

A Message from Minister Navdeep Bains to IPIC Members



This week I launched Canada's Intellectual Property Strategy. We consulted widely to develop this important plan but I want to personally thank IPIC for its support and counsel.

Yes, it is important for your membership, but also to the millions of Canadians your work touches from coast to coast.

As a pillar of our country's innovation ecosystem, this strategy is intended to help remediate Canada's perennial problem: we are good in research, science, creating and inventing things, but we can do better when it comes to commercializing innovation.

To give businesses the confidence they need to grow and take risks, and reap those rewards, we have developed a well-defined strategy that manages and protects intellectual property (IP).

It addresses several points borne out of our consultations with Canadians, including IPIC.

First, it's clear that Canadians have heard about IP, but for many it seems more like an abstract concept. Education and awareness is key because we can't truly compete if only 9 percent of our SMEs have their own IP strategies.

Secondly, we heard that even if our entrepreneurs understand the importance of IP, they're finding it too costly and complex to take full advantage of the system, so we need to support them better as they turn to strong professionals like those in IPIC.

Third, IP is not fully understood and recognized in federal programming.

In other words, despite it being an eligible expense under several government programs, recipient companies are not developing their own unique IP strategies. We're going to fix that.

And finally, we learned that companies are not taking advantage of the public sector IP available to them.

Up until now, we have not helped ourselves. There has been no single window to identify public IP and information about licensing or commercialization possibilities. We're fixing that, too.

More specifically, Canada's new IP Strategy includes legislative amendments to strengthen our system by clarifying what are acceptable business practices. Other legislative amendments will clarify existing provisions to make the system more transparent and predictable so businesses can focus on what matters: innovating. And some amendments will help prevent abuse of the IP system by people or organizations, like patent trolls.

We will also create a new governing body for patent and trademark agents. We know this is an important step for IPIC, as we recognize the importance of the profession in fostering innovation in this key area of the modern economy. In doing so, we will ensure that professional and ethical standards are maintained, thereby ensuring quality advice from IP professionals. This measure recognizes the important role patent and trademark agents are playing in Canada's innovation ecosystem. We have consulted with the profession and IPIC's contribution has helped significantly in shaping this initiative.

Our new strategy also includes a suite of programs focusing on IP awareness, education, and advice. Naturally, the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) will have a huge role to play here. The IP strategy will extend CIPO's awareness efforts and programming across the innovation ecosystem, with a specific focus on women and Indigenous peoples. Enhancing IP literacy is not meant to be confined only to CIPO. Others can, and must, play a role. Associations like IPIC can make a real contribution by complementing the government's efforts.

Because we know that in IP, scale matters, we will put in place a patent collective. It will bring businesses together to help them make the best, most strategic use of IP; for example, by sharing best practices on how to build and defend IP portfolios and strategies.

We are also committing extra funds to the Standards Council of Canada so it can boost efforts to have Canadian technologies strategically embedded in international standards.

And the final element of Canada's new strategy will lower the costs associated with owning and using IP by speeding up the dispute resolution process.

The bottom line is the strategic use of IP by Canadian firms is fundamental to our government's innovation goals for Canada.

This strategy will help solidify our investments in innovation, and support our efforts to create the high-quality jobs and savvy necessary to succeed in the global, modern economy.

I want to thank everyone from the IPIC community who had a hand in developing it. You have done tremendous work in sustaining a real engagement to inform and shape Canada's IP strategy. I know I can count on your support during the implementation phase.

Together, we can increase Canada's position on the world stage and make a better life for all Canadians.

Navdeep Bains is the federal minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.