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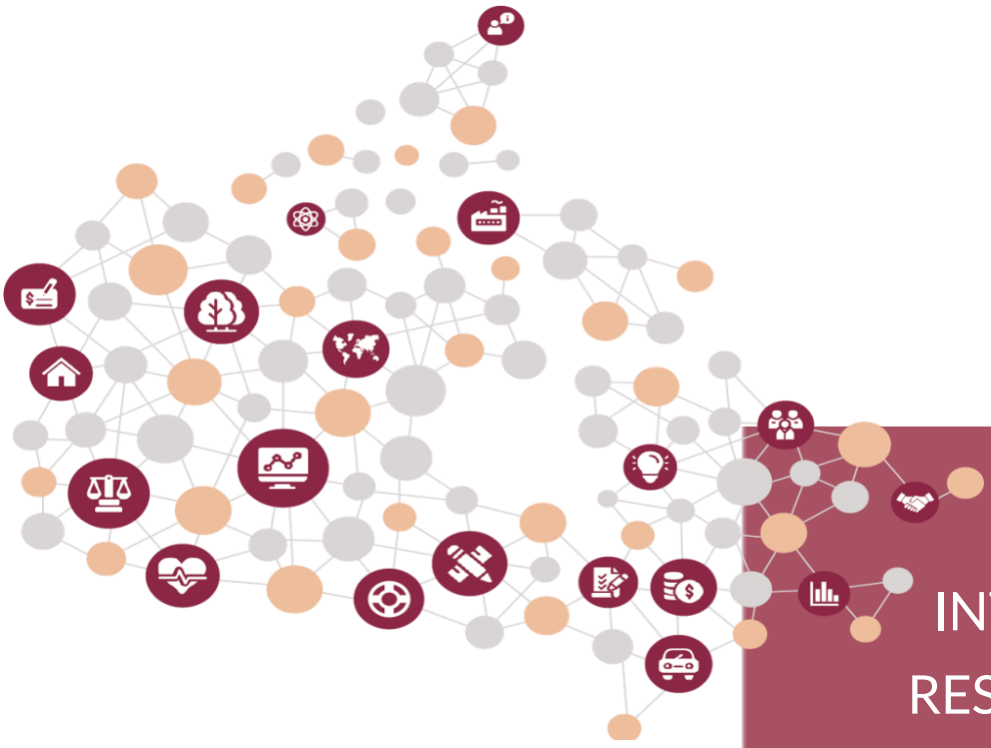

PUBLIC SECTOR DATA INTEROPERABILITY AND RESPONSIBLE ADOPTION OF AI IN CANADA: STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND CALL TO ACTION

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Public Sector Data Interoperability and Responsible Adoption of AI in Canada: Strategic Overview and Call to Action

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This report is action oriented. It focuses on public sector data interoperability in Canada, draws on several recent initiatives and publications, and builds on ongoing collaborative efforts by deputy ministers and chief information officers at the federal, provincial, and territorial (**FPT)** levels.

Noteworthy examples include the conclusion of an FPT collaboration agreement on cybersecurity and the recent commitment by ministers in support of the development of a shared public digital interoperable infrastructure, and secure foundations for AI.

This document stems in particular from a panel organized by CIRANO on 19 January 2026 on digital sovereignty, data interoperability, and AI governance in the public sector in Canada. The panel was designed as an FPT governance laboratory. Its objective was not so much to reach a superficial consensus as to promote operational clarity on current limitations, real obstacles, and what could become collaboratively possible in 2026. Panellists and participants were required to adhere to the “Chatham House Rule” to allow for frank and constructive exchanges.

The authors wish to draw attention to the pivotal leadership of two deputy ministers and chief information officers: Dominic Rochon (Federal Government) and Stéphane Le Bouyonnec (Quebec Government). Without their commitment and the active participation of Marc Sirois, Chief Statistician of Quebec, Éric Rancourt, Deputy Chief Statistician of Canada, and Luc Gagnon, Chief Technology Officer (Federal Government), this panel would not have been possible. The richness of the discussions owes much to them.

