



WHITE PAPER

# The Value of Social Media in the Government of Canada

A Hootsuite White Paper

Hootsuite®



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	3
<b>The social government: How it works</b> .....	4
Interacting with Canadian communities .....	4
Simplifying government operations.....	4
Digital transformation in Canada .....	5
<b>The four pillars of a social government</b> .....	6
1. Citizen engagement.....	6
2. Government service delivery.....	6
3. Critical response communications.....	7
4. Government operations.....	7
<b>Examples of social government</b> .....	8
<b>Getting it right: Proving the value of social</b> .....	9
Simplified social outreach .....	9
Consolidated social monitoring .....	9
Solid metrics to prove value .....	9
Security and process.....	9
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	10

# The Value of Social Media in the Government of Canada

## A Hootsuite White Paper

### Executive summary

The Government of Canada spends a significant amount of taxpayer dollars on citizen engagement and service delivery. For example, from 2015-2016, \$42.2 million was spent on media advertising alone.<sup>1</sup>

And communications costs are a drop in the ocean compared with the cost of delivering services to citizens via traditional service centers. Consider 1 800 O-Canada as an example: Servicing citizens by phone costs an average of \$3.95 per call—at a rate of 163,000 calls per month. This equates to \$7.7 million annually to run just one call center.<sup>2</sup> And that's not considering the cost of running the 590 in-person service centers across the country.<sup>3</sup>

Costs aside, relying on traditional approaches perpetuates operational challenges (including variables such as budget, timelines, and audience targeting) that must be managed across different government entities. This leaves little room for economy of scale, insight into trends, or consistency in approach.

There is also a disconnect between traditional approaches and the expectations of today's hyper-connected, always-on Canadians. They expect immediate access to information and real-time responses.

The Government of Canada has demonstrated its investment in digital government: For example, the Digital Canada 150 strategy aims to increase the ease of access to government resources.<sup>4</sup> However, the pace of technological change is diminishing the early successes of the Digital 150 strategy.

The Government of Canada must significantly expand its efforts, embracing a government-wide citizen engagement and service delivery strategy with social media and mobility at its core.

Never before has government had such a low-cost solution for engaging citizens. Consider the fact that that Canadians spend an average of 2.3 hours per day watching television and 1.8 hours per day engaging on social media.<sup>5</sup> Yet despite spending \$15.3 million on television advertising from 2015 to 2016—and despite clear growth in social media as a communications channel—the Government of Canada spent just \$1.1 million on social advertising during that time period.<sup>6</sup>

Maximizing the investment in social media requires a strategic approach to social engagement. Government agencies that are doing it well have mastered a way to adopt a human-centric approach when engaging with citizens on social. But there's a lot of work still to do—government is still perceived as being the most annoying industry on social media.<sup>7</sup>

Now more than ever provincial and local governments that are looking to embrace the power of social media must adopt tools to ensure good outcomes. Social media management solutions can simplify social engagement and pay for themselves in the form of operational efficiencies, streamlined service delivery, and improved citizen satisfaction with government interactions.

This white paper explores the value of social media as an agent to drive efficient, effective, and citizen-centric engagement within the Government of Canada.

**Twenty-three million Canadian citizens—65 percent of the entire population—are active on social media.<sup>8</sup>**

# The social government: How it works

## Interacting with Canadian communities

Social media continues to attract a multigenerational audience hungry for real-time information and engagement. Out of 36 million Canadians, 23 million are active on social media.<sup>9</sup>

While government agencies are using social media to disseminate information, many are focusing their efforts on using it as a broadcasting tool, resulting in one-sided conversations that don't result in meaningful engagement with citizens. As a result, citizens have a less-than-satisfying experience, which does nothing to improve their view of—or relationship with—government entities.

In an era when so many Canadians have a social media network profile and half are registered to more than one social site, a new social solution is needed to keep pace.<sup>10</sup>

