

CRDCN statement in response to the *Globe and Mail* series **Canada in the dark**

January 28, 2019

The Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) welcomes the light that the *Globe and Mail* series, **Canada in the dark**, shines on the importance of investing more in the collection of Canadian data, facilitating access, and ensuring its public availability to inform decisions of critical importance to Canadians. For nearly two decades, the CRDCN has been part of the solution, facilitating researchers' access to more and better data and working collaboratively with governmental and nongovernmental partners to answer the most challenging questions facing our country.

For this reason, we find the reference to the Research Data Centres as "data jails" both inappropriate and inaccurate. Rather than being "the bane of many researchers", the RDCs have been crucial in enabling thousands of emerging and established researchers from across the country to access anonymized microdata to address major social issues while ensuring the security of the data and thereby protecting Canadians' privacy. Moreover, contrary to the impression left by the *Globe and Mail* articles, international peer review of the CRDCN, which facilitates access to these RDCs, attests that Canada is an international leader in the depth and breadth of the anonymized microdata it makes available via the RDCs and in the knowledge it mobilizes to inform public policy.

CRDCN is partnered with Statistics Canada to democratize availability of these data and advance Statistics Canada's Modernization initiative. These efforts will increase ease of access across the country, including more remote access to enable all interested researchers to answer vital questions in new ways. As one of only 17 Major Scientific Initiatives in Canada, CRDCN is now working with Statistics Canada and Compute Canada to implement a high performance computing platform that will enable more researchers to analyse a greater variety of data including linked administrative data from federal government departments, provinces and other agencies.

So while the CRDCN welcomes the G&M series as a call to arms to accelerate access to, and analysis of, world class data to advance knowledge and inform public policy, Canadians should also recognize the strengths of Statistics Canada's anonymized microdata offerings and the importance of CRDCN research and its impact.

CRDCN and Statistics Canada will continue to work together to address the needs of the country in a data driven society and economy, while adhering to the principles of privacy and confidentiality protection Canadians deserve and expect.