

# Canadians for Digital Sovereignty Charter

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This charter outlines the core vision, values and principles that define Canadians for Digital Sovereignty (C4DS) as an organization and how it works. It is intended as a living document that will evolve as C4DS develops in response to evolving needs and opportunities. We welcome feedback.

## What is Digital Sovereignty?

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Digital sovereignty means effective democratic control of our digital ecosystem, free from external interference.

At all levels, digital sovereignty is about creating a society in which Canadians can build their digital lives free from external domination, surveillance, discrimination, manipulation, and exploitation. A digitally sovereign country is one in which we can actively choose our digital present and futures, according to our own diverse needs, interests, and aspirations.

While digital sovereignty aims for self-reliance, in this deeply networked, interdependent world, total autonomy is neither feasible nor desirable. Developing voluntary and mutually rewarding alliances with other entities that respect human rights and democratic values can strengthen sovereignty rather than detract from it.

**Digital sovereignty** is fundamental to all dimensions of sovereignty, but is currently weak across critical dimensions that have implications for Canadian sovereignty:

- **Democratic (Political and Electoral):** Democratic participation and elections increasingly take place online, largely on platforms owned and governed by foreign technology companies. These firms' opaque algorithms and commercial incentives determine which voices are amplified, which ideas circulate, and what voters see—shaping political debate, media visibility, and electoral outcomes. At the same time, foreign actors exploit these platforms to target and manipulate voters. Without digital sovereignty, Canada cannot fully safeguard its democratic processes or the legitimacy of its elections from external interference or the profit-driven priorities of foreign tech giants;
- **Economic:** Businesses and organizations increasingly must pass through a handful of foreign tech giants to reach Canadian customers and markets. These intermediaries extract a growing share of wealth from our country from arbitrage, information asymmetry, and market dominance rather than generating consumer value;
- **Infrastructural:** In an increasingly unstable world, the digital ecosystem needed now to run a functional society overly depends on the hardware and software

controlled by the US tech enterprises, led by a handful of giants in alliance with a hostile Administration; and

- **Cultural:** Foreign tech giants have become unavoidable intermediaries for local cultural exchange, amplifying foreign media while extracting massive profits at the expense of local cultures, news and information, bilingualism, and Indigenous cultural revitalization, undermining Canadians' free expression and ability to foster identities, values, languages, and cultures distinct from the United States.

## Purpose and Vision of Canadians for Digital Sovereignty

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Canadians for Digital Sovereignty's (C4DS) **purpose** as a networked coalition-in-formation is to defend and advance our digital sovereignty for the benefit of all people in Canada. We are united by a shared dual purpose at an unprecedented moment in our country's history, one in which our traditional relationship with the US poses new threats to our future as a self-governing nation:

- **To lessen Canada's dependence on US technology giants** to carry out core functions of our digital ecosystem; and
- **To encourage and hold accountable the federal and provincial governments** to enact and enforce a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework of digital sovereignty, and invest in building local alternatives

We cannot be strong and free if our digital ecosystem, both public and private, is primarily governed by the laws and practices of foreign powers and corporate monopolies. **Our vision** is to work toward a future in which we determine our own digital destiny, one in which technology serves people, reflects Canada's values, and contributes to rather than erodes our meaningful self-governance.

## Values of Canadians for Digital Sovereignty

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C4DS is guided by the following values:

- **A strong, democratic, and independent Canada with robust public-interest governance:** We fight for a future in which voters and our elected representatives govern our digital future in the public interest, according to our values and preferences. We reject the current drift towards technofeudalism and monopolistic control by unaccountable foreign corporations frequently aligned with anti-democratic governments
- **Freedom of expression and privacy as fundamental human rights:** We believe all Canadian Internet regulation must be Charter-compliant and advance an Internet where expression is free, personal data are protected, and platforms are accountable for their impact on Canadian rights

- **Digital self-reliance and resilience:** We advocate for building our home-grown capacity across digital services, infrastructure, policy, innovation, and enforcement to the extent feasible
- **Technology that works for people:** We believe in a new path for tech and innovation that serves people, in harmony with democracy, human rights, labour rights, and self-determination for all. Openness, interconnectivity, and expanding personal choices are core to the original vision for the web, and to the place we seek for ourselves in the world
- **Transparent, accountable and adaptable digital infrastructures and services:** We believe digital sovereignty cannot be achieved without the ability to understand and control foundational digital infrastructures and services. They must be open to inspection to determine whether they conform to democratically determined norms and be adaptable to meet such norms when required. We advocate for free and open-source software ([FOSS](#)) as a powerful means for achieving this goal
- **Equity and inclusion:** We believe that that all citizens in both official languages, across regions, and including Indigenous peoples, must be consulted on and benefit from digital sovereignty
- **Pragmatism in service of progress:** We will not let 'perfect be the enemy of good' when advancing reforms within Canada's domestic and geopolitical contexts
- **International alliances and solidarity:** We believe, in our deeply networked and interdependent world, digital autarky is infeasible and counterproductive. Where self-reliance is inadequate, we should advance our digital sovereignty through mutually beneficial international alliances with others that share our commitments to democracy and human rights. We believe Canada should contribute to building a robust international digital rights regime and develop digital regulations through multilateral cooperation with like-minded democratic nations
- **We all have a role to play:** We believe Canada must realize digital sovereignty across multiple levels and constituencies. Each entity in the following non-exhaustive list is entitled to pursue their legitimate mandates by digital means within a framework that contributes to the public interest and national sovereignty overall:
  - **Canada's government** can regulate our digital society and markets as a free and independent country, with Canadian law effectively governing all layers of our digital infrastructure and services stack
  - **Indigenous Peoples** can directly govern the aspects of Canada's digital ecosystem that pertain exclusively to them, as well as exercise their rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)) and recognized by the [federal](#) and provincial governments
  - **Provinces** can enact local rules and strategies for digital development in areas of their jurisdiction, including health, education, labour and employment, consumer protection

