

*A DIACC workshop report prepared for members,
policymakers, and Canada's digital trust ecosystem*

F R E D E R I C T O N 2 0 2 6

Trust That Travels.

Advancing Digital Trust and Verifiable Credentials
in Atlantic Canada

Workshop Report Brief

A synthesis of the Atlantic Canada Digital Trust Executive Workshop, convened by DIACC

SERIES

DIACC Workshop Report

EVENT

Atlantic Canada Digital Trust Executive Workshop, held in conjunction with DIACC's Annual General Meeting

LOCATION

Fredericton, New Brunswick

DATES

June 10–11, 2026

CONVENED BY

DIACC (Digital ID and Authentication Council of Canada)

METHOD

Synthesis of four executive roundtables held under the Chatham House Rule, drawn from de-identified table report-outs

SPONSORS

Gold: Province of New Brunswick, Portage CyberTech. Silver: Facephi

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DIACC opened the workshop by acknowledging the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples, on whose traditional territories the gathering took place.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Roundtable discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule. Material from named presentations is identified as such, and other findings are de-identified to the role or sector level. Figures come from the published sources listed and were checked against them. Where no published source exists, participants self-report the figure. AI tools supported drafting and copy-editing. DIACC made source-checking and editorial decisions.

Acknowledgements

DIACC thanks the following sponsors for their generous support of this workshop.

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DIACC WORKSHOP REPORT

01

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

What the room concluded, in brief.

Across four roundtables, participants reached one shared conclusion. In Atlantic Canada, the technology for verifiable credentials (VCs) and digital identity verification (IDV) is no longer the obstacle. **Governance, ownership, and the final step of getting institutions and citizens to actually adopt are the hard parts.**

The legislative conditions are moving. The federal Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act came into force on January 1, 2026; seven provinces, including New Brunswick, have adopted or introduced comparable legislation, and the Canada-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Credentials and Trust Services, signed in December 2025, adds international urgency. New Brunswick has also digitized a substantial share of its provincial services. But permission is not adoption. The federal Act applies to federal jurisdiction; professional bodies regulated by provinces are not bound by it, and no one clearly owns the resulting cross-jurisdictional gap.

Three patterns ran through every table. First, a pilot-first consensus: waiting for full pan-Canadian alignment is not realistic, so participants favoured starting with one willing regulator or province and a recoverable use case. Second, adoption follows compelling use cases such as healthcare, labour mobility, real estate title, and licensing services. Convenience and necessity drive uptake; awareness campaigns alone do not. Third, AI readiness has moved to the foreground, from deepfakes and injection attacks to post-quantum cryptography and AI agents acting as non-human actors.

The tools largely exist. The unfinished work is governance, ownership, and adoption.

— WORKSHOP SYNTHESIS, JUNE 2026

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02

Key Findings at a Glance

Key Findings at a Glance

For the skim-first reader.

FINDINGS THAT DEFINE THE ATLANTIC PICTURE

1. The constraint is governance, not technology.

Getting to adoption is harder than the build.

2. Legal permission is narrower than it looks.

Federal mobility legislation does not bind provincial regulators.

3. Pilot beats alignment.

Start small with willing partners and invite others later.

4. Use cases drive adoption.

Lead with high-utility, forcing-function, recoverable services.

5. Credentials are one layer.

Pair them with contextual signals and plan for AI-era threats.

6. Inclusion is a precondition.

Connectivity, literacy, language, and citizen control decide legitimacy.

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03

Introduction

Introduction

Why digital trust, and why now?

DIACC (the Digital ID and Authentication Council of Canada) convened the Atlantic Canada Digital Trust Executive Workshop in Fredericton on June 10-11, 2026, in conjunction with its Annual General Meeting. Over two days, DIACC members, Atlantic regional leaders, and government counterparts examined how credentials, services, and trust move across jurisdictional and institutional lines. The work was organized around four roundtables: credential portability for regulated professions, citizen adoption of verifiable credentials, fraud resilience in an AI era, and practical adoption pathways for Atlantic organizations. Premier Susan Holt delivered the closing keynote.

New Brunswick trade-policy officials opened the workshop by setting the legislative context, and that context is more bounded than it first appears. The federal Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act received royal assent on June 26, 2025 and came into force on January 1, 2026. It allows a worker authorized by a province or territory to obtain a corresponding authorization within federal jurisdiction, and it recognizes comparable provincial and territorial requirements for goods and services. It does not compel provinces to recognize one another, and occupations regulated solely by provinces, including doctors, nurses, and most construction trades, fall outside it.