The strategic overview and call to action that follow are not intended to reflect institutional views or attribute statements to specific individuals. Rather, its purpose is to analyze the current situation, structure and develop conclusions, and proposals considered most crucial for the transformation of the Canadian public sector. The resulting document is an independent publication. The analysis, findings, and proposals contained therein are the sole responsibility of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views, policies, or orientations of CIRANO, its partners, the organizations represented, or the participants in the discussions, and cannot be attributed to them.

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Executive summary

The public sector in Canada faces a threefold strategic imperative: to sustainably increase its productivity and efficiency in serving citizens and the common good; to strengthen its digital sovereignty and autonomous decision-making capacity; and to integrate artificial intelligence in a responsible, secure and high-impact manner. These three objectives converge on a common lever that is still under-exploited: the interoperability of public sector data at the federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) levels.

The CIRANO panel of 19 January 2026 on digital sovereignty, data interoperability, and AI governance in Canada's public sector highlights a central paradox. On the one hand, there is already a real dynamic of FPT collaboration at the level of deputy ministers, chief information officers (CIOs) and heads of statistical organizations. However, this dynamic remains fragmented, politically invisible, with no guarantee of sustainability, and insufficiently structured to produce results commensurate with the stated and necessary ambitions, particularly in the context of the publication of a new national AI strategy. FPT data interoperability can no longer be approached as a technical or administrative issue; it is a strategic infrastructure for economic sovereignty, on a par with energy, transport, and telecommunications infrastructure.

In response, this report issues a call to action to the Prime Minister of Canada and his colleagues in the Council of the Federation. This call is aimed at establishing a sustainable FPT governance framework for public sector data and the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence (AI). It also proposes institutionalizing public digital infrastructure as a federative public asset for the common good. Finally, it is based on a credible and operational implementation timeline for 2026.

In an international environment marked by fierce technological competition, fragmented standards and the politicization of digital value chains, Canada's ability to align its ambitions with its actual capabilities is becoming a key determinant of its resilience and strategic autonomy.

The report focuses on the interoperability of FPT public sector data, while recognizing the critical importance of cooperation with the private sector and the academic ecosystem, as well as with our international partners, who share the same values. The public sector can play a key role in the responsible, AI-driven digital transformation of Canadian society and the economy.

This unique leverage is based not only on its exclusive legislative and regulatory responsibilities, but also on its position in the economy, the broad scope of its services, and its enormous data resources on all aspects of Canadian reality in its rapidly changing national and global context. FPT data interoperability creates a systemic capacity that enables the Canadian public sector, in all its components, to plan, anticipate, coordinate and act coherently on a large scale. Data interoperability does more than facilitate information sharing between administrations.

Without interoperability, investments in defence, energy, infrastructure, industrial innovation, and trade diversification remain fragmented, redundant, partially ineffective, and difficult to measure.

Interoperability allows these investments to be aligned around compatible, comparable, and actionable real-time data, maximizing their reach and effectiveness.

The digital transformation of the public sector, data interoperability and the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence are no longer simply administrative adjustments. They are part of the country's strategic infrastructures, alongside energy, transport, and telecommunications networks, and now determine the overall performance of public action. They improve and measure the quality of services offered to citizens and businesses. They directly influence the public sector's ability to exercise its decision-making sovereignty. Finally, they affect the credibility of public institutions in an increasingly complex digital environment.

These issues go beyond traditional ministerial mandates. They call for high-level political arbitration. Only such arbitration can establish common priorities between jurisdictions. It is necessary to overcome institutional silos. It is essential to accept the compromises inherent in any systemic transformation.

As such, first ministers are in the best position to drive, coordinate and ensure a coherent and sustainable federal-provincial-territorial dynamic.

