Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
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Canada

ENGAGEMENTS ON CANADA'S NEXT AI STRATEGY

Summary of Inputs
Q1 › 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved into a transformative force, reshaping industries and accelerating scientific progress. Its ability to analyze vast amounts of data, learn from patterns and support complex decision making is driving breakthroughs in fields such as health care, transportation, finance, research and creative industries. AI is now considered a foundational technology, often compared to electricity or the Internet, in its potential to reshape economies and societies. As its capabilities expand, so too does the urgency for thoughtful governance, responsible development and public engagement to guide how this powerful technology is used.

Canada has been at the forefront as a key player in the invention of modern AI. We are now at a crossroads as we look to the future and consider how to responsibly apply this new technology.

The government ran a 30-day public consultation to shape a renewed AI strategy to build Canadian leadership in this area and drive economic transformation with this powerful new tool. Engagement was sought with founders, researchers, workers, creators, students, public servants and community voices.

From October 1 to 31, 2025, we asked for input on focus areas, including how to:

- accelerate the safe adoption of AI across the economy and public services
- scale Canadian AI champions and attract investment
- strengthen sovereign infrastructure (compute, data, cloud)
- build public trust, skills and safety

Minister Solomon also named an AI Strategy Task Force, composed of representatives from across academia, industry, think tanks and NGOs, to provide recommendations on members' respective areas of expertise to inform the development of the new strategy. Task Force members delivered 32 reports. In addition, submissions from over 11,300 respondents were received through the online public consultation. This was the largest public consultation in the history of Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), generating important ideas, questions and legitimate concerns to take into consideration in the drafting of the strategy.

Key themes captured in the consultation included the need for:

- ethical, safety-focused research tied to democratic values
- transparent governance and risk-based regulation
- sovereign infrastructure and intellectual property protection
- national AI literacy and lifelong learning
- strong security frameworks and liability laws

This consultation reflects Canada's commitment to democratic engagement by ensuring that citizens, stakeholders and communities have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of AI. Submissions are informing the development of the renewed AI strategy and will help guide policy decisions and create an approach that reflects diverse perspectives, safeguards public interest and strengthens Canada's leadership in responsible AI.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Over 11,300 participants provided their thoughts and ideas during the 30-day online public consultation, which ran from October 1 to 31, 2025. We captured over 64,600 responses to 26 questions on the eight AI pillars identified for the purpose of the consultation.

The responses were analyzed using SimpleSurvey, which uses natural language processing algorithms to provide insights from open-ended questions by analyzing sentiments, keywords and topics. ISED also created an internal classification pipeline for analysis, incorporating Cohere Command A, OpenAI GPT-5 nano, Anthropic Claude Haiku and Google Gemini Flash to read through the submissions and identify common themes. Responses were also classified by question, pillar and sentiment. Human reviewers validated and refined the AI-generated analyses, ensuring accuracy and comprehensive representation of all perspectives. The same approach was used to analyze the Task Force reports. This innovative approach enabled thorough, unbiased reporting in record time—months faster than traditional methods—demonstrating a balance between efficient delivery and responsible, Canadian-centred AI adoption.

For the online consultation, the majority of respondents indicated that they were providing input as an individual (83%), with about 17% participating on behalf of an organization. Just over half of the respondents, or 52%, identified as interested Canadians, 19% identified as Canadian business representatives, 13% identified as academics or researchers, 4% identified as representatives of a government or a regulator, 3% identified as industry association representatives and 2% identified as privacy advocates or legal professionals. Almost 6% identified as other, which included members of civil society; software developers; engineers; Canadian artists, actors, writers and representatives from the film industry; and educators and librarians.

