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County Leads in Open and Transparent Sharing of Information

At today's County of Grande Prairie Council Meeting, the County launched its Open Data Catalogue. Open Data takes various types of municipal information that does not violate privacy laws and makes it accessible to the public for free.

"Open Data really revolutionizes the way the County shares information," said County Information Systems Manager Natalia Madden. "It's a self-service portal that allows the public to download information that is managed by the County any time of the day or night right from their own computers."

Madden said the concept behind Open Data is very simple, yet very innovative. She said that governments across Canada and around the world hold a great deal of information and are realizing the benefits of sharing data with their citizens.

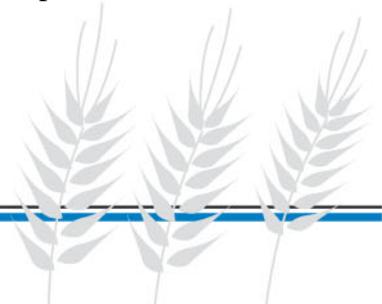
"It makes sense to share the data and make it available to the public. Having access to this information benefits people in their daily activities," said Madden. "It allows people to make more informed decisions and even plan more effectively."

"Open Data has also grown out of a push for government openness," she said. "People want transparency in government."

Data varies in each municipality. Currently, the County had 11 datasets available to the public: Points of Interest; Recycling and Services; Garbage Collection Routes; Municipal Boundaries; Roads; Fire Guardian Zones; Fire Permit Zones; Land Use Zoning; Annexation; Councillor Divisions; and Area Structure Plans.

Over time, the site will become more populated as new datasets are made ready. In the upcoming months, the County will be looking to the public to provide feedback on the types of information they want to see made available.

Open Data makes information even more useful because it can be applied in a number of very creative ways. Two or more data sources can be combined with a simple click of the mouse creating a completely different set of information.



Madden said not everything will become public. Confidential and sensitive information held by the County will continue to be handled in accordance with existing protocols, provincial and federal laws.

The public is invited to an Open Data Meet and Greet next Tuesday, June 19 from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm to learn about how they can use Open Data at home or at work. The event will take place at the County Administration Building on 84th Avenue in Clairmont.

The County joins only three other Alberta municipalities providing information through Open Data – Calgary, Edmonton and Medicine Hat.

For more information contact (780) 532-9722 or visit <http://data.countygp.ab.ca>

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