PART I—OVERVIEW OF THE PANEL'S FINDINGS AND THE AUTHORS' OBSERVATIONS

1. Context and turning point

AI is not simply a new technological cycle. It is an infrastructural transformation as significant as, as decisive for the economy as electrification, and as disruptive to society as the internet. However, unlike previous transformations, the AI era is developing at a time when digital market power is already highly concentrated.

Data is the raw material of AI. To develop the capabilities of AI models, particularly in the public sector, it must have access to both large and diverse data sets. If access to this essential data is restricted by a lack of interoperability, the productivity of this critical sector will inevitably be hampered.

The question facing policymakers around the world is therefore not simply how to regulate the risks associated with AI, but whether bottlenecks such as the lack of interoperability of public sector data will be allowed to determine who can innovate, compete and participate in the AI economy.

The year 2026 will be decisive for Canada in many ways. The convergence of three major dynamics—the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, the geopolitical reconfiguration of digital value chains, and persistent pressure on public sector productivity—places the digital transformation of the public sector at the heart of national strategic choices.

In this context, the Canadian Prime Minister's recent speech on strategic autonomy, economic sovereignty and collaboration among middle powers brings new political clarity to issues that have often been addressed in a sectoral or technocratic manner. This vision is based on a central principle: the resilience of a state is no longer measured by its intentions, but by its actual ability to act, resist and cooperate according to its own rules.

In Canada, the issue of capacity is increasingly playing out in the digital space of the public sector: its data, digital architectures and analytical capabilities are strategic assets comparable to energy, transport, or defence infrastructure. Yet these assets remain fragmented, compartmentalized and unevenly governed across levels of government. It is precisely this gap between stated political ambition and actual institutional capacity that is one of Canada's main strategic vulnerabilities today.

2. Definition and challenges of FPT data interoperability

Public sector data interoperability is no longer just a technical issue of information sharing. It is now a key lever for governance, sovereignty and government performance.

In a federation such as Canada, FPT interoperability refers to the ability of the federal, provincial and territorial governments and their components to:

- exchange data in a secure and legally reliable manner.
- Align their semantic, technical and organizational standards.
- Collectively exploit this data to improve services, inform public decisions and support responsible innovation, particularly in the field of AI.

Without real interoperability:

- public sector AI projects remain fragmented, costly and difficult to generalize.
- Digital services remain inconsistent for citizens and businesses.
- The State loses its ability to function as a strategic platform serving the common good.

Conversely, well-governed interoperability becomes an invisible but crucial infrastructure capable of supporting the country's productivity, economic security and decision-making autonomy.

The question is no longer: *should data be shared*? But *who defines the rules, architectures and common analytical capabilities?*

3. Digital sovereignty and economic security: interoperability as a strategic capacity multiplier

In the current international context, data, standards and analytical capabilities have become levers of economic sovereignty and security, on a par with energy, defence and critical infrastructure.

The gap between ambition and capacity is now Canada's main vulnerability.
For a middle power such as Canada, reducing this vulnerability requires targeted investments in assets that generate leverage. FPT interoperability of public sector data is one such structural asset, yet it remains insufficiently recognized as such in public policy.

Reducing this gap requires investment in assets that generate leverage: public productivity, critical industrial capabilities, economic security, and credible trade diversification.
FPT interoperability of public sector data is a powerful cross-cutting tool for supporting these objectives by:

- strengthening strategic planning capacity.
- By improving the resilience of value chains.
- By supporting public sector AI aligned with the collective interest and digital sovereignty.

As such, interoperability is no longer a matter of administrative modernization. It is becoming a major project of national interest, comparable to the major infrastructure projects of the 20th century. This reduction in our vulnerabilities through FPT data interoperability can be illustrated as follows in strategic sectors such as:

National security and defence capabilities.
The credibility of a security posture depends on the ability to quickly aggregate and exploit operational, industrial and logistical data from multiple jurisdictions. Without interoperability, decision-making autonomy remains theoretical.

