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The adoption of open government by local governments in Canada: Obstacles and possibilities

Anna Kopec
Department of Political Science
University of Toronto

Byron Sheldrick
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which dimensions of open government have been adopted by local governments in Canada. Local government structures are sometimes conceptualized as particularly well suited to democratic experimentation. Certainly, it has been the case that many governmental/democratic reform initiatives have started at the local/municipal level. Exploring open government at the local level provides us with insights into two questions. First, it helps us determine the extent to which open government has permeated beyond federal and provincial levels of government in Canada. Second, due to the challenges associated with open government, it allows us to identify and highlight such challenges.

Keywords: open government; local government

Résumé

Le présent document a pour objet d'explorer dans quelle mesure les administrations locales ont adopté les dimensions d'un gouvernement ouvert. Les structures d'administrations locales sont parfois considérées comme particulièrement bien adaptées à l'expérimentation démocratique. Certes, de nombreuses initiatives liées à la réforme gouvernementale et démocratique ont été lancées au niveau local et municipal. L'exploration d'un gouvernement ouvert au niveau local nous permet d'explorer les enjeux concernant deux questions. Premièrement, cela nous aide à déterminer dans quelle mesure le gouvernement ouvert s'est répandu au-delà du gouvernements fédéral et des gouvernement provinciaux au Canada. Deuxièmement, en raison des défis associés au gouvernement ouvert, cela nous permet d'identifier et de mettre en évidence de tels défis.

Mots-clés: Gouvernement ouvert, local govenrment

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Introduction

Open government has a long history dating back to the 1950s. As a concept, it was originally linked to freedom of information debates and was seen a critical precondition of accountability (Parks 1957; Clarke and Francoli 2014; Yu and Robinson 2012). Open government, as such, had clear links to notions that democratic governments should not operate in secrecy, but rather that government information should be public information, and that decisions should be made transparently if there is to be accountability. This understanding of open government, while important, remained firmly rooted in a relatively traditional concept of liberal democracy.

The concept of open government was given new life in 2008 with the election of Barak Obama as president of the United States (Catlaw and Sandberg 2014). The launch of President Obama's Open Government Directive led to a revival of the concept and added new dimensions to the conceptualization of open government. In addition to traditional notions of access to information and decision-making transparency, open government became linked to concepts of citizen participation and the transformation of the relationship between state and citizen (Catlaw and Sandberg 2014; Pyrozhenko 2015). The concept of open government is also inextricably linked to the revolution in information technology and the rise of social media. The growth of new technological platforms for connecting and communicating with citizens has potentially transformed the nature of the democratic relationship between governments and those they govern (O'Reilly 2010; Francoli 2011; Mulgan 2014; Millard 2015; Sandoval-Almazon and Gil-Garcia 2016). These dimensions of open government raise the possibility of moving beyond traditional understandings of liberal democracy towards a more radical democratization of state structures.

Urban studies, in general, has not directly addressed the question of open government. Despite this, there are clear intersections between the study of open government and urban studies. Fundamentally, urban studies is inherently interdisciplinary, examining the urban environment, including social interactions, governance, political accountability, economics, and socio-legal dimensions. In short, urban studies inquires as to how people live in urban spaces. In doing so it employs techniques of political science, public administration, geography, sociology, criminology, economics, and law. The study of open government, in contrast, examines how governance is organized and structured. Its concern is with the development of transparent and participatory structures of decision-making, that enable and empower citizens to participate in the making of decisions that impact their lives. The concern of open government scholars is with both the creation of democratic processes, but also with information flows, and the developing capacity for decision-making, particularly through technology and social media. If we relate this to urban studies, we can see clear connections to those scholars who seek to examine the governance structure of local decision-making (Lucas 2017, Joy and Vogel 2017), but also to those who are interested in the development of smart cities, and the deployment of technology to both enhance urban life, and to ensure the economic competitiveness of cities (DeFilippis 1999; MacLeod 2011; Hoffman 2014). Similarly, the New Urbanism has developed an approach to urban planning which emphasizes holistic design and the creation of "human scaled" development that enhances the livability of urban spaces for all those who live in cities (see Charter of New Urbanism, https://www.cnu.org/resources/what-new-urbanism). Open government is consistent with the principles of new urbanism, in that it seeks to enhance the political engagement and capacity of citizens. (Resnick 2010) In a local context, it seeks to create "human-scaled" governance processes, so that design is not just an urban planning concept, but also a governance concept.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various dimensions of open government and determine the extent to which they have permeated local government in Canada. Local government structures are sometimes conceptualized as particularly well suited to democratic experimentation (Raven et al 2017; Caprotti and Cowley 2017; Kronsell and Mukhtar-Landgren 2018). Certainly, it has been the case that many governmental/democratic reform initiatives have started at the local/municipal level. Exploring open government at the local level provides us with insights into two questions. First, it helps us determine the extent to which open government has permeated beyond federal and provincial levels of government in Canada. Second, it allows us to examine variation in adoption at the local level and associated challenges. There has been much talk of open government at the federal and provincial levels. The federal government and eight of 10 provinces have made an explicit commitment to open government (Government of Canada, Open Government. https://open.canada.ca/en). More specifically, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have all implemented open government initiatives and have dedicated open government portals. Additionally, the government of the Northwest Territories has also endorsed open government principals.

The local level, however, is less frequently examined in relation to open government strategies in Canada. The adoption of open government principles by local governments is not without its challenges, and investigating the permeation of open government at the local level may highlight these challenges. Municipalities, for example, may lack the resources to pursue open government in a fulsome manner. The shear diversity of local government structures, therefore, may be an important factor. Large municipalities might have greater success in pursuing open government strategies, while smaller municipal governments may struggle. In other instances, local officials may consider themselves already well connected to their citizenry. This might also run counter to the implementation of open government principles, particularly in small municipalities. If everyone knows the mayor and councillors personally, the need to pursue elaborate strategies of citizen engagement may not be a high priority. In this context, open government may become redefined as simply the normal process of government operations, buttressed by democratic elections. It may also be that some elements of open government may be easier for local governments to implement than others.

