

Statement Of Principles For Sound Decision-Making In Canada

The Science Integrity Project

There is growing public concern that policy decisions in jurisdictions across Canada are being made without the support of relevant, accurate, and up-to-date information¹. The Science Integrity Project – a 2-year initiative involving nearly 75 diverse, influential, and experienced thinkers and practitioners nationwide – is an inclusive, constructive, and non-partisan effort aimed at improving the use of evidence in decision making at all levels of government in Canada. The project held a national forum in February 2015 to discuss foundational principles for the generation and use of evidence in decision-making in Canada. This Statement is the product of their work.

The Case For Evidence-Based Decision-Making

Strong public policies, built on the foundations of evidence and analysis, ensure better outcomes for Canadians, increase government accountability and transparency, and improve our democracy. Canadians expect their representatives to seek, consider, and use rigorous, widely sourced evidence to inform decisions. Such evidence may take many forms, including:

- **Science** in its broadest sense, including the body of knowledge resulting from experiments, systematic observations, statistical data collection and analysis, theory and modeling, and including information from a range of fields in the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, health sciences and engineering; and,
- **Indigenous knowledge**, the body of knowledge that is the result of intellectual activity and insight gained in a traditional context and adapted over time to modern situations, and which includes the methods, skills, practices, and knowledge contained in codified knowledge systems passed between generations.²

Principles for Evidence-based Decision-making

We call upon all Canadians, acting individually and collectively, to embrace and apply the following principles for evidence-based decision-making. These principles are both ambitious and achievable. Real-world applications exist in many Canadian jurisdictions and have been implemented in countries around the world with great success. We believe the robust implementation of these principles will result in a stronger Canada.

Principle 1 The best available evidence – produced by methods that are transparent, rigorous, and conducted with integrity ³ – should always inform decision-making in Canada.	Principle 2 Information should be openly exchanged among scientific researchers, Indigenous knowledge holders, decision makers, and the public ⁴ .
Principle 3 Research results should be preserved, protected, interpreted and shared in a way that is broadly understandable and accessible.	Principle 4 Decision-making processes, and the manner in which evidence informs them, should be transparent and routinely evaluated.

1. E.g., Professional Institute of the Public Service in Canada (2013) www.pipsc.ca/portal/page/portal/website/issues/science/bigchill; Voices-Voix Coalition (2015) http://voices-voix.ca/sites/voices-voix.ca/files/dismantlingdemocracy_voicesvoix.pdf

2. There are many definitions of indigenous knowledge; we use one adapted from the World Intellectual Property Organization

3. By “integrity” in the use of science and Indigenous knowledge, we mean that public policies are built upon the best available, most relevant knowledge resources and that the transfer and use of knowledge in policy and decision-making is transparent. Integrity in the use of knowledge in policy-making also requires integrity in the production of knowledge, that is, adhering to professional, ethical, and disciplinary standards in the production of scientific knowledge and codified cultural standards in the production of Indigenous knowledge.

4. Except in rare cases of demonstrated concern regarding privacy and security. For an overview of open access principles see “Concepts of Openness and Open Access” (UNESCO 2015 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232207E.pdf>).