Of the over 11,300 participants, 1,860 indicated the sector they work in:

What sector does your organization fall under?	%	#
IT/tech/cyber	35%	645
Professional, scientific and technical services	20%	372
Arts, entertainment and recreation	15%	272
Academia	13%	235
SME	12%	223
Health care	12%	215
Information and cultural industries	10%	193
Government	9%	174
Financial sector	6%	113
Manufacturing	4%	77
Natural resources (agriculture, forestry, mining, oil and gas)	3%	60
Administrative	2%	42
Construction	2%	39
Retail trade	2%	36
Transportation and warehousing	2%	29
Hospitality	1%	26
Real estate	1%	22
Total	**100%**	**1,860**

A total of 3,146 respondents indicated their age group:

What is your age group?	%	#
Under 18 years	0%	4
18 to 24	4%	116
25 to 34	21%	665
35 to 44	30%	931
45 to 54	21%	668
55 to 64	11%	361
65 or older	5%	156
I prefer not to say	8%	245
Total	**100%**	**3,146**

A total of 3,132 respondents provided information on their organization's location. The percentage breakdown by province and territory is as follows: Ontario 39%, British Columbia 20.6%, Alberta 7.8%, Quebec 7.6%, Nova Scotia 3.8%, Manitoba 1.9%, New Brunswick 1.45%, Saskatchewan 1.4%, Newfoundland and Labrador 0.9%, Price Edward Island 0.26%, Yukon 0.16% and Northwest Territories 0.06%. Around 2% identified outside Canada as the location.

WHAT WE HEARD

› ONLINE CONSULTATION

Research and talent

Respondents strongly emphasized the need for Canada to attract, retain and develop top AI talent. This includes competitive compensation, scholarships, fellowships and immigration reforms to strengthen talent pipelines. Respondents called for a supportive ecosystem that links academia, industry and government to enable collaboration and help bridge the gap between fundamental research and commercialization. Building secure infrastructure—such as domestic compute capacity and shared data resources—is seen as critical for economic growth and technological sovereignty.

While many advocated aggressive investment in talent and infrastructure, they stressed that that these efforts must uphold ethical standards and academic independence. Respondents cautioned against chasing short-term hype and urged Canada to prioritize responsible governance, environmental sustainability, and the protection of Canadian data and workers. There was a strong call for a national strategy that focuses on human-centred AI in areas of Canadian strength—such as health, culture and design—while ensuring inclusive benefits and privacy protections.

Key recommendations included:

- a national AI talent strategy that treats talent as a national asset
- AI assurance labs and governance councils to test and validate ethical frameworks
- mission-driven research programs aligned with public needs
- strong intellectual property protections and structural reforms to keep AI enterprises in Canada

AI adoption across industry and governments

Respondents stressed that successful AI adoption means moving beyond pilots and prototypes to real-world applications that improve productivity and public services. They envision an AI-augmented workforce where technology enhances—does not replace—human expertise. Sectors like health care, agriculture and public services were highlighted as priorities for responsible integration.

However, concerns were widespread about premature deployment and overhyped technologies like generative AI. Respondents warned of environmental harm, privacy risks and job displacement, urging Canada to adopt a cautious, evidence-based approach. They called for ethical guidelines, regulatory clarity and sector-specific standards to ensure AI improves efficiency without undermining human judgment.

Proposals included:

- a unified national strategy for responsible AI adoption
- tax incentives and government support for productivity-enhancing AI
- strong safeguards for sensitive sectors like health care
- public education to build trust in AI and an understanding of its limitations

Commercialization of AI

Respondents agreed that economic strength in AI must be paired with meaningful regulation and measures in place to ensure Canadian ownership of intellectual property (IP) and data. They called for structured incentives—such as grants, investor tax credits and public funding—to support Canadian AI companies and prevent IP flight to foreign jurisdictions. Government is seen as a key player, not only as a funder but also as an early client of growing Canadian companies and a strategic connector ensuring commercialization aligns with national priorities.

Concerns included foreign dominance, environmental impacts and the risk of AI bubbles. Respondents urged Canada to modernize regulations, create financing models that retain Canadian control, and protect creative industries from exploitation by AI. They advocated a national policy that balances global competitiveness with ethical standards and sovereignty.

Scaling champions and attracting investments

Respondents want Canada to scale domestic AI champions through tailored growth supports, mentorship, and government procurement. They emphasized removing barriers to scaling—such as access to capital and strategic partnerships—and creating a domestic market for Canadian AI solutions. Workforce readiness and talent development are seen as critical enablers.

However, skepticism runs deep. Many warned of an AI bubble and argued for a cautious approach that prioritizes sovereignty, education and social safety nets over chasing global dominance.