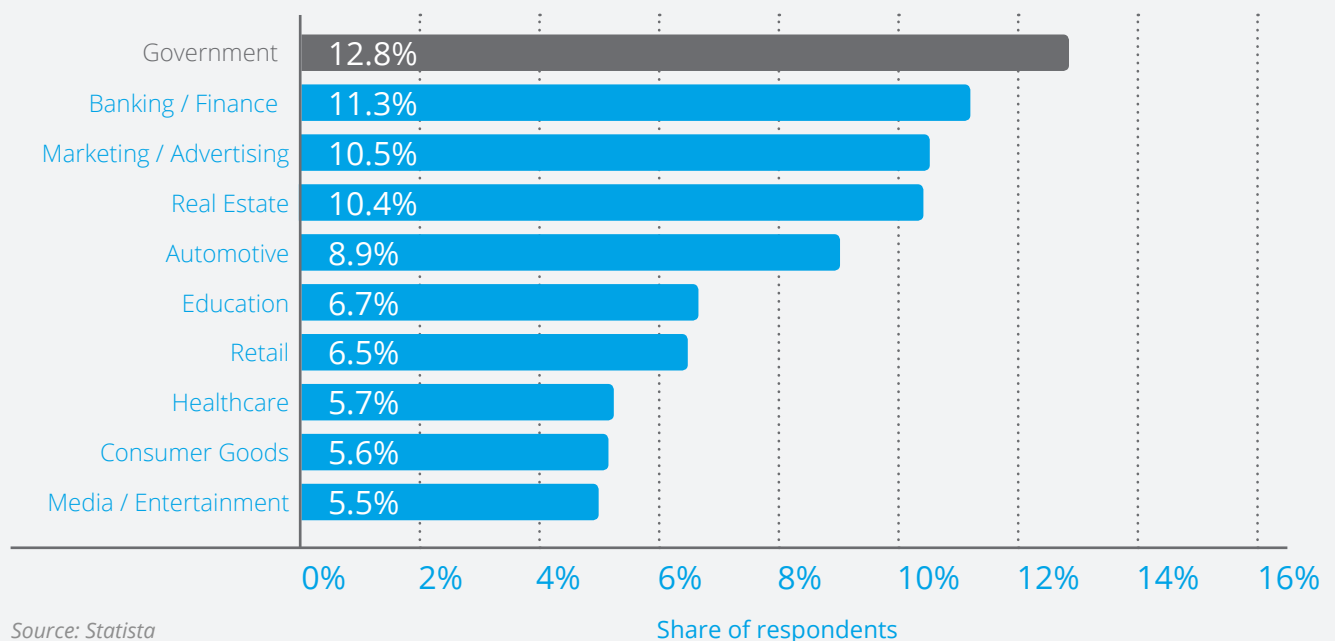
## Simplifying government operations

Compared with traditional means of communication like the telephone, mail, in-person contact, and email, social media provides government agencies a cost-effective way to communicate with a larger audience.

Governments can use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to issue alerts and expedite the delivery of information—from traffic and weather notifications to missing-person outreach. Health Canada is using Twitter and Facebook to provide public safety advisories such as food scares, virus outbreaks, and more. Environment Canada uses Twitter to share environmental safety and advocacy updates. And Global Affairs Canada is using YouTube to advocate policies and share updates on foreign affairs, development, and trade.

Yet while agencies at various levels of government continue to adopt social media, only 63 percent of them have an enterprise-wide social media strategy.<sup>11</sup>

## Leading most annoying industries on social media according to social media users worldwide as of July 2016



## Digital transformation in Canada

Canada's Digital 150 Strategy provides citizens in rural areas with access to reliable broadband. In 2017, more than 356,000 Canadian households will have access to high-speed Internet.<sup>12</sup> Other recent improvements include wireless upgrades to increase services in urban areas and introduce more competition into wireless service offerings.

The rate of digital transformation has a direct impact on citizens' ability to adopt social media. Ontario, for example, is one of the most digitally connected provinces, with 67 percent of its population using social media, while Quebec is the least digitally connected, with only 49 percent of its population on social platforms.<sup>13</sup> Public sector entities should consider the success of digitally-connected companies like Amazon and Google to understand citizen appetite for digital access. Also impacted by digital transformation is health care. As many as 94 percent of Canadian health care professionals surveyed say connected care technology will be crucial to the future of medical care.

Further, 87 percent say it will help medical diagnosis, and 82 percent feel it will aid in home care services.<sup>14</sup>

Never before has the opportunity been so great for digital transformation to change the lives of Canadian citizens for the better.

