Data Use in Ontario’s Rural Communities
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Introduction

- Data plays a growing role in public life, and advancements in data technologies can help in planning for cities and towns
- We wish to better understand the extent to which data is used in rural areas and the reasons for its use

New Data Technologies

- **Big Data**: Refers to datasets that are extremely large, that are collected at a very fast rate, or that contain a notably wide variety of information.\(^1\)
  - Big Data allows for new ways to investigate old problems, but it may oversimplify how issues are discussed\(^1\)
  - **Open Data**: Refers to data that is made available to the public, usually online, for use and re-use without charge\(^1\)
  - Advocates claim that Open Data increases transparency and makes a fairer society, although its effects on government operations and privacy are not always clear\(^1\)

Open Data in Canada

- Canada ranks highly on the world stage for its work in making public data more open\(^2\)
  - The Federal Government, most provincial governments, and many municipalities maintain online Open Data portals
  - Most of these portals are found in large urban areas; of the 21 municipal Open Data portals in Ontario, 3 are based in rural areas\(^3\)
  - Some may assume that rural areas have no capacity or interest for working with data, but there have been few studies of this so far, particularly within Canada

Research Plan

- We plan to survey relevant municipal employees across Ontario on their community’s experience with or discussions around using Big Data and/or Open Data in planning (Winter 2018)
  - A series of interviews will follow these surveys to gather further details from selected participants (Summer 2018)
  - This research will produce a Master’s Thesis and a publication

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