



Digital Access Day 2026

Access, Autonomy, and the Open Internet

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Doors open at 8:30 AM

(Networking reception to follow)

Impact Hub Ottawa, 123 Slater Street - 7th Floor

SPEAKER AGENDA

Time	Activity	Speakers
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration, Coffee, & Networking Attendees will arrive for coffee and a light breakfast, with time to connect informally with policymakers, community leaders, researchers, and industry experts working at the intersection of access, infrastructure, and Canadian digital sovereignty.	
9:00 AM - 9:10 AM	Welcome & Land Acknowledgement The day will open with welcoming remarks that frame this year's central theme: as Canada pursues greater autonomy over AI, data, and critical infrastructure, how do we ensure that affordability, inclusion, and an open internet remain foundational—not secondary?	Franca Palazzo Executive Director, The Canadian Internet Society
9:15 AM - 9:25 AM	Opening Remarks	Karim Bardeesy Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry
9:25 AM - 9:40 AM	Opening Keynote — Digital Sovereignty, Access, & Inclusion This opening keynote will set the stage for the day's discussions. As governments increasingly focus on	Mark Schaan Associate Deputy Minister, Innovation, Science and Economic

	<p>digital sovereignty, data control, and domestic capacity, communities across Canada continue to face persistent challenges of affordability, connectivity gaps, and uneven digital opportunity.</p> <p>The keynote will explore what digital sovereignty should mean in practice: not closing borders, but building resilience, capacity, and agency—while ensuring access and inclusion are designed into sovereignty strategies from the start.</p> <p>Key questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do sovereignty debates risk overlooking affordability and equity unless deliberately grounded in access? • What does resilience look like for small businesses, rural regions, and equity-seeking communities? • How can Canada strengthen autonomy without undermining the open, global internet people rely on every day? 	<p>Development Canada (ISED)</p>
<p>9:40 AM - 9:50 AM</p>	<p>Introductory Remarks to Panel 1</p>	<p>Dr. Wendy Cukier Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute; Academic Research Lead, Future Skills Centre</p>

<p>9:50 AM - 10:50 AM</p>	<p>Panel 1 — AI Adoption, Skills & Access: Making AI Work For People, Not Just Platforms</p> <p>This panel looks at AI adoption through an access and sovereignty lens. As AI tools move rapidly into workplaces, public services, and small businesses, Canada faces a central challenge: how do we ensure AI strengthens opportunity and autonomy, rather than deepening inequality or dependence on a handful of foreign platforms?</p> <p>Panelists will discuss what a truly human-centred AI transition could look like—grounded in Canadian labour market realities, responsible deployment, and inclusive skills development.</p> <p>The discussion will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the real barriers to AI adoption for SMEs and workers in Canada, beyond the hype? • How do we inspire the use of AI tools to help seize the opportunities Canada is facing? • How do we build skills and training systems that match our labour market—not Silicon Valley’s? • How can we avoid “Opaque box” tools that weaken Canadian autonomy, accountability, and trust? • What is one concrete idea each panelist would put forward to make AI work for access and inclusion, not just efficiency? 	<p>Vidya ShankarNarayan Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, People, Culture, and Digital Solutions, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</p> <p>Dr. Wendy Cukier Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute; Academic Research Lead, Future Skills Centre</p> <p>Shannon Lundquist Vice Chair and Senior Client Partner, Deloitte</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Karen Savoie President & Founder, Savoie Faire Consulting</p>
<p>10:50 AM - 11:05 AM</p>	<p>BREAK</p>	

<p>11:05 AM - 11:25 AM</p>	<p>DAD Talk: Community Story — Haudenosaunee Digital Sovereignty</p> <p>This talk will offer a grounded perspective on digital sovereignty from a Haudenosaunee lens, rooted in the Two Row Wampum treaty relationship. It will explore how Indigenous understandings of sovereignty intersect with, and at times diverge from, prevailing Canadian approaches to digital policy, infrastructure, and governance.</p> <p>The speaker will examine how digital access is defined in practice—who it serves, where it is available, and under what conditions—and how these realities shape autonomy and participation.</p> <p>The discussion will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What “digital access” means in practice: access to what, where, and for whom • The tensions and contradictions between Canadian digital sovereignty and Indigenous digital sovereignty • How the internet can create spaces for Indigenous digital autonomy and self-determination • Opportunities to reconcile these perspectives through more inclusive and intentional approaches to digital policy and infrastructure 	<p>Jeff Doctor Impact Strategist, Animikii</p>
<p>11:25 AM - 12:25 PM</p>	<p>Panel 2 — Cybersecurity, Critical Infrastructure & Sovereign Cloud: Building Resilience in Essential Systems</p> <p>Canada’s public systems, critical infrastructure, and essential digital networks rely heavily on a small number of global cloud and security providers. This panel will explore how Canada can protect sensitive public sector and operational data, reduce</p>	<p>Emily Laidlaw Canada Research Chair, Cybersecurity Law & Associate Professor, University of Calgary</p>