More than 2.8 billion people globally were using social media by the end of 2016, up 21 percent from 2015.<sup>15</sup>

## Amplifying Social Reach

**6,000**

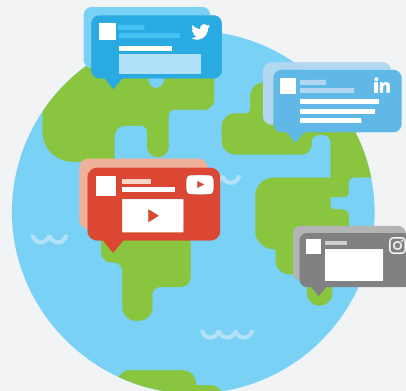
**Tweets**  
sent every second

**100 Million**

Daily active users  
of **Snapchat**

**1 Billion**

Daily searches on  
**LinkedIn**



**80 Million**

Photos shared on  
**Instagram** daily

**1 in every  
6 minutes**

Amount of time spent daily  
on **Facebook**

**4 Billion**

Daily views on **YouTube**

Source: Hootsuite<sup>16</sup>

# The four pillars of a social government

## 1. Citizen engagement

Listening to citizens is the first step to learning what's happening within communities. Tweets and Facebook events, polls, lists, and livestreams can be used to gauge and monitor citizen engagement and community concerns.

Within five years, social media interactions will be equal to the number of phone interactions, with 70 to 80 percent being service-oriented.<sup>21</sup>

Canada takes public safety seriously, using social tools to promote good citizen behavior and advocate safety.



Public Safety Canada used Twitter to educate the public about cyberbullying.

## 2. Government service delivery

Social media can play a role in helping reduce the public-sector resources consumed in the delivery of citizen services. Services like tax payments, permit applications, and license renewals, for instance, can be delivered as do-it-yourself services.

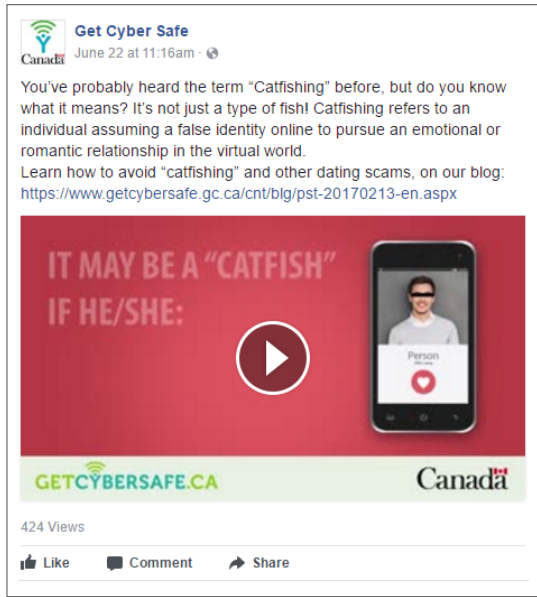


The British Columbia Royal Canadian Mounted Police use Twitter to advocate road safety for motorcycle riders.

The Canada Business website has simplified service delivery to entrepreneurs by turning 14 federal, provincial, and local websites into one, and by transforming 272 paper guides into online manuals searchable by topic, along with updates accessible via a blog, RSS feeds, Twitter and more.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the burden on staff government call centers can be reduced with more effective workflows on social media that shorten wait times and help administrative staff work more efficiently.

### 3. Critical response communications

Social media can help spread the word quickly about a disaster or public emergency. Twitter and Facebook updates can alert citizens to power outages, terror alerts, and weather disasters in real time for immediacy and accuracy. First responders can monitor community activity to identify areas where citizen support is needed.



Get Cyber Safe used Facebook to alert citizens to the dangers of "Catfishing."



The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo leveraged social media to orchestrate a mass evacuation during the Alberta wildfires in 2016.

### 4. Government operations

As well as enhancing citizen engagement and service delivery, social media can create efficiencies in other areas of government operations.

For example, social tools can be used to attract and retain highly skilled workers where traditional recruitment fails. Younger workers are comfortable engaging via social media. Unlike insular traditional recruitment, social media enable open, transparent and real-time interactions that give citizens an unfiltered understanding of the opportunities and benefits that exist within government employment. This can help enhance the employer brand of government agencies and help them compete against the private sector for fresh talent.



The Canadian Armed Forces use Facebook to engage citizens with the mission of the military and the opportunities for those willing to serve.

# Examples of social government

## 1. Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)

**Problem:** Citizen reports of inappropriate TV content

When the CRTC saw an uptick in citizen complaints about broadcast content, it turned to social media to address those concerns. Instead of dialing into a call center to report the offenses, citizens can post to social channels, where a CRTC representative takes a proactive approach to responding to the complaints.

## 2. U.S. Department of State

**Problem:** Citizen passport questions

When the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs wanted to streamline how it responded to citizen passport questions, it turned to social media. Sharing information on a wider scale helps embassies keep policy information current.