By examining those local governments that have embraced open government, it allows us to get a better sense of what dimensions of open government are most popular and/or easiest to implement, as well as what obstacles exist to the implementation and adoption of open government. The degree to which some of the radical potential of open government has been realized can then be assessed. Finally, this research serves an important purpose in understanding the value associated with the study of open government, as well as the limitation of such a project.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first part provides an overview of the evolution of open government as a concept and the application of the term. The adoption of open government in the Canadian context will be specifically addressed. The second section of the paper outlines the methodological approach to the research and some of the limitations encountered. Finally, the results of our survey will be examined and discussed. In doing so, we emphasize the different open government strategies that have been pursued at the local level and also consider the limitations of local capacity to pursue open government. Finally, we conclude with a consideration of the implications of our findings and the potential for future research in this area.

Open government as a concept

Open government is an evolving concept. At one level, it is a strategy designed to transform information flows between the state and citizens, and by doing so allow citizens to interact with, impact, and reuse, that information. The result is a more engaged and active governance process. The growth of support for the correlation of good governance with the cooperation of all stakeholders, including laypeople, has further supported the growth of open government initiatives. Cooperation and collaboration strengthens democracy with the creation of new government-citizen relationships and networks that serve the needs of the community. Open government enhances governance and the quality of policymaking through greater transparency, collaboration and accountability (Misuraca and Viscusi 2014; Catlaw and Sanberg 2014; Scandoval-Almazon and Gil-Garcia 2016; Trivellator, Boselli and Cavenago 2014; Millard 2015).

Open government, then, is a multilateral process that includes the elements of transparency, collaboration and participatory government. People and technologies are integrated into government action thereby serving the twin goals of enhancing participation and efficiency/effectiveness. It creates opportunities for new forms of knowledge and insight with the use of external resources to achieve government goals. The goals of open government, however, are not always clear or well-defined; the term is subject to considerable theoretical ambiguity. As a concept, many scholars have noted its lack of definitional clarity and weak theoretical underpinnings (Lennon and Berg-Cross 2010; Clarke and Francoli 2014; Writz and Birkmeyer 2015).

Clarke and Francoli (2014) have tried to overcome this by generating a detailed qualitative analysis of the themes included in seven national open government plans housed by the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The partnership is an international platform for sharing open government initiatives that was launched in 2011. Essentially, it operates as a repository and clearinghouse for open government projects. Its focus, however, is very much on national governmental plans. The partnership originally included eight countries, but has grown to over 70 countries, including Canada. Each government has an open government action plan which can be accessed through the Partnership website (Yu & Robinson 2011; Clarke and Francoli 2014; Harrison and Sayogo 2014). The OGP recommends that government plans should include the following core principles: transparency, citizen participation, accountability, and technology and innovation. Based on these values, Clarke and Francoli (2014) identified a further 14 themes that they used to analyze government plans housed with the OGP. These included:

- Access to information;
- Accountability;
- Public participation;
- Open data;
- Reuse of government information and data;
- Drive economic growth/promote innovation;
- Improve information management;
- Improve public services;
- Protect civil rights and privacy;
- Transparency;
- Alternative service delivery;
- Make government more efficient;
- Prevent corruption;
- Promote corporate accountability

Clarke and Francoli's analysis found that, in general, more traditional understandings of open government, rooted in access to information, remained predominant in most plans, but with a concern for public participation added to the mix. In general, they found the four most common themes to be:

- Access to information
- Accountability
- Public participation
- Open data

Open data is clearly related to the more traditional open government theme of access to information. It does, however, add an important technological dimension, and highlights the importance of new information technologies in the open government literature. Open data includes the creation of data repositories based on state collected and generated information that can be readily and freely accessed by citizens, corporations, and NGOs. These themes of data information (collection and sharing) are combined with themes of accountability and public participation. Opening up access to information, and generating new forms of information, is seen as critical to government accountability and transparency, and a step to empowering citizens to participate in governmental processes. Again, a technological dimension is added with the utilization of information technologies, including social media, to create accountability mechanisms and citizen participation. In many open government frameworks, these four themes are viewed as inextricably linked. Access to information and open data provide the tools for citizen engagement and participation, which in turn enhances accountability (see also Francoli 2011; Dawes and Helbig 2010; Lathrop and Ruma (Eds.) 2010).

How far has open government travelled in Canada

Given the commitment of the federal government to a formal open government plan, the question remains as to how far this has travelled from the federal level to provincial and local levels of government. The structure of the Canadian constitution, and in particular the division of powers in ss. 91 and 92, ensures that federal and provincial levels of government are largely autonomous. The federal government does not have the capacity to determine or dictate provincial policy in this area. However, given the widespread provincial endorsement of open government, one might expect fairly widespread take-up at the local level.

There are other reasons why one might expect open government to have particular salience at the local level. In general, the literature on open government has frequently suggested that municipal politicians are "closer" to their constituents and operate in a sphere of decision-making that has greater impact on people's day to day lives. As a result, there is a sense that people can have a greater impact on decision-making at the local level. Indeed, local governments are often seen as potential arenas for democratic experimentation and the development of participatory opportunities for citizen engagement. In this context, one might expect open government to be taken up in a local context more readily than it might at provincial or national levels (see for example Wainwright and MacIntosh (Eds.) 1987). At the same time, there are also reasons to expect that local government may be particularly ill suited to demo-

cratic experimentation. Local government is sometimes seen as particularly vulnerable to capture by vested interests, particularly property developers and local industry, which may have privileged access to government decision-makers (Ruming 2010). While this may be true of large municipalities, it may even be more relevant to small municipalities, where local elites are a far tighter and more clearly defined group of people. For small municipalities, resources and capacity to pursue open government initiatives may also be limited, particularly if there is a need for investment in technological infrastructure.