	<p>concentration risk, and defend against cyber threats while still supporting an open, interoperable internet. Panelists will examine what “sovereign cloud” should mean in practice, and how Canadian providers and institutions can work together to strengthen resilience across essential systems.</p> <p>Discussion will focus on questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the biggest cyber and concentration risks today across public systems and critical infrastructure, and where have we made progress and or found opportunities to improve? • What should sovereign cloud mean in practice for government and other essential services? • How can Canadian providers reduce risk without undermining interoperability or openness? 	<p>Charles Noir VP, Community Investment, Policy & Advocacy, CIRA</p> <p>Sami Khoury Government of Canada Senior Official, Cyber Security</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Brent Arnold Chair, The Canadian Internet Society; Partner, INQ Law</p>
<p>12:25 PM - 1:25 PM</p>	<p>LUNCH & NETWORKING</p>	
<p>1:25 PM - 2:25 PM</p>	<p>Panel 3 — Oceans, AI, & Data Sovereignty</p> <p>This panel will explore a concrete use case: AI-driven analytics in maritime and port operations. As oceans and coastal infrastructure become increasingly strategic—economically, environmentally, and geopolitically—data control and infrastructure choices matter.</p> <p>The discussion will examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How AI and better use of vessel, port, and environmental data can improve safety, efficiency, and decarbonization • Why data location, governance, and cloud choices are sovereignty questions, especially in defence and security contexts 	<p>Christiana Cavazzoni Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Digital Officer, Fisheries and Oceans Canada</p> <p>Jad Taher CEO & Cofounder, Goflek</p> <p>Sarkis Abrahamian Director of Business Development, Government & Defense, Evertz</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons from Canadian maritime innovation that apply across sectors such as energy, transport, and logistics 	<p><i>Moderator:</i> Georgia Evans Consultant, Earncliffe Strategies</p>
<p>2:25 PM - 3:25 PM</p>	<p>Panel 4 — Access, Affordability, & Sovereign Infrastructure: Who Really Benefits?</p> <p>This session connects affordability and access to the infrastructure choices behind digital sovereignty. When governments and institutions invest in sovereign cloud or domestic networks, who actually benefits? Do these investments translate into more secure and affordable connectivity for Canadians—or simply shift who gets paid?</p> <p>Panelists will examine consumer interests, public policy goals, and the role of Canadian technology firms and community networks.</p> <p>Discussion will focus on questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we ensure sovereign tech investments translate into real affordability and access gains for people? What does a fair role for Canadian companies and organizations look like in public infrastructure projects that shape access and content? How do AI and privacy fit into this discussion? How should governments balance sovereignty, competition, consumer protection, and openness? What is one concrete policy change that panelists would prioritize to make sovereignty and access work together? 	<p>Shelley Robinson Executive Director, National Capital FreeNet</p> <p>Joel Templeman Executive Director, Internet Society - Manitoba Chapter; Project Manager, North End Connect</p> <p>Dr. Michael Geist Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, University of Ottawa</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Matthew Gamble AVP, Network and Security Services, Canadian Tire Corporation; Principal, Int13 Consulting Inc.</p>
<p>3:25 PM - 3:40 PM</p>	<p>BREAK</p>	

<p>3:40 PM - 4:40 PM</p>	<p>Closing Panel — What Comes Next? Digital Access and Sovereignty in a Changing Landscape</p> <p>This closing conversation will look ahead to the next phase of Canada’s digital future, focusing on the practical choices and emerging pressures that will shape digital access, sovereignty, and economic resilience over the next 12 to 24 months.</p> <p>As Canada continues to invest in AI, cloud infrastructure, and domestic digital capacity, key decisions around policy, procurement, and system design will have lasting impacts on affordability, access, and competitiveness. At the same time, external pressures—from energy constraints to global economic shifts—may significantly influence how and where these investments can succeed.</p> <p>This discussion will connect these broader developments back to Canadians, examining how infrastructure and policy choices translate into real access, opportunity, and resilience for individuals, communities, and institutions.</p> <p>Panelists will focus on what matters most in the near term, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most important decisions Canada will face in the next 12–24 months that will shape digital access and sovereignty? • Where are we at risk of overextending or misaligning investments, particularly in AI and infrastructure? • What external pressures—from economic shifts to energy constraints—could reshape Canada’s digital trajectory? • How do we ensure that investments in AI and infrastructure translate into meaningful access 	<p>Bill Abbott Director, Regulatory Law at TELUS</p> <p>Natalie Dunleavy Campbell Senior Director, NA Government and Regulatory Affairs at Internet Society</p> <p>Josh Tabish Senior Director for Canada, Chamber of Progress</p> <p><i>Moderator:</i> Lena Trudeau President, The Canadian Internet Society; Owner & CEO, Inclined Analytics</p>
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	<p>and opportunity for Canadians?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one concrete action or shift you would prioritize in the next year to strengthen Canada’s digital capacity and resilience? 	
<p>4:40 PM - 6:30 PM</p>	<p>Networking Reception</p> <p>A reception will conclude the day, providing space for informal discussion, partnership-building, media conversations, and continued engagement with Canadian sovereign technology firms, community networks, and civil society organizations.</p>	