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Bilateral memoranda of understanding on mutual recognition signed between provinces and territories.

Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Regulations, Canada Gazette Part II, November 19, 2025

Interprovincial recognition is advancing on a separate track: seven provinces, including New Brunswick, have adopted or introduced comparable legislation, and provinces and territories have signed 19 bilateral memoranda of understanding on mutual recognition. Internationally, the Canada-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Credentials and Trust Services, signed in Montréal on December 8, 2025, commits both sides to technical interoperability work, joint testing, and standards development. DIACC's published statement at the time framed the question as how quickly international momentum can produce the domestic coordination it depends on.

That patchwork is the setting for the workshop's central question. New Brunswick brings an operational track record: under the Digital New Brunswick 2.0 strategy, the province reports that Service New Brunswick moved from 10 percent of its services available online in 2018 to more than two-thirds. Atlantic Canada's manageable scale and existing inter-provincial cooperation make it a credible place to demonstrate a coast-to-coast interoperable trust ecosystem, one that bridges existing systems through shared trust and data-assurance standards rather than imposing a single uniform approach.

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The Adoption Gap

The Adoption Gap

One gap, felt four ways.

Before the four discussions diverge, they share a problem. In every case, the technology was available, yet the work stalled because no one could say who owned the decision to accept a credential issued elsewhere.

Three conditions make that worse. Legislative permission does not carry acceptance, so a law that allows mobility leaves regulated bodies free to decline. Credential formats, content standards, and communication protocols differ by province and industry, raising the cost of every connection. And public awareness is low enough that citizen demand cannot yet push institutions on its own.

The result is a region with the tools, some of the legal permission, and no agreed owner for the gap between them.

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Four Tables, One Constraint

Four Tables, One Constraint

What each roundtable surfaced, and what digital trust delivers.

Regulated professions: portability without an owner

The legal map set out in the introduction shaped this table. The federal Act covers only federal jurisdiction, provincial recognition advances one bilateral agreement at a time, and the professions most often raised in portability discussions sit outside both.

Permission is not acceptance. Regulated bodies and professional associations do not automatically accept credentials issued elsewhere, and participants named the absence of a clear owner for cross-jurisdictional acceptance. Institutional self-interest sometimes competes with service improvement. The way forward runs through the associations: engage them early, learn their commercial motivations, and do not assume legislation will move them.

Participants found the digital-signature sector the most persuasive precedent. Adoption there did not follow instruction. It followed members asking their associations for digital options until they responded. New Brunswick's move from digital signatures toward verifiable credentials follows that arc, and its digital strategy commits to expanding digital credentials.

Transferable lesson

Map the legal authority for each use case before naming an owner, then cultivate visible demand from the people the institution answers to and let it do the convincing.

Citizen adoption: necessity first, convenience second

Public awareness of verifiable credentials is low, and participants were candid that citizens alone cannot drive adoption. Educating the public was repeatedly framed as the industry's responsibility, not something to outsource or assume.

What does move adoption is a service people cannot complete without a verified credential. In real estate, lenders will not advance a mortgage without clear title, so title verification is effectively mandatory and uptake does not need to be sold. Healthcare and labour mobility, the two use cases participants ranked highest, carry the same necessity. Alongside those sit low-risk, high-visibility services such as hunting and fishing licences, where failure is recoverable, and an early win builds momentum. A high-visibility public event was floated to draw mainstream attention.

Inclusion decides whether that uptake is legitimate. A table focused on New Brunswick surfaced constraints that did not appear elsewhere, including cellular and Wi-Fi dead zones in rural and resource-sector areas and both literacy and bilingualism requirements. The province's own digital strategy names rural internet infrastructure and digital skills training as priorities, suggesting these are recognized rather than contested. Participants treated plain-language communication, multiple support channels, and continued human support alongside digital options as adoption requirements. Data minimization and granular citizen control, such as sharing part of a medical record rather than the whole, were seen as the way to win over reluctant users.

Transferable lesson

Embed credentials where a transaction already demands them, and design for connectivity, language, and citizen control from the outset. Necessity drives adoption faster than persuasion, and exclusion undoes it.