Energy and critical infrastructure.
Energy planning, network resilience and infrastructure protection require intergovernmental coordination based on compatible and shared data. The lack of interoperability prolongs systemic vulnerabilities despite significant investments.

Productivity and economic performance.
The fragmentation of fiscal, regulatory and statistical data directly limits the ability of governments to design effective policies and improve overall productivity.

Industrial capacity in critical sectors.
Identifying strategic dependencies, particularly in critical minerals, clean technologies and AI, requires an integrated understanding of value chains, which is impossible without FPT interoperability.

Trade diversification.
Diversification does not mean breaking ties with the United States, but rather the ability to manage the risks of excessive dependence. This ability relies on economic intelligence based on integrated data.

4. Key findings from the panel and authors' observations.

Several key findings emerged during the discussions:
First, a real FPT dynamic already exists among deputy ministers responsible for digital transformation and IP. This collaboration is progressing, producing concrete learning and demonstrating an ability to transcend traditional silos.

Second, this dynamic remains largely invisible politically and publicly, which limits its momentum and strategic legitimacy, especially in a context where AI is often portrayed in the media as a stand-alone issue, a miraculous panacea detached from the quality and scope of high value-added data sets.

Thirdly, several structural weaknesses persist:

- FPT governance is still largely ad hoc and dependent on the will of the moment.
- Organizational rivalries around AI within and between different jurisdictions
- uneven digital literacy among many decision-makers and legislators at all levels.

Finally, the panel highlighted a key tension: effective and responsible AI cannot precede the organization of data. Without reliable, shared, integrated, accessible and collectively governed data, the adoption of AI in the public sector risks becoming an additional factor in fragmentation and increased loss of public trust.

FPT governance: structural weaknesses and real levers for action

The main obstacle to FPT interoperability and responsible AI adoption is neither technological nor conceptual but rather relates to organizational cultures and current decision-making mechanisms.

Several structural weaknesses have been identified:

First, current FPT governance relies heavily on informal mechanisms, personal networks of trust and fragmented sectoral forums. While this flexibility has enabled occasional advances, it is now reaching its limits as the issue becomes systemic and strategic. The absence of a shared, sustainable, mandated and visible FPT governance model undermines continuity, dilutes responsibility and slows down the scaling up of successful initiatives.

Second, AI governance remains fragmented within jurisdictions. In several administrations, responsibilities are divided between innovation units, IT teams, data departments, legal entities and central agencies, without always having clear arbitration at the executive level. This internal fragmentation automatically reverberates and amplifies at the FPT level.

There is also an asymmetry of capabilities between jurisdictions. Some provinces have advanced digital ecosystems and mature data frameworks, while others struggle to mobilize the necessary human, financial and organizational resources. Without a mechanism for mutualizing efforts and providing structured support, interoperability risks accentuating these differences rather than reducing them.

The issue of digital literacy among public sector decision-makers and legislators is real. It is a significant obstacle to the digital transformation of the public sector in all jurisdictions. The skill gap in data management and analysis, as well as the adoption of AI, does not only affect the workforce. It also affects senior managers, decision-makers and legislators. If leaders do not understand the challenges, risks and potential of the accelerating infrastructure transformation, they cannot define the necessary vision, evolve the public sector at the speed required by this transformation, or control its costs.

However, real and powerful levers do exist:

The increasing collaboration between deputy ministers responsible for digital transformation and chief information officers is now one of the few federal-provincial-territorial spaces where a shared vision is beginning to emerge, precisely because it is based on an essential prerequisite: trust between different jurisdictions. This dynamic, while still fragile, represents valuable political and institutional capital.

5. Public Digital Infrastructure (PDI)—International Framework and Federative Interpretation

The fundamental objective of the Public Digital Infrastructure (PDI) is to provide essential and enabling capabilities for society and the economy, just like physical infrastructure (roads, electricity).