Proposals included:

- a sovereign wealth fund with a venture capital arm
- fiscal policies that support sustainable growth and IP retention
- strong legal frameworks for privacy, environmental protection and ethical AI development

Safe AI systems and public trust

Public trust in AI hinges on transparency, accountability and robust governance. Respondents called for risk-based certification standards, independent audits, and clear disclosures about AI use. Ethical guidelines and oversight bodies are seen as essential to protect individual rights and promote fairness.

Concerns include bias, privacy breaches, job displacement and the environmental footprint of AI infrastructure. Respondents advocated public education programs, AI literacy initiatives, and community engagement through libraries and forums. Many expressed strong skepticism toward generative AI, demanding strict regulation, penalties for non-compliance and frameworks that uphold Canadian values.

Education and skills

The respondents had a clear view: Canada needs a dual approach to skills development involving broad digital literacy for all citizens and advanced AI expertise for specialized roles. Respondents called for integrating AI education across K–12 and post-secondary curricula, offering short, stackable credentials, and investing in lifelong learning. Public infrastructure must ensure equitable access to these opportunities.

Critical thinking, ethical reasoning and interdisciplinary skills were emphasized over narrow technical training. Respondents urged Canada to develop a national AI literacy strategy, workplace training programs and public campaigns to demystify AI. Concerns include job displacement, environmental harm and cognitive dependency, reinforcing the need for human-centred education.

Infrastructure

Canada faces significant gaps in AI infrastructure, including high-performance compute, data accessibility, and connectivity—especially in rural areas. Respondents advocated a sovereign approach to infrastructure, with Canadian-controlled compute facilities and governance frameworks to reduce reliance on foreign providers. Public–private partnerships were recommended to share costs and risks.

Environmental sustainability is a major concern for many, with calls for strategies to mitigate energy consumption and water usage in data centres. Respondents urged Canada to develop a national AI infrastructure roadmap that prioritizes sovereignty, sustainability and public benefit.

Security

Respondents highlighted the need for AI-enabled cybersecurity and national defence capabilities. Proposals included dedicated AI security centres, red team exercises, and coordinated partnerships between government, industry and academia. Data sovereignty and supply chain security are seen as critical to preventing foreign interference.

Concerns included the misuse of AI in sensitive sectors, misinformation, and vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure. Respondents called for strict liability laws, human-in-the-loop systems and robust policies to safeguard Canadian interests.

Overall Considerations

Stakeholders were divided between optimism for AI's potential and skepticism about its risks. Supporters see opportunities for productivity gains and economic growth, while critics warn of ethical, environmental and social harms.

Key concerns included:

- loss of IP and foreign dominance
- lack of regulation and accountability
- environmental degradation and job displacement

Canadians and Indigenous communities are concerned that AI threatens control over creative works, with unauthorized use and lack of compensation. There are calls for stronger IP laws, opt-in consent, fair compensation and protection for vulnerable creators. Recommendations included Canadian data ownership, broad stakeholder involvement and regular legal updates.

Respondents also noted that marginalized groups are under-represented in AI, leading to biased systems and harmful outcomes. Barriers to participation and concerns about superficial diversity efforts persist. Recommendations included intentional inclusion, anti-bias design, expanded AI literacy, transparent audits and funding tied to equity.

Respondents urged Canada to adopt a cautious, sovereignty-focused approach that prioritizes public interest, sustainability and democratic values.

› TASK FORCE REPORTS

The 32 reports submitted by Task Force representatives outline key priorities to strengthen the country's position as a global leader in AI. The recommendations focus on building talent, accelerating adoption, supporting commercialization, scaling homegrown champions, ensuring safe and trustworthy AI systems, expanding education and skills, investing in infrastructure and securing critical assets. The following summaries highlight the main themes and expert insights from Task Force members across industry, academia and government.

Research and talent

Multiple reports emphasize the critical need to attract, develop and retain top AI talent. Several experts stressed the importance of streamlining immigration processes and creating fast- track schemes for leading AI researchers and practitioners. There was a recurring call for initiatives that showcase success stories and role models, as well as for the development of hands- on educational and applied programs that bridge the gap between academic research and practical, commercial outcomes.