Fraud resilience when the attacker has AI

Fraud-prevention participants warned that AI-driven fraud is outpacing institutional responses. Specific concerns included deepfakes, digital injection attacks in which fraudulent images are fed directly into document-verification systems, and a coming post-quantum reality in which widely used public-key cryptography, including RSA and elliptic-curve methods, becomes vulnerable. Participants also flagged a liability and regulatory gap for IT firms handling sensitive identity data.

Against that, credentials alone are insufficient. Participants were emphatic that credentials are one layer, to be paired with contextual signals such as device, location, and behaviour, and with anomaly detection. Physical anchors including hardware tokens and chip-based credentials retain a role, particularly as AI agents proliferate and a physical last line of defence gains value.

Participants used the term "Record Zero" for a verified digital identity that serves as the anchor to which all other credentials are tied, including degrees, employee IDs, and professional designations. Framed that way, a single trusted anchor resolves downstream problems such as name collisions and AI-generated fake credentials without requiring people to over-share.

Transferable lesson

Treat the credential as one layer among several, and test a single verified identity anchor instead of debating it. One anchor can prevent a class of fraud and data-sprawl problems at once.

Atlantic organizations and the case for starting small

The strongest cross-table consensus was to stop waiting for pan-Canadian alignment. Participants favoured finding one willing regulator or province, running a readiness assessment, and proving the model before scaling. Full participation should not be a precondition. Build with willing partners and invite others in.

Fragmentation is what makes the alternative expensive. Provinces and regulated industries use different credential formats, content standards, and communication protocols, and banks in particular must accept credentials originating in multiple jurisdictions. Participants argued for a deliberate translation capability to bridge formats rather than waiting for every jurisdiction to standardize, anchored by shared trust and data-assurance standards so that a coast-to-coast ecosystem can function without erasing provincial differences.

Two practical obstacles were named for organizations attempting this work. Government change management is routinely underestimated, and procurement legislation can block the iterative work needed to engage emerging solution providers. On cost, forced adoption was rejected in favour of incentives and shared investment, and participants noted that private enterprise is willing to share the cost of building the ecosystem rather than leaving it to government alone.

New Brunswick brings an operational base to build on. Under Digital New Brunswick 2.0, the province reports a substantial shift of Service New Brunswick's services online since 2018, though the figure measures availability rather than citizen uptake, so adoption targets need a usage baseline.

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More than two-thirds of Service New Brunswick services are available online, up from 10 percent in 2018.

GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK, DIGITAL NEW BRUNSWICK 2.0, 2023–2027

Transferable lesson

A pilot with one willing partner beats a plan that requires everyone. Bridge the formats that already exist, and budget for change management and procurement as seriously as for technology.

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The Ownership Throughline

The Ownership Throughline

Seen the other way: one unresolved question running under all four tables.

The four discussions were distinct, and they stalled at the same point. Each table asked for the same three things: someone accountable for the cross-jurisdictional problem, a bridge between existing credential systems, and demand strong enough that institutions move without being told to.

A named owner for each cross-jurisdictional problem. This was the most consistent finding across the four tables. Legislative permission does not translate into acceptance on the ground, and federal guidance can produce unintended consequences at the provincial level. Ownership has to be assigned use case by use case, after establishing whether portability runs through the federal Act, provincial mutual-recognition legislation, a bilateral memorandum, or a professional body's own rules. Healthcare and labour mobility, the two priorities the room ranked highest, sit in different places on that map.

A translation layer rather than a single standard. Participants did not want forced uniformity. They wanted bridges between existing systems, built on shared trust and data-assurance standards that let credentials move across provinces and sectors without flattening local differences. This is where the Pan-Canadian Trust Framework earns its place, and where certification gives organizations a way to vet vendors and demonstrate they meet the bar.

Demand that institutions answer to. Adoption was framed as something to cultivate, rather than mandate. That means incentives and shared costs on the supply side, and on the demand side, a use case with enough necessity or convenience that citizens and members ask for the service themselves.

Two conditions govern all three. Adoption follows necessity and convenience, so awareness campaigns alone will not produce it. Inclusion and AI readiness are foundational, rather than later additions, since a trust layer is only as strong as the people it reaches and the cryptography beneath it.

DIACC's role is as a bridge and convener

Supplying the shared trust and data-assurance standards through the PCTF and certification so that credentials move across jurisdictions without forcing uniformity, and convening the governance work that no single institution owns, including the education working group initiated at the event.

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Strategic Takeaways

Strategic Takeaways

Roundtable conclusions.