An initial scan of municipal websites, however, suggested that open government had relatively little salience at the local level. A review of the 50 largest municipalities in Canada demonstrated that very few municipalities had adopted formal open government plans, and with the exception of the concept of open data, relatively few municipalities had pursued open government themes.

Size	Formal Plan	Access to Information	Accountability	Participation	Open Data
>1 million	1	2	2	2	3
n = 3	(33%)	(66%)	(66%)	(66%)	(100%)
500,000 - 1	2	3	1	1	8
million	(25%)	(37.5%)	(4.6%)	(4.6%)	(100%)
n = 8					
200,000 - 500,	1	1	1	1	6
000	(8.3%)	(8.3%)	(8.3%)	(8.3%)	(50%)
n = 12					
100,000-200,	2	2	1	1	12
000	(7.4%)	(7.4%)	(3%)	(3%)	(44%)
n = 27					
Total	6	8	5	5	29
	(12%)	(16%)	(10%)	(10%)	(58%)

The federal government's Open Government portal seems to indicate a much broader local take-up of open government principals by municipalities. It lists 60 "open municipalities" (https://open.canada.ca/en/maps/open-da-ta-canada#overlay_1). However, these municipalities have been designated as "open" due to the existence of some sort of data portal or data repository. This would seem to confirm the notion that open data is the preferred mechanism by which most municipalities pursue openness.

These preliminary results led to a series of questions, which we pursue more thoroughly in this paper. Examining websites tells us very little about the nature of open government initiatives, and the attitudes of local politicians and officials towards open government. Are there specific obstacles to implementing open government at the local level? Are initiatives the result of pressure from above (provincial or federal) or are they locally generated? Is the adoption of open government the result of pressure from below (citizen-led demands) or is it a bureaucratic or politician-led policy?

In order to pursue these issues in greater detail we conducted a national survey with elected and appointed municipal officials. The intention was to generate a fuller picture of if, and how, open government was being adopted at the local level, and to develop a better understanding of both obstacles and opportunities for open government. The results, we hope, will contribute to the open government debate, and assist in developing effective open government strategies.

Methodology

To examine the extent to which open government strategies have been adopted at the municipal level we conducted a French and English language survey. The survey asked respondents about the existence of formal open government strategies in their municipality, the objectives of such strategies, along with details regarding how the policies were developed and implemented. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

We invited mayors, city council members, members of city clerk's offices, and the chief administrative officers in 100 cities to participate in the survey. We cast a wide net when recruiting participants with the hopes of capturing possible variations in the initiatives present in cities of different sizes and within several provinces. Our sample included the ten most populous cities within each province. The cities were determined with the help of national and provincial data (the full list of cities can be found in the Appendix B). Although this sampling technique attempted to include an equal number of cities from each province, it also led to a list of cities with extreme variations in population given that the largest city in one province (Toronto, for example) was often significantly larger than the most populous city in another (Charlottetown, for example). Despite the size discrepancies, we opted to pursue this approach in order to overcome an issue that arose in the review of municipal websites referred to above. Of the 50 largest municipalities examined in that study, 23 came from Ontario, 10 from Quebec, and 8 from British Columbia. Manitoba, by contrast, only had 1 city that made the list, and several Atlantic Canadian provinces were excluded completely. Sampling an equal number of municipalities from each province helped to overcome this limitation.

We received a total of 56 responses to the English survey and 26 to the French survey, for a total of 82 responses. A majority of participants were council members, with some participants identifying as chief administrative officers, mayors, and senior policy staff. From the 56 responses in the English survey, 51 participants provided the name of the city they represent. Although our original sample targeted ten municipalities in each province, and each province was represented in our sample, responses remained skewed towards certain provinces. The most responses came from Alberta (25%; n=13), British Columbia (22%; n=11), Manitoba (18%; n=9), and New Brunswick (12%; n=6). There was only one participant that identified with a city in Ontario and only one from Nova Scotia. The French respondents were predominantly from Quebec (75%; n=18) and New Brunswick (25%; n=6). Overall, the survey results are quite tilted towards western Canada (particularly in the English survey), with major cities in Ontario not represented. This discrepancy was somewhat puzzling in that of the six cities possessing formal open government plans in our initial scan, three of them (Toronto, Kitchener, and Guelph) were from Ontario. It should also be noted that the three territories were not included in this research.

There are several other limitations to the survey. The terms we used in our survey were not always defined. As a result, responses may reflect the individual respondent's interpretation of the term, which may be different than how the term is used in the open government literature. Very few of the terms associated with open government have definitive and clear meanings. The extent to which the survey was able to capture these variations may therefore be limited. The survey included both multiple choice, rank order, and open-ended questions. Some participants did not answer all questions and, in general, the open-ended questions were the most likely not to elicit a response. Finally, this research does not test the effectiveness of open government strategies. Our intention is to engage in a preliminary investigation into the adoption of strategies and their integration at the municipal level. The results, therefore, cannot speak to the quality of the policies under investigation. Finally, surveying municipal officials may have also led to a response bias, with certain participants feeling the need to either bolster their current policies or emphasize certain aspects while not mentioning others.

Open government strategies in Canadian Mmunicipalities

Our initial scan of municipal websites suggested that very few municipalities had adopted open government strategies. However, our more detailed survey of municipal politicians and officials suggested a greater awareness of open government concepts.

Out of 82 participants, 54% said their municipality had an open government strategy (n = 44) and 27% said they did not (n = 22). A small number of respondents said that it could not be determined if their municipality did in fact have an open government strategy (17%, n = 14). These responses indicate adoption rates that are higher than initially assumed. As well, they indicate interesting differences between the adoption of explicit strategies of open government and more implicit adoption strategies, where open government is simply incorporated through other policies. Some participants, when asked why their municipality did not have a formal open government strategy, indicated that an explicit initiative is unnecessary since open government is incorporated into other local policies. All of the English survey participants that represented a municipality without a strategy argued that regardless of the lack of a formal strategy the concept of open government was practiced at the local level.

