



## **Canada risks losing out to global competitors if it fails to lift its AI adoption rates, warn AI policy experts**

*Balancing AI's risks and benefits is key to realizing Canada's potential*

(March 29, 2023 - OTTAWA) Today, the Internet Society Canada Chapter (ISCC) convened global experts on artificial intelligence (AI) policy to discuss the many opportunities and challenges that Canada is facing regarding AI adoption, as well as the types of policies that will be required to maximize the country's prosperity responsibly.

The ISCC gathering was held in collaboration with the Responsible Artificial Intelligence Institute, Brookfield Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and AWS Canada.

Currently, Canada ranks in the global top five in terms of AI research influence, but lags far behind when it comes to commercialization and adoption – to the detriment of national productivity. Canada trails the global average in IBM's Global AI Adoption Index, ranking behind economies from India, China, Germany, and France.

"To be frank, we're not ready yet for what's coming" said The Honourable Senator Colin Deacon. "We have such potential to lead in harnessing these technologies, but our public sector institutions really need to upgrade their capacity if we're going to see the most compelling benefits in much-needed areas like our healthcare system. Other countries are going to continue to out-compete us if we don't rise to this moment now."

"Bridging the gap between Canada's development and deployment of AI is probably one of the most important economic questions we need to tackle right now," said Brookfield Institute's Mark Hazelden. "Our analysis suggests closing the skills gap for businesses should be a priority. And for many businesses, as well as the public sector, this means gaining even a basic understanding of what AI can do for them."

Getting the regulation right has also been a shared priority for researchers and policymakers alike, although an exploding number of bills globally is underlining the need for these rules to be interoperable.

In June 2022, the Canadian Government introduced the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act or "AIDA," through its broader C-27 privacy bill. Meanwhile, the European Union has been working on its version of AI legislation since April 2021, and in the U.S., 41 out of 50 states have proposed at least one bill. Globally, Stanford University's AI Index notes a 7.7 fold increase in mentions of AI in international legislative proceedings since 2016.

“International standards are going to be crucial for interoperability” said Ashley Casovan, Executive Director of the Responsible AI Institute. “Clearly, we need a robust framework of oversight to reassure consumers and build trust in these technologies, but these requirements need to be based on international consensus.”

During the panels, technology experts discussed how Canada should focus on spurring adoption of low to medium risk AI, in an effort to enable digital transformation in key sectors, such as agriculture, construction, transportation, healthcare, HR, and government services.

“If Canada wants to increase productivity, create good jobs, and increase wages, then policymakers need to accelerate AI development,” said Robert Atkinson, Founder and President of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation. “For Canada, this means further investing in its AI knowledge capacity, while ensuring that any regulatory framework does not limit AI development or adoption.” Atkinson said he believes that Canada is well placed for the AI revolution, but not if it follows an overly restrictive path.

Most importantly, the experts weighed in on the importance of adopting responsible AI practices.

“The impact that this technology is going to have across society means that this conversation is for everyone,” said Sana Khareghani, who founded the UK Government’s Office for Artificial Intelligence “We need to be open, inclusive, and transparent in how we shape this technology and maximize its societal benefit.”

“There are a ton of positive potential opportunities with AI,” said Casovan, “but only if there is rigorous oversight and inclusivity along every step of the process.”

The Ottawa event welcomed over 100 business and civil society leaders, federal department officials, elected officials, policy experts, and academics.

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*The Internet Society Canada Chapter (ISCC) is a not-for-profit organization that engages in internet legal and policy issues to advocate for an open, accessible, and affordable internet for Canadians.*

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