Furthermore, many reports highlighted the importance of leveraging and strengthening Canada's existing world- class research institutions—including the national AI institutes (Mila, Vector, Amii) and the CIFAR AI Chairs program—to maintain a competitive edge. They recommended enhanced multi-sector and interdisciplinary collaboration among academia, industry, government and defence, as well as coordinated efforts, to transform foundational research into marketable innovations and ethically grounded applications.

AI adoption across industry and governments

Contributors emphasized that the government should play a catalytic role in driving AI adoption by acting as an early adopter or anchor customer, thereby setting a model for both the public and private sectors. Several reports underlined the need for streamlined procurement practices, standardized playbooks and pilot-to-scale frameworks to overcome bureaucratic and digital infrastructure challenges while ensuring that AI solutions are safe, accountable and demonstrably effective. Additionally, there is a recurring theme of integrating measurable performance metrics for government organizations and leaders as well as mission-driven sectoral initiatives to validate success and build public trust. This includes using clear return on investment (ROI) indicators, transparent goal tracking, and targeted support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and underserved sectors to bridge the gap between innovative research and real-world applications.

Another shared insight is the need for improved coordination among government agencies, academia and industry to support knowledge sharing and capacity building. Reports called for national AI adoption playbooks, dedicated digital transformation programs and coordinated leadership roles to address systemic barriers such as outdated IT systems, siloed data and risk-averse purchasing behaviours. These measures are seen as essential to foster an ecosystem that accelerates responsible AI adoption in both governmental and industrial contexts while ensuring public trust and safety.

Commercialization of AI

Multiple Task Force members underscored the necessity of aligning Canada's research strengths with robust commercialization pathways. Nearly all reports called for reforms that would help bridge the gap between academic innovations and market applications, such as improving tax policies, streamlining regulatory frameworks and creating funding mechanisms that incentivize research commercialization. These recommendations emphasized reforming existing programs—for example, modifying R&D support mechanisms such as the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) tax incentives and the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP)—and introducing new schemes like commercialization vouchers and dedicated post-secondary incubation hubs to facilitate the transition of innovations into market-ready products.

Another shared theme was the protection and retention of Canadian intellectual property and economic sovereignty. Several experts stressed the importance of maintaining domestic control over technological breakthroughs, whether through tax incentives, ownership requirements or specialized public–private partnerships. They advocated creating an ecosystem where state-funded research and private investment work in tandem, ensuring that Canadian innovations not only reach commercial viability but also contribute to sustaining Canada's national competitive advantage and global market presence.

Scaling champions and attracting investments

Several reports emphasized the need for a reformed financial and regulatory ecosystem that supports the scaling of domestic AI champions and attracts both domestic and foreign investment. These reports highlighted the importance of targeted, performance-based investments (e.g. moonshot funding and grants) and refined tax and venture capital frameworks to help Canadian AI companies grow and retain critical intellectual property within Canada. In parallel, there was a broad consensus on the need to modernize government procurement practices and streamline funding processes—whether through a centralized portal or integrated funding programs—to reduce administrative burdens and encourage rapid market-oriented scaling.

Reports also stressed the strategic importance of building Canada's digital and compute infrastructure. Proposals included establishing national compute centres and data campuses and creating a sovereign infrastructure build-out that keeps critical operations domestic. Furthermore, many of the contributors noted the risk of domestic innovators being acquired by foreign entities or relocating operations to other countries, emphasizing the need for policies that safeguard domestic talent, bolster economic sovereignty and ensure that growth is both global and locally rooted.

Safe AI systems and public trust

Submissions emphasized the need for transparent governance, accountability and public engagement as they are critical to building safe AI systems and public trust. Several reports called for the establishment of oversight mechanisms, such as transparent dashboards, trust labels and independent auditing platforms, to monitor AI deployments. In parallel, there is widespread support for integrating ethical safeguards and streamlined regulatory frameworks that include tiered risk assessments, secure data-sharing protocols and clear standards for privacy and cybersecurity, ensuring that both public and private sector AI initiatives are deployed responsibly.

Another common theme was the importance of fostering public understanding of and participation in AI governance. Initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, the creation of national AI learning hubs, and educational programs aimed at increasing AI literacy are frequently recommended to demystify AI operations and align them with societal values. This holistic approach, combining robust regulation with proactive public engagement, is seen as essential for reinforcing public confidence in AI systems while also aligning them with international standards and competitive global frameworks.