## 3. Kansas City 311

**Problem:** Government and non-emergency reports

Kansas City established a 311 call center in 2007 that handles about 10,000 calls per week related to non-emergency concerns like trash collection, potholes, damaged sidewalks, and more.<sup>19</sup> The center now captures resident complaints via the internet, mobile apps, and social media. Residents can track requests on a map and look up the remediation status online.

## 4. Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

**Problem:** Unauthorized carry-on items

The Transportation Security Administration uses Instagram to showcase some of the strangest items people try to bring through security. The Instagram account helps humanize TSA agents and also reinforces what's not allowed on airplanes. It attracted more than 72,000 followers in the first year it was used.<sup>20</sup>

## What's getting in the way of the social government?



### Need for funding

Competition for Canadian government dollars is fierce. The federal budget in 2016 projected a \$29.4 billion deficit.<sup>21</sup>

Canada's military spending is slated to increase 70 percent in 10 years,

reaching \$32.7 billion, or an estimated 1.4 percent of the gross domestic product.<sup>22</sup> Efforts to consolidate services are prompting departments to evaluate enterprise technology that can benefit government users on a wider scale. Also trending is the reallocation of funding from traditional media to social media for cost-effective, targeted messaging.



### Resource shortages

As social adoption rises, so does the number of accounts and interactions that must be monitored, filtered, routed, and responded to. Relying on a single department to manage this without enterprise-strength social

media management software is unrealistic and can result in delayed response, missed opportunities for engagement, brand damage, and poor service delivery.



### Skills gap

There's a technology talent gap in the public sector that puts IT transformation and digital optimization at risk. Consider the fact that even though Canada will create 218,000 tech jobs by 2020, it

lacks people to fill them.<sup>23</sup> Technology skills and leadership at the highest levels are essential to driving government adoption of social media resources to obtain the skills.<sup>24</sup>



# Getting it right: Proving the value of social

## Simplified social outreach

Social media engagement can be used to enhance agency outreach by delivering a unified communications strategy that's on-brand and consistent.

A single platform for social management can centralize social outreach and engagement at the federal and provincial levels for efficiency and ease of procurement. It can also empower teams at the local and department levels to maintain their brand voices. Automation features that allow users to schedule social posts help keep engagement flowing, with less time invested in the process.

## Consolidated social monitoring

Social listening helps agencies learn what's on the minds of constituents. Likes, dislikes, and concerns are posted in real time, giving governments insight into relevant discussions. Listening to these discussions sets up agencies to respond to messages, brand mentions, and comments across all social channels, helping them resolve problems and maintain of brand reputation.

## Solid metrics to prove value

Measurement of success is key to proving the value of social and increasing budget for social initiatives.

To measure success, agencies need to start by defining what success means to them. Hootsuite defines social media ROI as "the sum of all social media actions that create value."<sup>24</sup> Activities on social media that create value for governments might fall under categories such as brand perception, customer experience, and security and risk mitigation. With a well-established definition of success in place, agencies can use social media management software to measure and demonstrate progress toward program objectives.

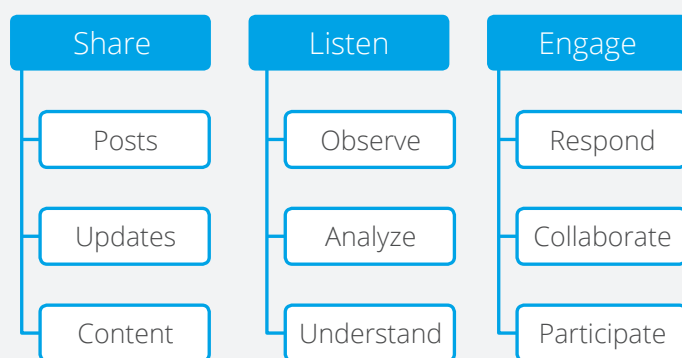
## Security and process

Few things can be more damaging to perception of a brand than a negative social post that turns viral. A centralized social media management platform makes it easy to recognize and address potentially damaging social content. Staff access can be managed across departments with secure logins, publishing approval workflows, and flexible permission levels. This allows for consistency across departments, agencies, and locations, and ensures that posts are reviewed, approved, and compliant.