Adoption of open government at the local level

Participants who indicated that their municipality had an open government strategy, were asked about its development and adoption. In an open question, respondents were given an opportunity to describe how their strategy was developed. Answers frequently emphasized engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, along with strategic planning on the part of council and staff. Multiple stakeholders were generally consulted, and some municipalities created working groups that included private companies, local agencies, and members of the public. In terms of consulting the public, just under half of participants in the English survey answered that there were consultations in the development of their strategy and almost all participants in the French survey answered that the public was consulted. The time that it took municipalities to develop their strategy varied from multiple years to months, although a majority argued that it is a continuous and ongoing process.

When asked why the strategy was developed, most participants (42% in the English survey, 50% in the French survey) answered that it was driven by members of council and/or the mayor's office, with the demand from members of the public or constituency groups a secondary factor (23%, 25%). Approximately one-fifth of respondents indicated that open government strategies were adopted in response to the demands or initiatives of higher orders of government. Amongst English respondents, a significant majority (63%) indicated that they felt they had no choice but to comply with these demands. In the French survey, however, a majority of respondents (67%) indicated that the municipality was given a choice as to whether to adopt open government initiatives.

Strategies for implementing open government

Participants were also asked for details regarding their strategies for implementing open government. They were first asked about how different open government initiatives had been prioritized in their municipality. They were offered a list of priorities and asked to rank them in order of importance. Access to information was ranked as the first priority by a majority of participants (42%) in the English survey, although transparency was also seen as vital by some (25%). Accountability was placed in second place by most (55%), although public participation was also identified as an important priority (20%). In the French survey, however, public participation was ranked first by most participants (43%), although access to information was also an important consideration (33%). Transparency was ranked second (67%), while access to information was ranked third (33%) along with driving economic growth (33%). Although access to information was most important to those answering the English survey, it seemed that public participation was most important to participants answering the French survey.

Table 2: Order of importance of open government strategy priorities

Survey	Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
English	Access to information (42%)	Accountability (55%)	Access to information (33%)
	Transparency (25%)	Public participation (20%)	Public participation (30%)
	Accountability (18%)	Drive economic growth (12.5%)	Open data (30%)
French	Public participation (43%)	Transparency (67%)	Access to information (33%)
	Access to information (33%)	Improve public services (25%)	Leading economic growth (33%)
	Improve government effectiveness (25%)	Access to information (17%)	Public participation (29%)
Total Respondents	Access to information (32%)	Transparency (35%)	Access to information (32%)
	Public Participation (18%)	Accountability (30%)	Public participation (26%)
	Transparency (14%)	Public participation (15%)	Open data (16%)

The questions that followed were organized around the particular open government themes identified by Clarke and Francoli (2014). Here we were attempting to identify the range of policies attached to each broad theme, and to better understand how the ideas of open government are translated into concrete initiatives. With respect to access to information, participants identified a variety of initiatives. These included making information available online, hiring staff to coordinate requests, and improving the delivery and accessibility of information. The utilization of media and technology was also cited as a component of access to information.

In relation to the theme of accountability, participants in the English survey identified transparency (32%) and access to information (30%), as key components of their open government strategy. Enhancing public participation was also mentioned frequently (23%). In the French survey, transparency also was the most frequent answer (29%), although public participation was second (25%) and access to information was ranked third. (21%). Although the use of technology (19%, 17%) was a less common response to the question regarding key aspects of their strategy, almost a third of respondents identified information technology as a key mechanism for enhancing public participation.

When asked to describe specific forms of public participation, online mechanisms such as surveys, debates, open data and statistics and interactive portals were often mentioned, along with public meetings and outreach. In the French survey respondents also included more specific forms of public participation such as focus groups, consultations, and other public activities. In reference to specific mechanisms of open data used to enhance public participation, respondents discussed such things as open data portals, generating publicly available data sets, encouraging staff to release information, encouraging city officials to be more active online, stakeholder engagement, and enhancing media coverage. A quarter of respondents were unsure of any specific mechanisms. With respect to the types of data made available through these mechanisms, the most common items mentioned were maps and population statistics, followed by election, budget, community service, and business information. Information regarding building permits, zoning by-laws, public transportation and council expenses were also referred to. In the French survey, zoning, by-laws, budget information, public transportation, community events along with maps and population statistics were argued to be most available through open data mechanisms.

In terms of the targets of open government initiatives, citizens were identified as the target audience by a clear majority of participants (78% in the English survey and 57% in the French), with users of public services in second place (64%; 60%) and developers in third (39%; 40%). Updating citizens, promoting municipal achievements, and engaging citizens were identified as the most common uses of the information that is made available. Although this finding is not particularly surprising, it does speak to the democratic nature of open government. Municipalities are often seen as governmental structures that are "closer" to the people. Yet, at the same time, participation rates in local government elections are frequently very low. Generally, rates of participation in local elections are less than for provincial and federal elections (Buekert 2018). Municipalities are also, often portrayed as "captured" by local business, and in particular, developers. Open government and the enhancement of public participation, therefore, sits between these contradictions. It seems from this data that most local officials see open government as a mechanism for enhancing their relationship with the citizenry more broadly, rather than as a way of making access to government easier for developers and business interests.

Municipalities without an open government strategy

As noted above, almost a third of participants' municipalities did not have an open government strategy. Although these municipalities lacked a single cohesive plan, respondents felt strongly that their municipality still adhered to the principles of open government. Respondents indicated that they had not had time to enact an overarching plan but instead had used a number of separate strategies to address the elements of open government. These respondents were still asked about government priorities. Those without an open government strategy did not see access to information as high a priority (identified by 63% of participants compared to 88% of those with a strategy), placing economic growth/innovation, and improving public services (both identified by 88% of respondents) as a higher priority compared to those with an open government strategy (identified by 68% of those with a strategy as a priority).

Beyond the differences in municipal priorities, the respondents had similar democratic accountability priorities and means to enhance public participation. Fewer mechanisms for open data were cited, with one participant inquiring into what open data was, and another mentioning that their municipality is part of a website renewal process. The data that the municipalities made available to their constituents also varied, with budget information and population statistics ranked lower than for those municiaplities with an open government strategy. Election and budget information was cited as the most available data.