Education and skills

Reports highlighted the importance of integrating AI literacy and skills development across the entire education continuum—from K–12 to post-secondary and workplace training. Several experts advocated developing nationally coordinated AI curricula, teacher professional development and modular training programs to ensure that all demographics, including vulnerable and under-represented groups, have equitable access to AI education. These initiatives are seen as foundational to fostering a culture of continuous learning and preparing the workforce to engage with rapidly evolving AI technologies.

There was also a strong shared focus on bridging the gap between academic research and industry needs. Many reports called for the formation of industry–academia partnerships, work-integrated learning opportunities, innovation hubs, and targeted incentives (such as tax credits and scholarship programs) to retain top talent and mitigate brain drain. Additionally, attention was given to attracting international talent through streamlined immigration processes and fast-track visa solutions, further reinforcing the critical role of education and skills in sustaining Canada's competitive edge in the global AI landscape.

Infrastructure

As already noted, numerous experts emphasized the need for building robust and sovereign AI infrastructure that includes comprehensive compute, connectivity and data capabilities. Many reports called for the development of domestically controlled data centres, high-performance computing clusters and integrated digital ecosystems to ensure Canada's technological independence and secure data governance. There is a consistent focus on leveraging Canada's unique advantages—such as low-cost, clean energy, abundant natural resources and world-class infrastructure talent—to secure a global competitive edge in AI by addressing gaps in power, connectivity, and permitting processes.

Another prevalent theme was the importance of fostering public–private partnerships and streamlining regulatory frameworks to accelerate infrastructure development. Several reports recommended establishing frameworks such as the AI Sovereign Compute Infrastructure Program, national AI corridors and shared AI research platforms to lower entry barriers for SMEs, research organizations and underserved regions. This collaborative approach is seen as critical for reducing operational costs, ensuring equitable access to cutting-edge resources, and navigating supply chain and cybersecurity risks.

Security

Many of the reports underscored the importance of strengthening Canada's national security framework in the AI domain and protecting critical infrastructure, data and AI models. Several reports called for updating procurement processes, regulatory protocols and cybersecurity standards to guard against emerging threats. They also shared an emphasis on adapting procurement models and modernizing defence mechanisms to align with national security priorities. Additionally, many experts highlighted the need for robust cybersecurity measures through enhanced encryption, data residency and incident reporting frameworks to safeguard both public and private sectors.

Another recurring theme was digital sovereignty, including a focus on reducing reliance on foreign-controlled infrastructures. As already noted, experts recommended domestic compute and data solutions, legislative measures to assert control over foreign cloud providers, and clear guidelines to manage cross-border dependencies. Taken together, these common recommendations aim to build a resilient, agile and secure national AI ecosystem that not only anticipates potential cyber threats but also strengthens Canada's overall defence posture in a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape.

Key Considerations

Canada stands at a critical juncture in shaping its AI strategy. For Canada to remain globally competitive while safeguarding national interests, the approach must balance innovation with ethics, sovereignty and inclusivity.

Respondents noted that Canada's AI strategy must align technological progress with Canadian values—privacy, fairness, sustainability and inclusivity—while positioning the country as a global leader in ethical AI development.

They indicated that Canada should focus on:

- retaining and attracting top AI talent, funding leading research institutions and fostering collaboration across sectors
- Prioritizing ethical, human-centred AI in high-impact areas like health care and public services
- Protecting intellectual property and data, modernizing tax incentives and supporting commercialization
- implementing transparent governance, risk-based regulation and Indigenous data sovereignty principles
- Integrating AI literacy into curricula, expanding lifelong learning and ensuring equitable access
- building secure, sustainable compute capacity and connectivity using renewable energy
- strengthening cybersecurity, safeguarding critical infrastructure and developing trusted domestic solutions

› SUPPLEMENTARY POLICY SUBMISSIONS

In addition to the public consultation and Task Force reports, ISED received close to 300 supplementary policy papers, letters or ad hoc submissions that did not directly respond to the consultation questions (see Annex A). Submissions were received from private individuals, academics, businesses, government organizations and non-government organizations. The latter three categories are summarized below.

