

Canada's AI—Our Voices, Our Future

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#OurVoicesOurFuture #NosVoixNotreAvenir

#AllHandsOnDeck not #SomeHandsOnDeck



Uniting the voices of civil society to ensure our national AI strategy is built on inclusion, trust, and shared values.

Open Letter to the Government of Canada

Subject: Ensuring an Inclusive, Principles-Based National AI Strategy for Canada

To:

The Honourable Evan Solomon, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation
The Honourable Mandy Gull-Masty, Minister of Indigenous Services
The Honourable Rebecca Alty, Minister of Crown–Indigenous Relations
The Honourable Rechie Valdez, Minister for Women and Gender Equality
The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Justice and Attorney General
The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety
The Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Finance and National Revenue
The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry
The Honourable Shafqat Ali, President of the Treasury Board
The Honourable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health
The Honourable Gregor Robertson, Minister of Housing and Infrastructure
The Honourable Julie Dabrusin, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture
The Honourable Joël Lightbound, Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement
The Honourable Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport and Government House Leader

Members of the Canada AI Strategy Task Force
And all relevant leaders and agencies,

Canada's Next Chapter in AI: An Opportunity for Real Leadership

As members and supporters of Canada's vibrant civil society, Indigenous, research, and innovation communities, we write to encourage the Government of Canada to seize this moment to strengthen inclusion, trust, and shared leadership in shaping our nation's next AI strategy.

We acknowledge and commend the government's decisive action in launching the new AI Strategy Task Force and initiating a national consultation. The commitment to move quickly reflects a clear sense of purpose and ambition. However, Canada's leadership in AI will be defined not only by speed, but by how meaningfully it brings the full diversity of voices into the process.

Why This Matters Now

Canada's AI moment is here. As stewards of a society built on principles of equity, truth and reconciliation, democracy, and the rule of law, we have an opportunity to set a standard for the world—not just for innovation, but for trust, accountability, and real public benefit.

Yet, we see a growing disconnect. Too many critical voices—especially representatives from Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized communities, persons with disabilities, newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and other equity-seeking and marginalized groups, as well as civil society, grassroots organizations, and the social impact sector—are not at the table.

This is not only a question of fairness, but of effectiveness and legitimacy. Decades of evidence show that when policy is made without those most impacted, we risk reproducing systemic inequities, scaling harm, and deepening the erosion of public trust in our institutions.

Why Inclusion Isn't Optional—And What's at Stake If We Ignore It

The current approach—a short consultation window, with an industry-dominated task force—echoes twentieth-century regulatory models that are no longer fit for purpose in a world where AI is rapidly reshaping healthcare, education, labor, democracy, culture and everyday life. AI is dynamic and global, affecting every Canadian in ways that go beyond what legacy frameworks can manage.

If we fail to course correct, we risk:

- Scaling bias and exclusion, rather than benefit and wellbeing;
- Widening the public trust gap at a time when Canadian AI adoption and confidence are already among the lowest in the OECD;
- Losing the full potential of Indigenous knowledge, civil society expertise, and lived experience to shape a truly Canadian approach.

- Misallocating public funds and entrenching vendor lock-in, crowding out open standards, Canadian SMEs, and community capacity.
- Weak data sovereignty and governance, risking breaches of OCAP/CARE principles and cross-border misuse of community data.

A constructive path forward

We're not asking for delay—we're asking for better design. Here's a pragmatic, time-bounded plan government can adopt now:

1. **Expand representation and formalize co-governance**

Seat a Civil Society & Communities Council as a standing companion to the Task Force—comprising civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and rightsholders, equity-seeking groups, labour, disability advocates, youth, and regional/rural voices.

Charge this Council with joint sign-off on participation metrics, trust & safety benchmarks, and a public engagement plan before Task Force recommendations are finalized.

2. **Run ongoing, meaningful, accessible engagement—not one-and-done**

Extend beyond written submissions: host regional town halls, community roundtables, and digital dialogues with translation and accessible formats. Publish open summaries of what was heard, what changed, and why, and establish ongoing participatory governance hubs to enable continuous, evidence-informed engagement between government, civil society, and communities through modern democratic deliberation and consultation methodologies.

3. **Adopt a Public Benefit & Equity Test for all recommendations**

For each proposed action (infrastructure, adoption, commercialization, security), require a plain-language impact brief that addresses: effects on marginalized communities; labour and skills; environmental footprint; data and model governance; and accountability pathways.

4. **Institutionalize two-way accountability**

Publish a rolling public log: who was engaged, what evidence was used, unresolved disagreements, and reasoning for trade-offs. Commit to a 12-month review with the Civil Society & Communities Council to refine the strategy based on lived outcomes, not just intentions.

What we're asking the Government to do—formally

- **Broaden and deepen representation now.** Expand the Task Force input model to include structured, ongoing participation from civil society, Indigenous Peoples, equity-seeking groups, youth, and labour.

- **Anchor the strategy in enduring values**—privacy, freedom, equity, reconciliation, human rights, public benefit—and align with OECD/UNESCO/Council of Europe frameworks.
- **Strengthen public consultation and transparency**—extend and diversify engagement methods; publish decision rationales; ensure feedback loops.
- **Prioritize trust, safety, and social impact** as central outcomes with clear metrics, not afterthoughts.
- **Commit to co-governance** through a standing Civil Society & Communities Council with budget and joint accountability.

We stand ready to support and collaborate to realize this vision.



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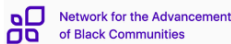
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