IPN is most often defined by just three components: digital identity, digital payments and data exchange systems. Currently, at least 64 countries have IPN-type digital identity systems, 97 countries have IPN-type digital payment systems, and 103 countries have IPN-type data exchange systems.

From an interoperable systems architecture perspective, this emerging concept is a key element in establishing an effective framework for FPT interoperability of public sector data and its responsible adoption of AI. In 2023, G20 members unanimously recognized IPN as:-a set of shared digital systems that must be secure and interoperable, built on open standards and specifications to provide equitable access to public and/or private services at the societal level.

Technologies, standards and analytical capabilities exist. What is most often lacking are explicit choices about interoperability priorities: at what level, according to what rules and in what order!

In a federation, the PDI cannot be designed as a centralized project, but as a shared digital infrastructure that supports FPT collaboration while fully respecting each other's responsibilities.

Canada already has significant capabilities in each of these components of the IPN. However, these capabilities remain fragmented across jurisdictions, unevenly mature and insufficiently aligned with a common strategic vision.

The identified risk is clear: without an explicit FPT data governance framework, Canada's IPN could develop in a disorderly manner, weakening digital sovereignty rather than strengthening it.

6. PDI and AI governance

AI governance cannot be addressed in isolation. It must be embedded in broader NPI governance and data interoperability.

Statistical agencies are established pillars of expertise, methodological rigour and public trust. Their role is set to evolve, not to be diluted, but to serve as a credible foundation for increased interoperability of FPT administrative and analytical data in strategic areas of government action.

In this context, AI becomes less of a stand-alone technology and more of an amplifier of existing institutional capabilities or weaknesses.

Canada has the talent, institutions and foundations necessary to successfully transform the public sector digitally and adopt AI responsibly, but it still lacks an explicitly assumed, politically driven and supported FPT architecture.

PART II—CALL TO ACTION AND 2026 TIMELINE

7. Why this call to action?

The digital transformation of the public sector, the responsible adoption of AI and digital sovereignty can no longer be treated as parallel projects. These issues converge towards a common lever: FPT interoperability of public sector data, conceived not as a technical project, but as a national strategic infrastructure in the institutional, economic and democratic sense.

The aim of the call to action is not to multiply initiatives, but to channel resources and capabilities and crystallize an already existing dynamic, which is still too invisible and insufficiently equipped, in order to transform it into a sustainable collective capacity by 2026.

8. Window of opportunity 2026: a rare alignment not to be missed

Several factors are converging in an unusual way:

- the upcoming launch of a national AI strategy.
- The creation of a Digital Transformation Office (DTO) within the federal government.
- Increased awareness of digital sovereignty and economic security issues.
- Promising FPT momentum at the deputy minister and chief information officer levels but awaiting a clear collective political signal.

This convergence creates a rare opportunity to align political vision, institutional architecture and operational capabilities.

The risk, however, is equally clear: without rapid structural decisions, this window could close, giving way to a proliferation of parallel initiatives, institutional fatigue and a loss of collective credibility.

2026 is a pivotal year, during which governance choices must be made collectively, clear FPT priorities must be established, and high-impact demonstration projects must be launched.

Failing that, Canada risks finding itself in a reactive position, forced to adapt its systems, standards and capabilities to architectures designed elsewhere, according to interests and values that are not necessarily its own.

9. Call to action to the Prime Minister of Canada and his colleagues in the Council of the Federation.

It is in this context that the call to action is explicitly addressed to the Prime Ministers of Canada and the Council of the Federation. This call is both functionally necessary and politically justified.

The rapid transformations of the digital economy, the rise of technological rivalries and the acceleration of the adoption of artificial intelligence are redefining the very conditions of state capacity. In this context, the digital transformation of the public sector, the responsible adoption of AI, and digital sovereignty can no longer be approached as mere administrative projects. They are now structural issues of national capacity, on par with energy, physical infrastructure, and economic security.