Business submissions emphasized the critical need for Canada to maintain a competitive and commercially viable AI ecosystem by investing in secure, sovereign infrastructure, expanding talent pipelines and developing targeted incentives. Key proposals included unified data platforms, industry–academic consortiums, and immigration reforms to attract top AI talent. There was strong advocacy for bridging research and commercialization through public–private partnerships, innovation hubs and sector-specific initiatives, particularly in health care, automotive and climate. To accelerate AI adoption, businesses called for streamlined procurement processes, regulatory reforms favouring Canadian-owned SMEs, and outcome-based pilot programs.

Another recurring theme in the business submissions was protecting domestic innovation, with recommendations for sovereign capital funds, tax incentives and intellectual property retention policies. Scaling Canadian AI champions requires robust financial supports, stable regulatory environments, and anchor-customer schemes. Ensuring safe and trustworthy AI systems was paramount, with calls for transparent, risk-based frameworks, certification regimes, and alignment with international standards. Workforce development was addressed through scalable training programs, micro-credentialling and partnerships that bridge academic research with industry needs. Finally, tailored infrastructure solutions and advanced cybersecurity measures are seen as essential to safeguarding national assets and supporting broad-based industry participation.

Government organization submissions underscored the importance of coordinated public investment and policy leadership to advance Canada's AI capabilities while safeguarding national sovereignty. They advocated establishing national research networks, secure compute infrastructure, and specialized training for public officials to align AI development with strategic economic and security priorities. Ensuring safe and accountable AI adoption is a central concern, with calls for rigorous human rights assessments, standardized procurement and regulatory protections to prevent discrimination and promote transparency. Government bodies recommended advisory panels, real-time monitoring and cross-jurisdictional collaboration to address challenges in data accessibility, liability, and cybersecurity. A frequently suggested vehicle for better collaboration was the creation of national data platforms to better enable interoperability between key sectors and levels of government.

Commercialization strategies focused on pro-competition policies, expert review and harmonized regulations to foster domestic innovation and measurable market outcomes.

Contributors indicated that for government organizations, scaling Canadian AI champions requires reducing interprovincial barriers, promoting labour mobility and advancing competitive public procurement. They noted that building public trust in AI hinges on a robust, human-centred regulatory framework that integrates ethical, privacy and security safeguards, including mandatory transparency and independent oversight. Education proposals emphasized democratizing AI learning through accessible, culturally inclusive programs and adaptive training models. Infrastructure recommendations highlight the need for secure, interoperable digital systems, stable funding and equitable access—especially in underserved regions. Finally, government organizations stressed the urgency of establishing rigorous data governance and cybersecurity standards, including advanced integrity controls and national oversight, to protect critical infrastructure from evolving AI-related threats.

Non-government organization (NGO) submissions advocated a holistic, ethically grounded approach to AI research and deployment in Canada, emphasizing inclusivity, social accountability and cultural diversity. They called for integrating union, Indigenous and intersectional feminist perspectives into research agendas and recommended stable funding, participatory frameworks and academic–industry–government consortiums to prevent brain drain and ensure socially beneficial outcomes. Responsible AI adoption was noted as a clear priority, with NGOs urging robust regulatory frameworks, public oversight, and safeguards for marginalized groups, alongside rigorous testing and stakeholder consultations. Commercialization strategies focused on linking research excellence with market performance through ethical standards, modernized procurement and strong copyright protections, while supporting creative sectors and Indigenous innovation. To scale Canadian AI champions, NGOs proposed fiscal reforms, regulatory sandboxes, dedicated funding and anchor-customer programs, stressing the importance of sovereign infrastructure and coordinated regional collaborations.

NGOs stressed that building public trust in AI requires comprehensive, inclusive regulation, transparency, independent audits and broad stakeholder engagement to uphold human rights and social justice. Education initiatives emphasized equitable, culturally responsive AI literacy for all ages and communities, supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships and adaptive training. Infrastructure recommendations highlighted the need for Canadian-owned data centres, open data trusts and equitable access, especially in underserved regions, with strong ethical governance. Finally, NGOs stressed the urgency of having nationally governed, secure AI models and frameworks, calling for threat containment policies, certification regimes and community-driven oversight to protect against technical and societal risks while reinforcing national sovereignty and public trust.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Canada stands at a pivotal moment in shaping its AI future. Respondents and stakeholders across industry, academia and government emphasized the need for a balanced approach—one that drives innovation, while safeguarding sovereignty, ethics and public trust, and adopts evidence-based decisions that prioritize public interest and democratic values.