When asked to further elaborate the constraints that kept their municipality from developing a strategy, respondents discussed that there is a lack of consistency in the collection of data and a lack of coordination among the various departments. In addition, time and resource constraints were cited as limiting the creation of a formal initiative, along with the lack of a willing administration, and a lack of demand from citizens. It would seem that while those municipalities without a coherent open government plan still expressed commitment to the principles of open government, their aspirations in this area were more limited. Enhancing participation and accountability, and even open data and access to information, were secondary to more local concerns of economic development and service provision. This suggests that having a strategy is important to an approach of democratic enhancement.

Limitations to open government strategies

Similar limitations were echoed by participants from municipalities with open government strategies. Only one third of participants in the English survey responded that there were no limitations, with 13% preferring not to answer. The limitations some of the respondents cited included the lack of an interactive website, lack of resources including time and money, restrictive provincial legislation and regulations, lack of organizations, and the lack of available information.

It is clear that municipalities vary widely in their capacity to pursue open government initiatives. Large municipalities, with significant tax bases and resources, may be able to successfully implement open government initiatives. For some smaller cities, and rural municipalities, on the other hand, resources and capacity may pose significant challenges. The capacity to set up an interactive website, for example, or the ability to maintain a social media presence, cannot be assumed. These things take time, a certain amount of technical capacity, and the staff resources to pursue initiatives on an ongoing basis. Despite the pervasiveness of new information technologies, it would be wrong to assume that municipalities and local governments are equally able to engage with them. The development of open data portals raises further capacity issues. Such initiatives are very complex, and may involve significant investments of resources and changes in operational processes. Some municipalities may simply lack the resources, or be unwilling to invest in such initiatives.

In small municipalities it may be that the "need" for open government is simply not recognized. This should not be interpreted as a preference to be undemocratic. Rather, as the size of local communities and the scale of municipal government decreases, local representatives and municipal officials may be better connected to their constituents. In these contexts, personal connections may replace formal processes as the vehicle by which "participation" and "accountability" may take place. Living in large city such as Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal, the average citizen will likely never have an encounter with the mayor or their city counsellors unless they are attending an event specifically designed for engagement. If one is living in a small rural town or village, by contrast, city officials are your neighbours and you might encounter these individuals on a daily basis. Scale of local government can be important to how concepts like participation, engagement, and accountability are understood.

Conclusion

Our research indicates that there is considerable interest in open government concepts among municipal elected and non-elected officials at the local level. In general, though, the push to develop open government has largely been at the initiative of local leaders and municipal officials, rather than in response to grass-roots demands. This is consistent with the data on electoral turn-out at the municipal level, which suggests that citizens are frequently disengaged at the local level. Local officials, however, seem to view the development of open government as a means by which they can try to connect with local citizens, and hopefully mobilize and develop greater civic engagement. Despite this, our survey would also suggest that open data and access to information, the least radical and transformative elements of open government, tend to predominate.

This research, however, is very preliminary and limited both in scope and in assessment. Our study, for example, does not inquire as to the effectiveness of open government initiatives, or the extent to which such initiatives actually transform the practice of local government. More comparative research is definitely needed on the success of local open government initiatives, as well as issues of capacity-building at the local level so that these initiatives can be pursued. The importance of scale in relation to government needs to be further explored. Local government is a critical sector for the development of policies that have a direct impact on citizens. Moreover, as federal and provincial governments retrench, typically more and greater policy responsibility is often downloaded to the local level. In this

context, exploring the link between institutional practices and capacity is critically important for the development of rich democratic possibilities at the local level.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Open Government Questionnaire

- 1) What is your role?
 - a. Mayor
 - b. City council member
 - c. Chief Administrative Officer
 - d. Senior policy staff
 - e. Prefer not to answer
 - f. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 2) What municipality do you represent?

TEXTBOX

- 3) Does your municipality have an open government strategy?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Cannot be determined
 - d. Prefer not to answer

If participant answered no to question 3 then:

4) If your municipality does not have an open government strategy please explain why not.

TEXTBOX

- 5) If your municipality does not have an open government strategy, are any of the following priorities of your government? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Access to information
 - b. Accountability
 - c. Public participation
 - d. Open data
 - e. Reuse of government information and data
 - f. Drive economic growth/promote innovation
 - g. Improve information management
 - h. Improve public services
 - i. Protect civil liberties
 - j. Transparency
 - k. Alternative service delivery
 - 1. Government efficiency
 - m. Prevent corruption
 - n. Promote corporate accountability

o. Prefer not to answer p. Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
6) From the same list, what order of importance do these priorities have to your government? (Please use the same
priorities you chose in the previous question)
Access to information
Accountability
Public participation
Open data
Reuse of government information and data
Drive economic growth/promote innovation
Improve information management
Improve public services
Protect civil liberties
Transparency
Alternative service delivery
Government efficiency
Prevent corruption
Promote corporate accountability
Prefer not to answer
Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
7) Has there been any demand from stakeholders for an open government strategy?a. Yes, if so from who? TEXTBOXb. No
c. Prefer not to answer
8) What are the elements of democratic accountability that your government prioritizes? Choose all that apply. a. Public participation b. Access to information c. Transparency d. Citizen evaluation e. Use of technology f. Prefer not to answer g. Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
In what ways does your municipality seek to enhance public participation? Choose all that apply.
h. Interactive open data
i. Town hall meetings
j. Use of information communication technologies
k. Polling
1. Prefer not to answer
m. Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
11. C
9) Describe the forms of participation made accessible to citizens in your municipality's strategy. TEXTBOX
10) What mechanisms does your municipality have for creating open data? TEXTBOX

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11) What sort of data is available? Choose all that apply.

a. Zoning by-laws

b.	Land use data
c.	Business information
d.	Building permits

- e. Population statisticsf. Employment information
- g. Budget information
- h. Government schedule
- i. Election information
- j. Public surveys
- k. Community services
- 1. Public transportation information
- m. Community events
- n. Economic indicators
- o. Municipal license information
- p. Weather alerts
- q. Environmental information (use of green technology, water quality, waste information, etc.)
- r. Council expenses
- s. Maps
- t. Consultations
- u. Poll results
- v. Prefer not to answer
- w. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX

12) Who does you	r municipality	identify as	the prima	ry target	audience	of open	data?	Please	choose	in c	order (эf
mportance.												

