



Announcement

Coming soon: The Canadian Communities Policy Observatory

Western's Network for Economic and Social Trends (NEST) is pleased to announce the Canadian Communities Policy Observatory, a new web-based platform that will make it easier for policy makers, non-profit organizations, academics, journalists, and businesses to access data on Canadian urban centres, neighbourhoods, and regions.

While governments and other organizations produce a wealth of information about Canadian communities, accessing and using it is difficult for non-specialists. The Canadian Communities Policy Observatory will break down this barrier. Created using open-source technologies, the Observatory can be used without special training yet enables sophisticated data analyses and visualizations.

"The new Observatory will empower local governments, community organizations, and other interested parties by unlocking the potential of data," said NEST Director Victoria Esses, who co-leads the project.

"With the capacity to make sense of information, communities can better understand where they've come from and where they are today so that they can make important decisions about their futures."

The Observatory has many potential uses. Governments will be able to identify and visualize clusters of disadvantaged communities in order to better target their services. Economic development officials could use it to benchmark performance against peer jurisdictions. School boards could use it to understand how the demographics of school catchment areas are changing. And it can help Canada's community foundations prepare their annual Vital Signs reports.

The Observatory will also be a useful tool for academic researchers and students, who will no longer have to spend time and resources formatting and cleaning data before using it.

Funded by Western's Faculty of Social Science, the Observatory will launch in September with a comprehensive set of Census data cross-linked across the 1991–2016 period. Additional data will be incorporated over the coming year.

For more information, visit <https://observatory.uwo.ca> or email observatory@uwo.ca