

## BC government launches open access website

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We heard that the BC government had launched its open access website on July 19, 2011, we decided to take a look.

The new website at [www.data.gov.bc.ca](http://www.data.gov.bc.ca) was developed in response to requests for easier access to data, particularly from those spending a lot of time and energy filing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

It also marks the beginning of a new business model of transparency, a commitment made by Premier Christy Clark during her campaign for Premier, and a shift in the way that the provincial government distributes information and spreads knowledge.

The government is releasing 2,500 sets of data that anyone can download and use free of charge.

We found that much of the data on the new website is already available if you know where to look or are persistent enough to dig for it on obscure areas of the government's extensive website.

### We do we like?

We looked for data focused on or related to land use and real estate. Here's what we found:

- Using the keywords, 'Real Estate' resulted in one data set about forestry.
- Using the keywords, "Land use, Lower Mainland" resulted in 495 data sets. Surprisingly, some of the data was from areas outside the Lower Mainland, which means the search engine could use some refining.

Some of the data we found with potential value to REALTORS® in their day-to-day work with clients, includes:

- Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) Lines (boundaries) – including maps of ALR lands;
- Conservancy Areas;
- Crown Land Development Agreements, Inventory, Reserves and Notations, and Rights-of-Way;
- Development Cost Charges and Building Permit information for local governments;
- Home Owner Grant Analysis by municipality;
- Labour Market Outlook data on future supply and demand for occupations including REALTORS® (yes there will continue to be a demand);
- Lower Mainland proposed protected areas;
- Old Growth Forests management areas (important to REALTORS® in Whistler/Pemberton area); and
- Strategic Land and Resource Plans

### Tools and Apps

The new website also includes tools and apps designed to help users "mashup" data (synthesize it for re-use) including maps, charts, graphs and diagrams.

Tools include:

- **GeoCommons:** produces maps and analysis so you can see trends and share them on Facebook, Twitter and your blog.
- **Google Fusion Tables:** a data management and publishing web application that makes it easy to host, manage, collaborate on, visualize and publish data tables online.
- **iMapBC:** links to 500+ natural resource map datasets in an interactive mapping environment that lets you put together map layers, upload your own map data and produce maps you can print or email to others.
- **StatPlanet:** a browser-based interactive data visualization and mapping application that lets you easily and rapidly create visualizations from simple Flash maps to advanced infographics.

Apps include:

- **BC Water Resources Atlas:** facts about where a community's water comes from and how it compares with the quality of water in other areas.
- **GeoBC Data Distribution Service:** includes regional census data, locations of hospitals, tourism activities and more.
- **Integrated Land and Resource Registry (ILRR):** data about public and private land ownership including which land is protected or has BC Crown Land status.
- **Population Pyramids:** displays projections of population, birth or death counts across the entire province.
- **Species Inventory Database (SPI):** information about the wildlife in your client's neighbourhood, includes reports, studies and analysis.
- **Traffic Data Program:** information about which road has the least amount of traffic during rush hour so you can plan your next route using data maintained by the Ministry of Transportation.

### Leading the way with more to come

BC is the first provincial government to launch an open-data website and plans to release more data in the coming months. The City of Vancouver and the federal government also have open-data access. For information, visit: [www.delta.gov.bc.ca](http://www.delta.gov.bc.ca).