_Users of municipal services
_Citizens in general
_Developers
_Corporations
_Businesses in the municipality
_Businesses seeking to move to the municipality
_Other - Please specify: TEXTBOX

- 13) Does your municipality make use of the following information technologies? Choose those that are applicable.
 - a. Website
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Twitter
 - d. Prefer not to answer
 - e. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 14) How does your municipality make use of information technology?
 - a. To update citizens about issues road closures, weather issues, cancellations, etc.
 - b. To promote the municipalities achievements
 - c. To engage citizens provide opportunities for feedback and input
 - d. Prefer not to answer
 - e. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX

15) What limitations have prevented your government from developing an open government strategy?

TEXTBOX

- 16) If you are part of a larger municipal government structure, such as a regional government, does that structure have an open government strategy?
 - a. Yes, if so please describe the initiative and provide any information (ie. Website details, etc.): TEXTBOX
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 17) Completion of this survey indicates your consent. Because the survey is anonymized, once you complete the survey, the information you provided cannot be removed from the evaluation. Only the researchers will see the surveys. We will keep your identity as confidential as possible. Thank you for your participation!

If participant answered yes to Question 3 then:

- 18) Is your open government strategy included on your municipal website?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 19) What are some of the priorities of your municipality's open government strategy? Choose as many priorities from the below list as applicable.
 - a. Access to information
 - b. Accountability
 - c. Public participation
 - d. Open data
 - e. Reuse of government information and data
 - f. Drive economic growth/promote innovation
 - g. Improve information management
 - h. Improve public services
 - i. Protect civil liberties
 - j. Transparency
 - k. Alternative service delivery
 - 1. Government efficiency
 - m. Prevent corruption
 - n. Promote corporate accountability
 - o. Prefer not to answer
 - p. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX

20) From the same list, what order of importance do these	priorities have in your open government strategy? (Please
use the same priorities you chose in the previous question)	
A t-: C	

Access to information
Accountability
Public participation
Open data
Reuse of government information and data
Drive economic growth/promote innovation
Improve information management
Improve public services
Protect civil liberties
Transparency
Alternative service delivery
Government efficiency

Prevent corruption
Promote corporate accountability
Prefer not to answer
Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX

21) How was your municipality's open government strategy developed?

TEXTBOX

- 22) Were there consultations with public?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 23) What stakeholders were involved in developing your municipality's open government strategy?

TEXTBOX

24) How long did it take?

TEXTBOX

- 25) Why was the strategy developed? Was there:
 - a. Demand from members of the public/constituency groups
 - b. Was it driven by members of council and/or the mayor's office
 - c. Was it an election campaign promise
 - d. Was it in response to demands and/or initiatives from higher orders of government i.e the province/federal government
 - e. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 26) If the strategy was in response to demands and/or initiatives from higher orders of government was your municipality given a choice to have an open government strategy or was it something that your municipality was asked to do?
 - n. Yes
 - o. No
 - p. Prefer not to answer
- 27) What specific policies does your municipality's strategy have for access to information?

TEXTBOX

- 28) Do the policies for access to information differ from the policies regarding freedom of information?
 - a. Yes, if so how? TEXTBOX
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 29) What are the elements of democratic accountability in your municipality's strategy? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Public participation
 - b. Access to information
 - c. Transparency
 - d. Citizen evaluation
 - e. Use of technology
 - f. Prefer not to answer
 - g. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 30) In what ways does your municipality seek to enhance public participation? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Interactive open data

	The adoption of open government by focus governments in Cumatum Contactor and possibilities
c. d. e.	Town hall meetings Use of information communication technologies Polling Prefer not to answer Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
	ecribe the forms of participation made accessible to citizens in your municipality's strategy.
	nat mechanisms does your municipality's strategy have for creating open data? EXTBOX
a. b. c. d. e. f. g. h. i. j. k. l. m. o. p. q. r. s. t. u. v.	at sort of data is available? Choose all that apply. Zoning by-laws Land use data Business information Building permits Population statistics Employment information Budget information Government schedule Election information Public surveys Community services Public transportation information Community events Economic indicators Municipal license information Weather alerts Environmental information (use of green technology, water quality, waste information, etc.) Council expenses Maps Consultations Poll results Prefer not to answer Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX
34) Whimporta	no does your municipality identify as the primary target audience of open data? Please choose in order of once. Users of municipal servicesCitizens in generalDevelopersCorporationsBusinesses in the municipality

a. Website

35) Does your municipality make use of the following information technologies? Choose those that are applicable.

__Businesses seeking to move to the municipality

___Other – Please specify: TEXTBOX

- b. Facebook
- c. Twitter
- d. Prefer not to answer
- e. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 36) How does your municipality make use of information technology?
 - a. To update citizens about issues road closures, weather issues, cancellations, etc.
 - b. To promote the municipalities achievements
 - c. To engage citizens provide opportunities for feedback and input
 - d. Prefer not to answer
 - e. Other Please specify: TEXTBOX
- 37) Have there been any limitations to your municipality's open government strategy?
 - a. Yes, if so please describe some of the limitations you've experienced: TEXTBOX
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 38) If you are part of a larger municipal government structure, such as a regional government, does that structure have an open government strategy?
 - a. Yes, if so please describe the initiative and provide any information (ie. Website details, etc.): TEXTBOX
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to answer
- 39) Completion of this survey indicates your consent. Because the survey is anonymized, once you complete the survey, the information you provided cannot be removed from the evaluation. Only the researchers will see the surveys. We will keep your identity as confidential as possible. Thank you for your participation!