## Bringing the value of social government to the surface

- **Advance public sector missions:** An effective social media campaign to communicate the goals and benefits of government initiatives can help get constituents advocating on your behalf. Social conversations on Twitter and Facebook, viral videos on YouTube, and image shares on sites like Pinterest and Instagram all help drive awareness of—and engagement with—government causes. A social media management platform can provide enterprise-strength social media capability in an affordable solution to advance these initiatives.
- **Streamline agency operations:** Social media management tools can speed government response to emergencies to safeguard constituents and communicate in a timely manner. Governments can post emergency alerts and instant updates across several social channels from a single dashboard while monitoring responses and inbound communications.
- **Reduce cost of citizen outreach:** A shared platform for social media campaigns can unify and speed social interactions, reducing redundancies and making information more transparent and available for citizen and inter-agency consumption.

### Engaging with citizens: A multilayered approach



---

## Conclusion

Every government agency is at a different stage of the digital transformation journey. While social media is just one stage in this journey, it offers government agencies a relatively quick win in terms of enhancing the citizen experience.

Government social media use satisfies citizen demand for real-time information, makes citizen engagement easier, and streamlines government operations. Using social media, governments can control costs, increase transparency, earn greater public trust, and create positive public sentiment.

Effective social outreach requires that government users listen as much as they post, and that they respond quickly to comments and mentions. Investing in a citizen engagement platform (such as Hootsuite) to streamline and coordinate social media across departments and agencies is a critical step in ensuring successful social media adoption that delivers real value to government.

## Endnotes

- 1 Public Services and Procurement Canada. [2015 to 2016 Annual report on Government of Canada advertising activities](#). 2016.
- 2 Government of Canada. [Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report](#). 2016
- 3 [Service Canada website](#)
- 4 [Digital Canada 150 website](#)
- 5 Statista.com. [Most annoying industries on social media](#). 2016.
- 6 We Are Social. [Digital in 2017: North America](#). 2017.
- 7 We Are Social. [Digital in 2017: North America](#). 2017.
- 8 Public Services and Procurement Canada. [2015 to 2016 Annual report on Government of Canada advertising activities](#). 2016.
- 9 Accenture Public Service Pulse Survey. [Digital government: Great expectations, untapped potential](#). Accenture Consulting, 2016.
- 10 Insights West. [2016 Canadian Social Media Monitor](#). 2016.
- 11 Public Technology Institute. [Local government overwhelmingly uses social media to disseminate info, lacks budget for social media activities](#). Statescoop, 2017.
- 12 [Digital Canada 150 website](#)
- 13 Insights West. [2016 Canadian Social Media Monitor](#). 2016.
- 14 Kimpen, Jan and Mechael, Patricia. [Care that delivers](#). Future Health Index, 2017.
- 15 Walters, Kendall. [125+ Essential Social Media Statistics Every Marketer Should Know](#). Hootsuite Blog, 2016.
- 16 Walters, Kendall. [125+ Essential Social Media Statistics Every Marketer Should Know](#). Hootsuite Blog, 2016.
- 17 Government of Canada. [The new CanadaBusiness.ca: Leading the way in service delivery](#). 2011.
- 18 Greco, Don. [3 reasons to bring social media into the contact center](#). GCN, 2016.
- 19 Newcome, Tod. [311: From a Hotline to a Platform for Citizen Engagement](#). Government Technology, 2017.
- 20 Bierend, Doug. [The TSA's Instagram Feed Is Terrifying and Totally Awesome](#). WIRED, 2014.
- 21 Canadian Press. [Federal budget 2016: Liberal government projects \\$29.4B deficit](#). Global News, 2016.
- 22 Berthiaume, Lee. [Canada to increase defence spending by \\$14 billion in 10 years](#). Macleans, 2017.
- 23 Information and Communications Technology Council. [Canada's first national digital talent strategy paves the way forward for an innovative and globally competitive economy](#). 2016.
- 24 Hootsuite. [The ROI of Social Media](#). 2017.

# About Hootsuite for Government

Partner with Hootsuite to accelerate your social transformation



Hootsuite is the most widely used platform for managing social media, loved by over 15 million people around the globe and trusted by more than 800 of the Fortune 1000. Hootsuite Enterprise empowers organizations to execute business strategies for the social media era and scale social media activities across multiple teams, departments, and regions. Our versatile platform supports a thriving ecosystem of social networks complemented by 250+ business applications and integrations, allowing organizations to extend social media into existing systems and programs.

Along with our channel and agency partners, we help organizations build deeper relationships with customers, stay connected to the needs of the market, grow revenue, and draw meaningful insights from social media data. Innovating since day one, we continue to help organizations pioneer the social media landscape and accelerate their success through product training, group training and tailored organizational training, as well as security and compliance services.

Request a custom demo today by visiting [hootsuite.com/government](https://hootsuite.com/government)