- **Municipalities**, who manage a large volume of citizen data, can make day-to-day decisions about data, platforms, and connectivity that shape how sovereignty works on the ground
- **Enterprises and organizations** of all kinds and scales can develop digital services and infrastructures in accordance with their self-defined objectives
- **Communities** can organize, foster, share, and participate in their cultures, languages, and knowledge online
- **Official Language Minorities** can live, work, create, and participate fully in digital society in the official language of their choice, with meaningful visibility and access guaranteed by design rather than left to market forces.
- **All Canadians** can freely exercise their rights and participate in digital society according to their own needs and interests as citizens, workers, users, and creators

### What Canadians for Digital Sovereignty oppose

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While C4DS is mainly oriented to promoting a positive vision of what digital sovereignty can mean for Canadians, we recognize that this also requires resisting multiple forces that actively diminish Canadian digital sovereignty. In particular, C4DS declares the following:

- **No to The Trump Administration’s technopolitical dominance agenda:** We reject Trump’s explicit goal of imposing “[unquestioned and unchallenged technological dominance](#)”, including extraterritorial jurisdiction. We strongly reject the view that any effort to regulate US Big Tech is a “[direct and blatant attack](#)” on the United States. We see this as directly linked to the US [National Security Strategy](#), and an attempt to reduce Canada to a dependent colonial status.
- **No to bad faith Big Tech lobbying:** We reject inappropriate foreign tech giants’ lobbying, inducements, and coercion to undermine our ability to govern our own digital futures through domestic legislation, policies, and programs
- **No to Big Tech externalities:** We reject foreign tech giants’ imposition of harmful externalities on our citizens, including addiction and harms to mental health, the loss of privacy, and for profit facilitation of rising levels of abuse, disinformation, and toxification of the Internet
- **No imposed innovation that disregards public interest:** We reject technological development that proceeds “whether we want it or not,” in which disproportionate benefits flow to a narrow group of elites while the social, economic, and democratic costs fall on workers, youth, creators, and vulnerable communities.

### Way of Working of the Interim Steering Committee

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C4DS is a networked coalition-in-formation built on respect, trust, and collaboration. The members of the Interim Steering Committee, constituted to reflect this wider coalition, agree to the following principles and practices:

- **Respect:** We listen with openness, value each other's diverse perspectives, and work to maintain a constructive tone in discussion and disagreement
- **Transparency and accountability:** Within the Steering Committee we share C4DS information, documents, and decisions openly. We will freely disclose of any possible conflict of interest (e.g., current or recent ministerial advisory role, financial relationship with Big Tech or other relevant C4DS companies)
- **Consensus where possible:** We seek agreement through dialogue, and where consensus cannot be reached, we listen to and document differing views respectfully
- **Unity through diversity:** Members may freely disagree on how best to enact C4DS's values and vision. Divergent approaches within our vision and values that are respectfully expressed strengthen us. Members who believe another member is advocating squarely against C4DS's core vision may request a review of that member's C4DS membership from the Steering Committee
- **Shared responsibility:** As a temporary measure, Interim Steering Committee members rotate roles such as chairing meetings, taking minutes, managing communications, and drafting documents
- **Integrity and confidentiality:** Information shared in confidence within the coalition is not to be disclosed externally without participant consent
- **Privacy:** Any personal information that C4DS handles will be treated with respect and in accordance with relevant laws, as specified in its Privacy Policy
- **Outreach:** As a networked coalition-in-formation members seek and welcome the interest of others who support C4DS and may want to contribute to its work in various capacities
- **Digital sovereignty:** C4DS strives to walk its digital sovereignty talk wherever feasible. This means as a first choice using secure, open source digital services and infrastructure (e.g., website, communication/collaboration tools, etc) or those whose ownership remain exclusively within Canadian jurisdiction. Where no satisfactory Canadian option is available, we will seek options that remain consistent with our espoused values. Only as a last resort will we use foreign-controlled digital tools, and we will take reasonable precautions to minimize the risks from doing so