The binding constraint is governance, not capability. Atlantic Canada largely has the tools and, in some areas, the legal permission. What it lacks is clear ownership of cross-jurisdictional problems and the institutional will to adopt. The work is therefore a governance and trust program first, with technology in support.

Legal permission is narrower than the headlines suggest. Federal mobility legislation operates on federal jurisdiction. Provinces regulate the professions most often cited in portability discussions, including healthcare, and govern them only through provincial legislation and bilateral agreements. Any credential-portability plan must be built around the actual legal map, not a general impression of it.

Interoperability beats uniformity, and that is where the PCTF earns its place. Participants did not want a single forced standard. They wanted bridges between existing systems. The Pan-Canadian Trust Framework (PCTF), stewarded by DIACC, is such a bridge: shared trust and data-assurance standards that let credentials move across provinces and sectors without flattening local differences. Certification gives organizations a way to vet vendors and demonstrate they meet the bar.

AI readiness is now part of trust infrastructure. Deepfake detection, injection-attack countermeasures, post-quantum migration, and accounting for non-human actors are no longer future concerns. Trust frameworks that ignore them will age quickly.

Inclusion determines legitimacy. Connectivity gaps, literacy, and bilingualism are not reasons to delay modernization. Ignoring them in pilot design guarantees a system that serves some Canadians and excludes others. Inclusive design is a precondition for public trust.

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Cross-Sector Implications

Cross-Sector Implications

Where these Atlantic findings travel.

The patterns surfaced here recur wherever credentials must cross institutional and jurisdictional lines.

In healthcare, portable credentials and granular, consent-based record sharing address clinician mobility and patient trust at once, and healthcare is precisely where federal mobility legislation does not reach, which makes the ownership question urgent rather than theoretical.

In regulated professions and skilled trades, the same ownership finding applies, including the cross-jurisdictional inspection and liability questions raised in engineering.

In financial services, banks already face the multi-jurisdiction acceptance problem at the centre of the discussion, with direct ties to anti-money-laundering (AML) compliance and synthetic-identity detection.

In housing, title verification is the forcing function that drives adoption without persuasion.

In energy and broader public services, the same trust and eligibility-assurance needs apply.

The Canada-EU MOU extends the logic internationally, and participants viewed Europe's legislation-driven approach as setting a pace Canada will have to answer.

The common thread, and DIACC's distinct contribution, is that one set of shared standards, operationalized through certification, lets these sectors interoperate rather than each solving the problem alone.

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Recommendations & Next Steps

Recommendations & Next Steps

Concrete actions, in priority order.

- 01 Launch a pilot with one willing regulator or province.** Choose a recoverable, high-visibility use case such as a licensing service, run a readiness assessment first, and design explicitly for an achievable win.
- 02 Map the legal authority before naming the owner.** For each priority use case, establish whether portability runs through the federal Act, provincial mutual-recognition legislation, a bilateral memorandum, or a professional body's own rules. Healthcare and labour mobility, the two use cases participants ranked highest, sit in different places on that map.
- 03 Name the problem owner for each priority use case.** Bring the relevant professional associations to the table early and understand their business motivations rather than assuming legislation will move them.
- 04 Build the interoperability and translation layer on PCTF foundations.** Invest in shared trust and data-assurance standards that bridge credential formats across jurisdictions, instead of pursuing forced uniformity.
- 05 Make AI readiness explicit in trust frameworks.** Account for deepfakes, injection attacks, post-quantum migration, and non-human actors, and evaluate the participant-proposed "Record Zero" anchor concept as a pilot.
- 06 Stand up an education working group and a public-awareness effort.** Formalize the working group initiated at the event, and treat citizen education as an industry responsibility with shared ownership by the private and public sectors.
- 07 Anchor a first pilot in New Brunswick's service-digitization record.** Service New Brunswick moved from 10 percent of its services available online in 2018 to more than two-thirds under Digital New Brunswick 2.0, a strategy that also commits the province to expanding digital credentials, moving toward a "tell us once" experience, and improving rural internet access. That gives a cross-jurisdictional pilot an operational base and a stated provincial mandate. Design for connectivity, literacy, bilingualism, and citizen control from the outset, and baseline actual citizen usage before setting adoption targets, since the provincial figure measures service availability rather than uptake.

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Conclusion

Conclusion

The imperative, restated.

The technology is largely ready, the legal conditions for mobility are improving unevenly, and the appetite to act is real. What remains is the harder, human work: settling who owns the problem, building trust across institutions, and giving citizens compelling reasons to participate. DIACC's role is to convene that work and to supply the shared standards, through the PCTF and certification, that let a coast-to-coast ecosystem interoperate without forcing uniformity. Atlantic Canada has the scale, the cooperation habits, and the operational track record to prove the model, and that is the case for starting here.