The central issue is not a lack of vision or shared values. Canada has a broad consensus on the importance of an inclusive digital economy, responsible AI and respect for fundamental rights. The main vulnerability lies instead in the persistent gap between ambition and capacity. As long as data architectures remain fragmented, exchange rules vary from one jurisdiction to another, and intergovernmental governance relies on ad hoc mechanisms, this gap will continue to limit the real impact of the strategies announced.

In a parliamentary democracy, prime ministers are primarily responsible for the public sector's ability to act beyond administrative silos and sectoral mandates. The issues raised by FPT data interoperability and AI governance go far beyond the remit of a single ministry or level of government.

They influence:

- Consistency of public action.
- Economic competitiveness.
- Broad national security.
- Canada's international standing as a reliable and sovereign partner.

The absence of explicit collective political leadership at the highest level is now a risk factor. Not because governments are inactive, but because they are moving forward without a clear common mandate to arbitrate, prioritize and invest collectively.

In a context where digital standards, data flows and AI capabilities are becoming instruments of power, failing to decide is tantamount to letting others decide for us. The time that elapses before concrete political action is taken rapidly increases the risks and will make compartmentalization and discrepancies in data and systems more difficult to reverse. FPT data interoperability must be recognized as a national strategic infrastructure, requiring political impetus comparable to that which presided over the construction of major energy or transport networks.

The appeal to Prime Ministers has three specific objectives:

- to officially recognize FPT data interoperability and the public digital infrastructure (PDI) as national strategic priorities.
- Mandate a sustainable and effective FPT mutualizing governance model.
- Ensure consistency between the national AI strategy and the actual capabilities of the public sector.

It is not a question of centralizing, but of structuring cooperation. It is not a question of slowing down innovation, but of anchoring it in sustainable and sovereign foundations.

This call is rather for the establishment of a modernized federative architecture based on cooperation, trust and respect for each party's constitutional responsibilities. This approach recognizes that many of the most decisive levers in terms of data, services and analytical capabilities lie with the provinces and territories, while emphasizing the catalytic role of the federal government in ensuring consistency, strategic alignment and international credibility across the board.

The year 2026 offers a rare window of opportunity to transform an already existing but still largely invisible collaborative dynamic into a structured, sustainable and politically accountable capacity at the highest level.

10. 2026 Decision-making sequence: from administration to the top

To make the call to action credible and visible, the panel recommends an explicit two-step decision-making sequence.

Step 1—Immediate FPT table of deputy ministers and CIOs

In early 2026, it is recommended that an FPT round table be held for deputy ministers responsible for digital transformation and CIOs.

This table would play a "sherpa" role in the G7 summits sense:

- clarification of priorities.
- Preparing trade-offs.
- Developing concrete options for political decision-making.

Step 2—Meeting of First Ministers within the framework of the Council of the Federation

This committee would prepare a **summit meeting of Prime Ministers**, ideally timed to coincide with the publication of the national AI strategy.

The objectives would be:

- to explicitly link the national AI strategy and the digital transformation of the public sector.
- To perpetuate FPT collaboration by concluding a framework agreement and creating the Council for Public Sector Data Interoperability and Responsible AI Adoption.
- To position FPT interoperability as a strategic national infrastructure.

Indicative timeline 2026

Announcement of the national AI strategy?

- **Q1 2026**: FPT table of deputy ministers/CIOs; strategic framing.
- **Q2–Q3 2026**: meeting of Prime Ministers; conclusion of an FPT framework agreement and official launch of the federation council on public sector data interoperability and responsible adoption of AI; priority PDI demonstration projects.