Questionnaire - Gouvernement ouvert

- 1) Quelle est votre fonction?
 - a. Maire
 - b. Membre du conseil municipal
 - c. Gestionnaire municipal
 - d. Cadre supérieur
 - e. Préfère ne pas répondre
 - f. Autre veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE
- 2) Quelle municipalité représentez-vous?

ZONE DE TEXTE

- 3) Votre municipalité suit-elle une stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale?
 - a. Oui
 - b. Non
 - c. Ne peut être déterminé
 - d. Préfère ne pas répondre

Si le participant a répondu non à la question 3, alors:

- 4) Si votre municipalité ne suit pas de stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale, veuillez en expliquer les raisons. ZONE DE TEXTE
- 5) Si votre municipalité ne suit pas de stratégie gouvernementale ouverte, quelles sont les priorités de votre gouvernement parmi les suivantes? Choisissez tout ce qui s'applique.

Accès à l'information
Responsabilité
Participation du public
Données ouvertes
Réutilisation de l'information et des données du gouvernement
Diriger la croissance économique / promouvoir l'innovation
Améliorer la gestion de l'information
Améliorer les services publics
Protéger les libertés civiles
Transparence
Livraison de service alternative
Efficacité gouvernementale
Empêcher la corruption
Promouvoir la responsabilité des entreprises
Préfère ne pas répondre
Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE
Dans la même liste, quel ordre d'importance ces priorités ont-elles pour votre gouvernement? (Veuillez utiliser le
mêmes priorités que vous avez choisies à la question précédente)
Accès à l'information
Responsabilité
Participation du public
Données ouvertes
Réutilisation de l'information et des données du gouvernement
Diriger la croissance économique / promouvoir l'innovation
Améliorer la gestion de l'information
Améliorer les services publics
Protéger les libertés civiles
Transparence
Livraison de service alternative
Efficacité gouvernementale
Empêcher la corruption
Promouvoir la responsabilité des entreprises
Préfère ne pas répondre
Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE
Y a-t-il eu une demande de la part des parties prenantes pour une stratégie gouvernementale ouverte?
Oui, de la part de qui? ZONE DE TEXTE
Non
Préfère ne pas répondre
Quels sont les éléments de responsabilité démocratique privilégiés par votre gouvernement? Choisissez tout ce que l'annul au l'annul
s'applique.
a. Participation du public
b. Accès à l'information
c. Transparence
d. Évaluation citoyenne e. Utilisation de la technologie
е. Опиванон де на теспиономе

De quelle manière votre municipalité cherche-t-elle à renforcer la participation du public? Choisissez tout ce qui

f. Préfère ne pas répondre

g. Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

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s'applique.

- h. Données ouvertes interactives
- i. Réunions de la mairie
- j. Utilisation des technologies de communication d'information
- k. Vote
- 1. Préfère ne pas répondre
- m. Autre Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Décrivez les formes de participation rendues accessibles aux citoyens dans la stratégie de votre municipalité.

ZONE DE TEXTE

De quels mécanismes votre municipalité dispose-t-elle pour créer des données ouvertes?

ZONE DE TEXTE

Quel type de données est disponible? Choisissez tout ce qui s'applique.

Règlements de zonage

Données d'utilisation des terres

Informations d'affaires

Permis de construire

Statistiques de la population

Informations relatives aux emplois

Informations budgétaires

Calendrier du gouvernement

Informations sur les élections

Sondages publics

Services communautaires

Informations sur le transport en commun

Événements communautaires

Indicateurs économiques

Informations sur les permis municipaux

Alertes météorologiques

Informations sur l'environnement (utilisation de la technologie verte, qualité de l'eau, informations sur les déchets, etc.)

Dépenses du conseil

Cartes

Consultations

Résultats de sondages

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Qui est identifié par votre municipalité comme le public cible principal en matière de données ouvertes? Choisissez par ordre d'importance.

____Utilisateurs de services municipaux
____Citoyens en général
____Développeurs
____Corporations

Entreprises souhaitant déménager au coeur de la municipalité

____Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Entreprises au sein de la municipalité

Votre municipalité a-t-elle recours aux technologies d'information suivantes? Choisissez celles qui s'appliquent.

Site Web

Facebook

Twitter

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Comment votre municipalité utilise-t-elle les technologies de l'information?

Mettre à jour les citoyens au sujet des problèmes - fermeture des routes, problèmes météorologiques, annulations, etc.

Promouvoir les réalisations des municipalités

Engager les citoyens - fournir des opportunités pour les commentaires et les contributions

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Quelles limites ont empêché votre gouvernement d'élaborer une stratégie gouvernementale ouverte? ZONE DE TEXTE

Si vous faites partie d'une plus grande structure gouvernementale municipale, comme un gouvernement régional, cette structure suit-elle une stratégie gouvernementale ouverte?

Oui, et si tel est le cas, veuillez décrire l'initiative et fournir des informations (c.-à-d. les détails du site Web,

etc.): ZONE DE TEXTE

Non

Préfère ne pas répondre

L'achèvement de ce sondage indique que vous y consentez. Étant donné que le sondage est anonyme, une fois que vous l'aurez complété, les informations que vous aurez fournies ne pourront être retirées de l'évaluation. Seuls les chercheurs prendront connaissance des sondages. Nous garderons votre identité aussi confidentielle que possible. Merci pour votre participation!

Si le participant a répondu oui à la question 3, alors:

Votre stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale se trouve-t-elle au sein de votre site Web municipal?

- a. Oui
- b. Non
- c. Préfère ne pas répondre

Quelles sont les priorités de la stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale de votre municipalité? Choisissez autant de priorités dans la liste ci-dessous, selon le cas.

