

# REPORT OF THE CANADIAN INTERNET FORUM THE INTERNET AND CANADA'S FUTURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES - FEBRUARY 2011

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## Introduction

The inaugural process of the Canadian Internet Forum (CIF) took place between November 2010 and February 2011, culminating in a national event February 25 in Ottawa, Ontario — the site of one of Canada's main high technology clusters and the home to many leading Internet companies and start-ups. The forum was organized by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) with assistance from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Media Awareness Network (MNet).

More than 200 stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, the research community, academia, and government took part in the CIF. The forum was modeled on similar events that have taken place in recent years at the global level under the aegis of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF), as well as in other countries and regions. Information on these other events is available at <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/>.

The CIF provided a unique space for participants to explore the opportunities and challenges the Internet presents for Canada's future. Their discussions suggested that the fast evolving nature of the Internet requires all stakeholders not only to position themselves to leverage the opportunities it offers, but also to cooperate in the development of innovative, multi-stakeholder governance approaches to the challenges it raises.

Alternatives to this approach — such as subjecting the Internet to the kinds of governance structures that characterize the telecommunications and broadcasting industries — risks impeding the development of the Internet in Canada and sub-optimizing its benefits for economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability.

Success in this venture into new and uncharted territory will help position Canada as a leader in the development of the digital economy and the global information society.

The purposes of this paper are as follows:

- To report the results of the CIF to its participants and other Internet stakeholders, as a basis for advancing discussion of Internet policy and governance issues within Canada, as well as furthering the development of multi-stakeholder approaches to these issues.
- To provide a Canadian perspective on Internet policy and governance issues to the sixth UN Internet Governance Forum that will take place in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2011.