Axis 1—Conclude an enabling FPT framework agreement on data interoperability and public AI

The first key action is to conclude a federal, provincial and territorial framework agreement defining common principles, mutual commitments and clear governance mechanisms for public sector data interoperability~~,~~ responsible and secure adoption of artificial intelligence; and public digital infrastructure. This agreement would not aim for complete harmonization of systems or legislative frameworks, but rather the establishment of a common foundation of trust covering privacy protection, data security, interjurisdictional exchange procedures, algorithmic responsibility and risk management.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Burgundy report referenced in this document, the framework agreement would function as an enabling instrument, allowing jurisdictions to progress at different rates while remaining aligned with a common architecture.

Axis 2—Establish sustainable, results-oriented FPT governance

The panel clearly recognized the need to consolidate the current ad hoc mechanism.

Creation of a sustainable FPT Council on AI and data interoperability

It is proposed to transform the current annual FPT symposium on digital trust and cybersecurity into a perennial FPT Board, bringing together:

- deputy ministers responsible for digital transformation.
- Chief information officers (CIOs)
- heads of statistical agencies.

This Board would have a clear mandate to:

- guide FPT strategic planning.
- Prioritize high-impact use cases.
- Resolve interjurisdictional disputes.
- Oversee the implementation of the framework agreement.
- Guide and promote talent training programmes upstream (in educational institutions and in the workplace).
- Determine the feasibility of a virtual data and AI academy for the public sector and legislators at all levels.
- Ensure reliable and effective public oversight, thereby strengthening legitimacy and transparency.
- Integrate in its activities ongoing consultations with the private and academic sector data ecosystems, key stakeholders as well as Canada's broader ecosystem of international partnerships.

Role of the Federal Digital Transformation Office (DTO)

The announcement in the 2025 federal budget of the creation of a Digital Transformation Office (DTO) marks a major shift in federal digital governance. However, the lack of clarity regarding its institutional status and administrative affiliation raises a crucial strategic issue.

Two models are implicitly competing:

1. An independent office, similar to the Office of Major Projects of National Interest.
2. An office integrated into an existing federal department that already has related responsibilities in the areas of digital technology, data and AI.

The choice between these options is not neutral: it will determine the Government of Canada's ability to exercise consistent, cross-cutting and normative leadership in digital transformation.

The digital transformation of the public sector is, first and foremost, a matter of governance and standards, rather than technology. As such, the Treasury Board Secretariat is the most legitimate and effective institutional home for the Government of Canada's Office of Digital Transformation.

The Treasury Board Secretariat has unique institutional characteristics that make it the most coherent and credible anchor for the Office of Digital Transformation. As a central agency, it has a statutory mandate covering financial management, human resources, information assets and digital governance, as well as a recognized capacity to issue and enforce mandatory standards and guidelines across the federal government.

This position comes with normative and architectural responsibilities, particularly in terms of policies ~~on~~ services and digital technology, data governance, enterprise architecture and cybersecurity.

The role of the Chief Information Officer of Canada, housed within the Secretariat, is a key lever in ensuring policy consistency, implementation discipline and alignment of federal digital capabilities.

Furthermore, the Treasury Board Secretariat benefits from a government-wide position that gives it the institutional neutrality essential to arbitrate between departmental priorities and ensure that digital transformation is aligned with risk management, public performance and accountability requirements. This cross-cutting capacity is crucial to avoiding the fragmentation of initiatives and to embedding digital transformation into government governance on a sustainable basis.

Finally, this position makes the Treasury Board Secretariat a natural and credible interlocutor for the provinces and territories on issues of standards, interoperability and data governance. It thus provides a solid institutional foundation to support the conclusion and implementation of a future federal-provincial-territorial framework agreement on public sector data interoperability and the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence.

The Federal Digital Transformation Office (DTO) should be integrated into the Treasury Board Secretariat, under the responsibility of the Deputy Minister and Chief Information Officer of Canada. The DTO would function as a centre of strategic and regulatory expertise; a federal anchor for interoperability, PDI and public sector AI; provide analytical and operational support to the permanent FPT Board.
This architecture would clearly separate strategic leadership from operational execution, while strengthening the federal capacity for FPT coordination.