Consultation participants stressed the need for Canada's AI strategy to treat AI talent as a national asset through competitive compensation, scholarships, immigration reforms and long-term funding for research institutions, alongside collaboration between academia, industry and government.

Participants also emphasized that AI adoption should move beyond pilots to real-world applications in health care, agriculture and public services, guided by ethical standards and regulatory clarity to prevent risks such as privacy breaches and job displacement. Further, they indicated that commercialization efforts must protect Canadian intellectual property and data sovereignty through modernized tax incentives, streamlined funding and regulatory frameworks.

Opinion was clear that scaling domestic champions requires tailored growth supports, mentorship, procurement programs and effective growth capital vehicles, prioritizing sustainable growth over hype.

There was general consensus among participants that public trust depends on transparency, accountability and robust governance, supported by certification standards, independent audits and AI literacy programs.

Canadians and Task Force members also noted that education must combine broad digital literacy with advanced AI expertise, integrating AI into curricula and offering micro-credentials and lifelong learning while emphasizing ethics and critical thinking.

Participants reiterated that infrastructure investments should be focused on expanding compute capacity and connectivity using renewable energy and that security measures should include AI-enabled cybersecurity, strict liability laws and human-in-the-loop systems to protect critical assets.

It should be noted that the above assertions are summarizations of the consultation and Task Force inputs in those focus areas and are not relaying a granular view of the consultations themselves.

The core priorities and actionable recommendations emerging from the consultation and Task Force reports are being considered in the drafting of Canada's AI strategy, which will be will be released in 2026.

For access to the Task Force reports and the dataset of input received from the public, visit the Open Government Portal.

USE OF AI IN THE ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

To process the multitude of responses, ISED applied data science techniques powered by advanced generative AI tools.

ISED developed a scalable, AI-enabled workflow—known as a classification pipeline—that used several large language models, including Canadian models, to clean survey responses and categorize them into a structured set of themes and subthemes (a taxonomy). Manual human review at several stages ensured that intents were meaningful and sensible and that the solution had at least a 90% success rate in categorizing responses into specific intents.

External Canadian research experts were also consulted on the methodology. They provided valuable feedback and suggested a means of integrating the Task Force reports into the analysis to help refine the search for meaningful minority opinions. The methodology, data science and use of AI in this project are all aligned with and conform to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's guidance on the responsible use of artificial intelligence in government. Members of the ISED AI Accelerator participated in the conception and governance of the project to ensure appropriate policy considerations.

The outputs of that pipeline were used in drafting this report, with elements paraphrased or taken directly, because of the capability of the pipeline to provide high-level, public language summaries of the inputs.

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ANNEX A

› ONLINE CONSULTATION PORTAL AND TASK FORCE QUESTIONS

Research and talent

1. How does Canada retain and grow its AI research edge? What are the promising areas that Canada should lean in on, where it can lead the world?
2. How can Canada strengthen coordination across academia, industry, government and defence to accelerate impactful AI research?
3. What conditions are needed to ensure Canadian AI research remains globally competitive and ethically grounded?
4. What efforts are needed to attract, develop and retain top AI talent across research, industry and the public sector?

Accelerating AI adoption across industry and governments

1. Where is the greatest potential for impactful AI adoption in Canada? How can we ensure those sectors with the greatest opportunity can take advantage?
2. What are the key barriers to AI adoption, and how can government and industry work together to accelerate responsible uptake?
3. How will we know if Canada is meaningfully engaging with and adopting AI? What are the best measures of success?

Commercialization of AI

1. What needs to be put in place so Canada can grow globally competitive AI companies while retaining ownership, IP and economic sovereignty?
2. What changes to the Canadian business enabling environment are needed to unlock AI commercialization?
3. How can Canada better connect AI research with commercialization to meet strategic business needs?

Scaling Canadian champions and attracting investments

1. How does Canada get to more and stronger AI industrial champions? What supports would make our champions own the podium?
2. What changes to Canada's landscape of business incentives would accelerate sustainable scaling of AI ventures?
3. How can we best support AI companies to remain rooted in Canada while growing strength in global markets?
4. What lessons can we learn from countries that are successful at investment attraction in AI and tech, both from domestic sources and from foreign capital?