Accès à l'information

Responsabilité

Participation du public

Données ouvertes

Réutilisation de l'information et des données du gouvernement

Diriger la croissance économique / promouvoir l'innovation

Améliorer la gestion de l'information

Améliorer les services publics

Protéger les libertés civiles

Transparence

Livraison de service alternative

Efficacité gouvernementale

Empêcher la corruption

Promouvoir la responsabilité des entreprises

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Dans la même liste, quel ordre d'importance ces priorités ont-elles dans votre stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementales
(Veuillez utiliser les mêmes priorités que vous avez choisies à la question précédente)
Accès à l'information
Responsabilité
Participation du public
Données ouvertes
Réutilisation de l'information et des données du gouvernement
Diriger la croissance économique / promouvoir l'innovation
Améliorer la gestion de l'information Améliorer les services publics
Protéger les libertés civiles
Transparence Livraison de service alternative
Efficacité gouvernementale Empêcher la corruption
Empecher la corruption Promouvoir la responsabilité des entreprises
Préfère ne pas répondre
Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE
Comment la stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale de votre municipalité a-t-elle été développée? ZONE DE TEXTE
Y avait-il des consultations avec le public? Oui Non Préfère ne pas répondre
Quelles parties prenantes ont participé à l'élaboration de la stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale de votre municipalité?
ZONE DE TEXTE
Combien de temps cela a-t-il pris? ZONE DE TEXTE
Pourquoi la stratégie a-t-elle été développée? Y avait-il: Une demande des membres du public / groupes de circonscription Était-ce motivé par les membres du conseil et / ou le bureau du maire S'agissait-il d'une promesse de campagne électorale Était-ce en réponse à des demandes et / ou des initiatives d'ordres supérieurs de gouvernement, c'est-à-dire le gouvernement provincial / fédéral Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE
Si la stratégie était en réponse aux demandes et / ou aux initiatives des ordres supérieurs de gouvernement, votre municipalité a-t-elle eu le choix de suivre une stratégie gouvernementale ouverte ou est-ce que cela a été demande par votre municipalité? n. Oui o. Non
p. Préfère ne pas répondre

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Quelles politiques spécifiques la stratégie de votre municipalité a-t-elle pour accéder à l'information?

ZONE DE TEXTE

Les politiques d'accès à l'information diffèrent-elles des politiques en matière de liberté d'information?

Oui, et si cela est le cas, de quelle façon? ZONE DE TEXTE

Non

Préfère ne pas répondre

Quels sont les éléments de responsabilité démocratique au sein de la stratégie de votre municipalité? Choisissez tout ce qui s'applique.

Participation du public

Accès à l'information

Transparence

Évaluation citoyenne

Utilisation de la technologie

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

De quelle manière votre municipalité cherche-t-elle à renforcer la participation du public? Choisissez tout ce qui s'applique.

Données ouvertes interactives

Réunions de la mairie

Utilisation des technologies de communication d'information

Vote

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Décrivez les formes de participation rendues accessibles aux citoyens dans la stratégie de votre municipalité.

ZONE DE TEXTE

Quels sont les mécanismes de la stratégie de votre municipalité en matière de création de données ouvertes? ZONE DE TEXTE

Quel type de données est disponible? Choisissez tout ce qui s'applique.

Règlements de zonage

Données d'utilisation des terres

Informations d'affaires

Permis de construire

Statistiques de la population

Informations relatives aux emplois

Informations budgétaires

Calendrier du gouvernement

Informations sur les élections

Sondages publics

Services communautaires

Informations sur le transport en commun

Événements communautaires

Indicateurs économiques

Informations sur les permis municipaux

Alertes météorologiques

Informations sur l'environnement (utilisation de la technologie verte, qualité de l'eau, informations sur les déchets, etc.)

Dépenses du conseil

Cartes

Consultations
Résultats de sondages
Préfère ne pas répondre
Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Qui est identifié par votre municipalité comme le public cible principal en matière de données ouvertes? Choisissez par ordre d'importance.

_____Utilisateurs de services municipaux
_____Citoyens en général
_____Développeurs
_____Corporations
_____Entreprises au sein de la municipalité
_____Entreprises souhaitant déménager au coeur de la municipalité
_____Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Votre municipalité a-t-elle recours aux technologies d'information suivantes? Choisissez celles qui s'appliquent.
Site Web
Facebook
Twitter
Préfère ne pas répondre

Comment votre municipalité utilise-t-elle les technologies de l'information?

Mettre à jour les citoyens au sujet des problèmes - fermeture des routes, problèmes météorologiques, annulations, etc.

Promouvoir les réalisations des municipalités

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Engager les citoyens - fournir des opportunités pour les commentaires et les contributions

Préfère ne pas répondre

Autre - Veuillez préciser: ZONE DE TEXTE

Y a-t-il eu des limites à la stratégie d'ouverture gouvernementale de votre municipalité?

Oui, si tel est le cas, veuillez décrire les limites que vous avez vécues: ZONE DE TEXTE

Non

Préfère ne pas répondre

Si vous faites partie d'une plus grande structure gouvernementale municipale, comme un gouvernement régional, cette structure suit-elle une stratégie gouvernementale ouverte?

Oui, et si tel est le cas, veuillez décrire l'initiative et fournir des informations (c.-à-d. les détails du site Web, etc.): ZONE DE TEXTE

Non

Préfère ne pas répondre

Appendix B

City List

British Columbia Alberta

Vancouver Calgary
Surrey Edmonton
Burnaby Red Deer

Abbotsford Strathcona County

CoquitlamLethbridgeKelownaWood BuffaloKamloopsSt. AlbertNanaimoMedicine HatVictoriaGrande Prairie

Airdrie

Saskatchewan Manitoba

Saskatoon Winnipeg
Regina Brandon
Prince Albert Steinbach
Moose Jaw Thompson
Swift Current Portage la Prairie

Yorkton Winkler
North Battleford Selkirk
Estevan Morden
Warman Dauphin
Weyburn The Pas

Ontario Quebec

Montreal Toronto Ottawa Quebec City Laval Mississauga Brampton Gatineau Hamilton Longueuil London Sherbrooke Markham Saguenay Vaughan Levis

Kitchener Trois Rivieres
Windsor Terrebonne