

INFORMATION NOTE

Advice to Deputy Minister

DATE: September 22, 2022

ISSUE: January 2023 Digital Trust and Cybersecurity Symposium in Vancouver

BACKGROUND:

Québec hosted the first Ministers symposium on Digital Identity and Cybersecurity in June 2022. The drivers for the symposium were the increasing digital use by Canadians and increasing digital fraud and cybercrime that must be combated with new tools and solutions.

The symposium mapped out a diverse landscape of digital trust and cybersecurity progress across the provinces and territories. Despite the various approaches and status, there was agreement on several shared priorities:

- Leading **digital growth** for Canadians
- Protecting against **increasing cybersecurity threats**
- Finding and recruiting **skilled resources**
- **Managing costs**

The conversation also began to shift from digital identity—an electronic representation of a person's identity—to digital trust. This reframes the conversation to a broader context. It recognizes that only when digital identities are trusted will Canadians be empowered to work and play online securely and confidently and the goal of a thriving digital economy be achieved.

The Québec symposium endorsed three focus areas:

1. **Digital Trust:** a shared platform for all jurisdictions to develop interoperable services
2. **National Agreements** on information and expertise sharing
3. **Standardization** and harmonization of the technologies.

It was also agreed in Québec to author a joint statement that builds on and expands the February 2019 Whitehorse Declaration on Digital Identity. It is the shared intent this the new joint statement will incorporate the concept of digital trust and the growing risk of cyber crime, and will provide clear and concrete objectives for interoperability, the digital ecosystem and pan-Canadian solutions.

British Columbia will now host the second Symposium on Digital Trust and Cybersecurity symposium in Vancouver, in January 2023.

DISCUSSION:

All provinces and territories, supported by the Federal government, must empower Canadians with convenient, privacy-respectful, and trustworthy digital services and digital identities. Now more than ever, Canadians expect more access, with greater security, to high-value services in both the public and private sectors across Canada, and globally.

Investment in digital trust reduces fraud, increases people's online confidence, and streamlines and simplifies service delivery. It demonstrates BC's commitment to modernization efforts and a thriving digital economy, and benefits both the public and private sectors.

Research shows that most people expect the government to take the lead in protecting people's identities online. Governments are also uniquely positioned to issue those identities. Further, if government does not respond to this intersection of expectation and capability, the private sector will step in and citizens' security and safety will no longer be the primary motivator for finding solutions.

BC, Ontario and Québec are investing and collaborating on a new digital trust technology, known as verifiable credentials. These credentials empower people and give them more control of how they share their personal information. It's highly secure and tamper-resistant, and supports people communicating online privately and confidentially. It is an open and interoperable technology. BC is continuing to explore its potential as part of a gradual rollout. Notable, in September, the BC Digital Wallet was made available in the Apple App Store and Google Play to a limited set of lawyers as part on this continuing work.

Success in digital trust will rely upon the broad adoption of interoperable solutions (such as digital credentials) by other provinces and territories. As a result, we intend for other provinces and territories to be able to join our solutions at a greatly reduced effort. We are also increasing our collaborations with pan-Canadian colleagues on technologies, solutions, and communications.

NEXT STEPS:

The Vancouver symposium in January 2023 must build on the three focus areas from Québec, using a collaborative path forwards. It gives BC an opportunity to leverage our digital trust investments and demonstrate our thought leadership for the betterment of all Canadian digital economies.

We are therefore proposing that the Vancouver symposium has:

1. **Jurisdictional showcases** highlighting work in progress from BC, Québec, Nova Scotia and Alberta
2. **Panel on cybersecurity** to discuss incident response across Canada: the good, the bad, and where we can do better
3. **Panel on Indigenous names, identity and digital systems** to ensure any solutions provide Indigenous people with considerate, safe, and secure access to services
4. **Joint Statement** on elevating digital services to an expected and desired level of trust and integrity.

Attachments: None
Contact: [Name, Phone #]

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