Building safe AI systems and strengthening public trust

1. How can Canada build public trust in AI technologies while addressing the risks they present? What are the most important things to do to build confidence?
2. What frameworks, standards, regulations and norms are needed to ensure AI products in Canada are trustworthy and responsibly deployed?
3. How can Canada proactively engage citizens and businesses to promote responsible AI use and trust in its governance? Who is best placed to lead which efforts that fuel trust?

Education and skills

1. What skills are required for a modern, digital economy, and how can Canada best support their development and deployment in the workforce?
2. How can we enhance AI literacy in Canada, including awareness of AI's limitations and biases?
3. What can Canada do to ensure equitable access to AI literacy across regions, demographics and socioeconomic groups?

Building enabling infrastructure

1. Which infrastructure gaps (compute, data, connectivity) are holding back AI innovation in Canada, and what is stopping Canadian firms from building sovereign infrastructure to address them?
2. How can we ensure equitable access to AI infrastructure across regions, sectors and users (researchers, start-ups, SMEs)?
3. How much sovereign AI compute capacity will we need for our security and growth, and in what formats?

Security of the Canadian infrastructure and capacity

1. What are the emerging security risks associated with AI, and how can Canada proactively mitigate future threats?
2. How can Canada strengthen cybersecurity and safeguard critical infrastructure, data and models in the age of AI?
3. Where can AI better position Canada's protection and defence? What will be required to have a strong AI defensive posture?

ANNEX B

› TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Research and talent

- Gail Murphy, Professor of Computer Science and Vice-President – Research & Innovation, University of British Columbia and Vice-Chair at the Digital Research Alliance of Canada
- Diane Gutiw, Vice-President – Global AI Research Lead, CGI Canada and Co-Chair of the Advisory Council on AI
- Michael Bowling, Professor of Computer Science and Principal Investigator – Reinforcement Learning & Artificial Intelligence Lab, University of Alberta and Research Fellow, Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute and Canada CIFAR AI Chair
- Arvind Gupta, Professor of Computer Science, University of Toronto

Adoption across industry and governments

- Olivier Blais, Co-Founder and Vice-President of AI, Moov.AI and Co-Chair of the Advisory Council on AI
- Cari Covent, Strategic Data and AI Advisor, Technology Executive
- Dan Debow, Chair of the Board, Build Canada

Commercialization of AI

- Louis Têtu, Executive Chairman, Coveo
- Michael Serbinis, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, League and Board Chair of the Perimeter Institute
- Adam Keating, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, CoLab

Scaling our champions and attracting investment

- Patrick Pichette, General Partner, Inovia Capital
- Ajay Agrawal, Professor of Strategic Management, University of Toronto and Founder, Next Canada and Founder, Creative Destruction Lab
- Sonia Sennik, Chief Executive Officer, Creative Destruction Lab
- Ben Bergen, President, Council of Canadian Innovators

Building safe AI systems and public trust in AI

- Mary Wells, Dean of Engineering, University of Waterloo
- Joelle Pineau, Chief AI Officer, Cohere
- Taylor Owen, Founding Director, Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy
- Doyin Adeyemi, JD/MBA Candidate, University of Toronto and 1834 Fellow

Education and skills

- Natiea Vinson, Chief Executive Officer, First Nations Technology Council
- Alex Laplante, Vice-President – Cash Management Technology Canada, Royal Bank of Canada and Board Member at Mitacs
- David Naylor, Professor of Medicine and President Emeritus, University of Toronto
- Sarah Ryan, Senior Research Officer, Canadian Union of Public Employees

Infrastructure

- Garth Gibson, Chief Technology and AI Officer, VDURA
- Ian Rae, President and Chief Executive Officer, Aptum
- Marc Etienne Ouimette, Chair of the Board, Digital Moment and Member, OECD One AI Group of Experts, Affiliate researcher, sovereign AI, Cambridge University Bennett School of Public Policy

Security

- Shelly Bruce, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for International Governance Innovation
- James Neufeld, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, samdesk
- Sam Ramadori, Co-President and Executive Director, LawZero