Axis 3—Prioritize a limited number of use cases with high citizen and economic impact

One of the panel's key messages is the need to **resist dispersion**.
Rather than aiming for widespread interoperability in the short term, FPT governments should agree on **a few key priorities**, including

- the mobility of data related to identity and essential services.
- Strategic economic and industrial data.
- Energy and infrastructure data.
- Statistical data necessary for public AI.

These use cases must meet three criteria:

- tangible value for citizens and businesses.
- Direct contribution to digital sovereignty and economic security.
- Potential for rapid demonstration (2026).

Axis 4—Deploying a federative public digital infrastructure (PDI)

The panel emphasized the relevance of the Public Digital Infrastructure (PDI) framework as a paradigm shift. In the Canadian context, the PDI must be designed as a shared digital infrastructure based on mutualized capabilities, common standards and shared governance.

Interoperability software layer:

Proven open-source solutions, such as X-Road or equivalent layers, combined with CANARIE's connectivity infrastructure, provide a credible basis for:

- secure data exchange.
- The gradual integration of jurisdictions.
- Support for sovereign AI capabilities.

However, technology cannot precede governance. Deployment must be accompanied by:

- a harmonized legal framework.
- Common semantic standards.
- Appropriate funding, considering asymmetries in capabilities.

Conclusion—From ambition to capability: a defining choice for the federation

Canada no longer has the luxury of a fragmented, invisible or delayed digital transformation. The issue is no longer whether FPT interoperability should be strengthened, but how quickly and to what degree of collective credibility.

The year 2026 offers a rare window of opportunity. The imminent announcement of a national AI strategy, the growing maturity of FPT work and the explicit recognition of digital sovereignty issues are creating the conditions for a shift. Seizing this window will require leadership, clarity and a clear political commitment.

This report proposes a realistic path to achieve this. It is now up to decision-makers to transform this path into a sustainable capability and make FPT interoperability of public sector data a cornerstone of Canada's digital era. This document focuses on the interoperability of FPT public sector data, while recognizing the critical importance of collaboration with the private sector and the academic ecosystem, as well as with our international partners who share the same values. The public sector can play a key role in the responsible, AI-driven digital transformation of Canadian society and the economy.

This unique leverage is based not only on its exclusive legislative and regulatory responsibilities, but also on its position in the economy, the broad scope of its services, and its enormous data resources on all aspects of Canadian reality in its rapidly changing national and global context.

This strategic synthesis highlights a clear convergence: the digital transformation of the public sector, the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence, and digital sovereignty now constitute a single national capacity project. FPT interoperability of public sector data is the operational foundation for this project. Without it, national strategies risk remaining declarative; with it, they become concrete instruments of productivity, economic security, and public trust.

Canada already has considerable assets: recognized statistical institutions, advanced technological capabilities, high-level public expertise, and a culture of intergovernmental cooperation that, while discreet, is making tangible progress. What is still lacking is not competence, but strategic alignment, political visibility, and sustainable governance capable of transforming scattered initiatives into collective infrastructure.

The stakes go far beyond administrative modernization. This is a defining choice for Canada's ability to bridge the gap between ambition and capacity, assert credible decision-making autonomy, and position the public sector as a driver of a digital economy and a modern society focused on the common good.

The proposed call to action is deliberately pragmatic. It is based on limited priorities, realistic governance mechanisms and a clear policy sequence.

The window of opportunity is narrow, but real. In 2026, Canada can choose to make FPT interoperability of public sector data, a strategic infrastructure assumed at the highest political level.

SOME SOURCES AND REFERENCES:

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- Fact Sheet 9: Comprehensive mapping of public sector data ecosystems: Supporting document pages 32onwards
- Fact Sheet 10: Draft agreement on FPT data interoperability — for discussion purposes only: Supporting document pages 34 onwards