The Canadian Internet Society Policy Forum: Solutions for Canadian Digital Policy and Legislation

November 25, 2024 - Rideau Club, Ottawa

01 Welcome and Opening

Franca Palazzo, Executive Director, The Canadian Internet Society: The aim is to create a roadmap for Canada's digital policy that is both forward looking and responsive to the needs of Canadians. This isn't just a one off conversation. It's part of a sustained effort to ensure Canada can keep pace with rapid technological change while addressing the gaps and challenges that have held us back.

Back in June, we started With the Canadian Internet Society's first digital policy forum, where we brought together a diverse group of expert voices from across Canada to unpack the current state of digital policy, or lack thereof, in Canada. The insights from that forum were clear. We have a lot of work to do, and that's why we're here.

To build on these conversations, refine our ideas, and start moving towards solutions. I'm going to give you a quick snapshot of what we found in our first forum. We came up with five areas that we think need looking at. Governance, our digital policy is fragmented, and that's putting it lightly. We need a whole of government approach, or even a dedicated ministry, to provide structure, transparency, and accountability that this space requires. Second, stakeholder engagement. Policy can't be made in a vacuum. We need to bring in voices from civil society, technical experts, and communities that are often overlooked. A multi stakeholder approach is key to making policies that work for everyone.

Third, policy coherence. We've got to stop treating digital policy as something separate from everything else. It's not. Digital touches infrastructure, the economy, social equity,

everything. We need to think holistically and integrate digital policy into broader national priorities. Foresight and adaptability.

Technology moves fast, and if we don't start planning for what's coming, AI, data governance, etc., we'll always be playing catch up. Proactive and investment in re sorry, proactive planning and investment in research will be critical. And lastly, international cooperation. Canada has an opportunity, and frankly a responsibility, to lead on the global stage.

Issues like digital sovereignty and data protection don't end at our borders. We need to be part of shaping international frameworks. So these are the themes that emerged from our first forum, and I think you'll hear echoes of them throughout today. Our incredible panelists and speakers will explore these issues from multiple perspectives, drawing on their expertise to help us better understand the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The insights they share today will play a critical role in shaping the recommendations that will inform our final report. A report that we hope will serve as a valuable resource for the next government as it charts Canada's digital future. So, thank you again for being here, and we'll get started. Our first session, Laying the Groundwork, Defining Canada's Digital Policy.

This session is going to define the current state of Canada's digital policy, highlighting gaps and opportunities for improvement. And in order to do that, I'm going to call up Tim Denton, Chair of the Canadian Internet Society, and Philip Palmer, Vice President of the Canadian Internet Society.