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Canada's AI Sovereignty and Innovation Cluster (CAISIC) Inc. emerges, representing Canadian AI Technology CEOs

New Not-for-Profit brings together CEOs and innovators to strengthen Canada's AI ecosystem and support federal AI strategy as AI Minister strategy sprint completes and as the Federal Budget is approved

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CAISIC Introduction

After several months of informal meetings in 2025 with dozens of Canadian AI Tech CEOs and their designates, which included reviewing the strengths of the AI ecosystem around us, a critical knowledge and collaboration gap was identified and a new not-for-profit corporation was created.

The purpose of CAISIC is defined to:

Advance Canadian AI sovereignty and innovation by fostering collaboration amongst leading Canadian artificial intelligence technology leaders, innovators and AI adopters - including government and enterprise.

Why?

AI leads the transformation of the new digital global economy, and Canadian interests, Canadian business and IP, and Canadian talent must be first and foremost in our national strategies and entrepreneurial execution.

The economic security, national security, digital autonomy, and cultural values of Canada, Canadian enterprises and Canadians in general can be best served by sovereign AI technology, data, and governance solutions.

Some key motivations of the formation of CAISIC

- Understand and document the Canadian AI ecosystem and stack, and create an awareness of foreign dependencies in the AI Supply Chain, as well as their risks and their mitigations
- Formalize a group that could move quickly to advance AI Sovereignty and Innovation and not be held back by the understandable inertia of government and academia.
- Create momentum for 'Buy Canadian' and have AI ecosystem players clarify and transparently declare what is Canadian.
- Leverage Canadian AI entrepreneurial motivation to collaborate and activate attention to AI Sovereignty challenges, and ensure stakeholders are better informed in today's global transformation.

“CAISIC members are committed to practical and timely action, including transparently identifying what we have — and what we still need — in the Canadian AI ecosystem,” said Niraj Bhargava, Co-Founder and Chair of CAISIC, “Canadian Enterprises and Governments need to better understand how they can strengthen AI productivity today, leveraging Canadian providers. And where we have foreign dependencies, we will explore alternatives or mitigations where sovereignty risks are identified.”

Vice Chair Rafal Rohozinski continued, “CAISIC Working Groups are now active, including better defining the Canadian AI Stack and offering whitepapers and collaboration events. [Caisic.ca](https://caisic.ca) is a good place to start to join our membership or our network.”

An open letter from CAISIC was provided to the AI Task Force members in October

To the AI Task Force Members, CAISIC is ready to further organize, including with a strategic plan and execute on it quickly and effectively.

- 1. We need the Canadian AI Innovators to lead much of the critical work, as entrepreneurs are often the most practical at getting things done, understanding and overcoming our structural challenges, and building sustainable, measurable value and economics.*
- 2. We need to resist making ill-informed judgements about AI Sovereignty. We need to collectively define and measure it and use real data on what the strengths, risks and areas of priority should be for the critical requirement of AI sovereignty and innovation.*
- 3. We ask the Task Force and its recommendations to involve the unique perspectives of CAISIC and its members with our foundational knowledge and know-how, and watch for our further communications, whitepapers and feedback.*

Recent and ongoing roundtable inputs will inform our ongoing actions.

We are pleased to offer CAISIC and its membership as a vehicle for achieving successful execution and help achieve the recommendations that emerge from this Task Force.

CAISIC member perspectives on the new Federal Budget

“With more than 80 references to sovereignty and clear commitments to Build, Protect, and Empower Canada, the new Federal budget shows that Canada understands technological self-determination as essential to our national security, economic resilience, and innovation leadership.” said CAISIC Working Group Chair, Karen Olsson, “However, to truly build a sovereign ecosystem, the investments must be paired with programs that help Canadian SMEs deploy AI at scale and compete here at home.

CAISIC members are now developing a 2026 strategic plan that includes submitting a new Major Project for the Government of Canada, to drive Canada’s AI Sovereignty and be consistent with its budget and AI strategy.

CAISIC Steering Committee member examples

CAISIC Founding Members are Canadian AI Tech CEOs or their designates. Each Founding Member is part of a Working Group co-chaired by members of our Steering Committee. Examples of Steering Committee members include:

Brian Ritchie is CEO of the Indigenous AI company Kama.AI, and an active member of the Chapleau Cree First Nation. His company focuses on responsible, ethical, and accessible AI. He is motivated to support CAISIC, in part, to ensure that AI also benefits marginalized populations and does not perpetuate the growth of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

Craig McLellan is the Founder & CEO of ThinkOn, a Canadian-owned cloud services provider recognized for its leadership in secure data protection and sovereign cloud infrastructure. As a leading advocate for data sovereignty with over 25 years of experience in technology innovation and data security, Craig joined CAISIC to help shape a sovereign AI ecosystem that reflects Canadian values, protects Canadian data and strengthens our national competitiveness.

Karen Olsson is the Founder and CEO of Atomic47, a strategic consultancy and innovation lab helping organizations harness the potential of artificial intelligence to drive growth and transformation. With a background in technology leadership and community building, she focuses on creating human-centered systems that empower teams and accelerate innovation. Karen brings a passion for collaboration and ecosystem development, particularly within Canada's growing AI landscape.

Karla Congson is a Canadian business leader, recognized for her extensive expertise in innovation, marketing, and AI. As CEO and CTO of Agentiiv, she spearheads advancements in artificial intelligence for mid-market and enterprise organizations and is breaking ground in developing secure multi-agent workflows. With over 25 years of experience, Karla has held significant leadership roles as a corporate executive and repeat founder. She's received industry recognition through the following awards: Canada's Top 50 Women Over 50 by The CEO Magazine, Women of Influence Entrepreneur Award in the "Ones To Watch" category and Women in AI Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist. Her journey reflects a blend of strategic vision, entrepreneurial spirit, and a commitment to leveraging technology for impactful change.

Mardi Witzel is the CEO of PolyML, an early-stage Canadian company specializing in machine learning (AI/ML) for advanced manufacturing and financial services. As an advisor and writer on governance and innovation, Mardi joined CAISIC to raise the voice of the Canadian technology sector in shaping policy and adoption.

Niraj Bhargava, P.Eng is an accomplished technology leader with over 30 years of experience as a serial entrepreneur, multinational executive, ICD.D Board Member, and former business school Dean. He is the co-founder and CEO of NuEnergy.ai, a Canadian-based global leader in practical AI Governance, known for its patented Machine Trust Index and Platform that measures transparency and trust in AI systems. Niraj also serves as Chair of Canada's AI Sovereignty & Innovation Cluster—CAISIC—a new coalition of AI Tech CEOs. Niraj co-founded CAISIC in order to ensure Canadian values are embedded in local and global AI.

Rafal Rohozinski is the founder and principal of SecDev, which specializes in geopolitical, cyber and digital risk, and proprietary high-security AI solutions for governments, enterprises, and international organizations. He has three decades of international experience across 37 countries and holds academic credentials from the University of Cambridge, along with senior fellowships at The International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, and the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

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