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Back Matter

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Calls to Action

Separate from the report analysis.

Become a DIACC Member.

Shape national digital-trust standards and access programs and insights that move work like this forward.

Get Certified with the PCTF.

Demonstrate that your organization meets Canada's trust and security benchmarks.

Get Listed in the Member Services Directory.

Increase your visibility within a trusted national community.

About this Report

Methodology and attribution.

This report synthesizes the Atlantic Canada Digital Trust Executive Workshop, convened by DIACC alongside its 2026 Annual General Meeting in Fredericton, New Brunswick, on June 10-11, 2026. The program paired DIACC's member plenary and AGM with a two-day workshop organized around four roundtables, closing with a synthesis of shared priorities.

Each roundtable's peer discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule, and the findings here are drawn from the de-identified table report-outs. Named government and sponsor representatives delivered scene-setting and keynote remarks: New Brunswick government officials and Service New Brunswick framed the opening and citizen-services sessions, Portage CyberTech opened the credential-portability roundtable, and Facephi opened the cybersecurity roundtable. Premier Susan Holt delivered the closing keynote.

This report names governments, public agencies, sponsors, and DIACC. All other participants are de-identified at the role or table level. Legislative references, the Canada-EU memorandum, and provincial service figures cited in this report come from the published government sources listed under Sources. They were checked against those sources rather than recorded from the discussion, and they are context DIACC has added rather than material the workshop itself verified. The New Brunswick service figure measures the share of Service New Brunswick services available online, not the share of citizens using them, and the two should not be read interchangeably.

Disclosure

The Province of New Brunswick is a Gold sponsor of this workshop and is also a subject of analysis in this report. Provincial material cited here is drawn from published government sources, and DIACC's editorial and publishing decisions are independent of sponsorship.

This synthesis is editorial and domain-focused. It is not legal, financial, or compliance advice.

Sources

Published sources, with locators.

Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act. SC 2025, c. 2, s. 2, enacted by section 2 of the One Canadian Economy Act (Bill C-5): royal assent June 26, 2025; in force January 1, 2026 under SI/2025-107. The Act recognizes comparable provincial and territorial requirements for goods and services, and enables a worker holding a provincial or territorial authorization to obtain a corresponding federal authorization. An occupation falls within scope only where both federal and provincial or territorial authorizations exist. laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-31.55

Provincial mutual recognition. Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Regulations, SOR/2025-225, Canada Gazette Part II, Volume 159, Number 24, November 19, 2025: seven provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec) have adopted or introduced similar legislation, and provinces and territories have signed 19 bilateral memoranda of understanding between themselves on mutual recognition. gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2025/2025-11-19/html/sor-dors225-eng.html

Canada-EU Memorandum of Understanding on Digital Credentials and Trust Services.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, December 8, 2025: signed in Montréal at the first meeting of the Canada-EU Digital Partnership Council, one of two memoranda signed that day alongside one on artificial intelligence, and following the Canada-EU Leaders' Summit of June 23, 2025. Some documents title it "Digital Credentials, Digital Identity Wallets and Trust Services." canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2025/12/canada-and-the-european-union-to-deepen-their-collaboration-on-artificial-intelligence-and-digital-credentials-and-trust-services.html

DIACC statement on the MOU. DIACC, December 12, 2025: welcomes the memorandum and frames the open question as how quickly international alignment can catalyze the domestic coordination it depends on. diacc.ca/2025/12/12/statement-on-canada-eu-digital-credentials-and-trust-services-mou-international-alignment-benefits-from-domestic-coordination

Service New Brunswick digital services. Government of New Brunswick, Digital New Brunswick 2.0, strategy period 2023 to 2027: in 2018, 10 percent of Service New Brunswick's services were available online; more than two-thirds are now. The Government of New Brunswick's digital strategy commits to expanding the use of digital credentials, moving toward "tell us once", providing digital skills training, and improving rural internet access. www3.gnb.ca/digital/strategy-in-brief.html



Where Digital Trust Means Business.

DIACC is Canada's neutral, non-profit strategic alliance for operationalizing digital trust, stewarding the Pan-Canadian Trust Framework, running its certification program, and convening public and private-sector members to close the ecosystem gaps found in this report.

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