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## Strong emphasis on digital transformation of Ontario Government welcomed by ICT sector but concerned regarding cuts that impact the development of tech talent

**MISSISSAUGA, ON (April 12, 2019)** – The [2019 Ontario Budget](#), the first of the Ford Government's mandate announced earlier today, includes a strong message on becoming a leading digital government in Canada – welcome and necessary in today's digital economy. To ensure that Ontario, and the Ontario Government, remains a leader and driver of Canada's digital economy, it's vital that today's government leaders recognize that future success depends on technology-fueled innovation. We cannot afford cuts that will impact the draw of talent and tech firms, local and international. This is the perspective of Canada's leading technology industry association, the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC).

Earlier today Minister Fedeli stated that the Ontario Government believes it is 'time that the government held itself to the same customer service standards as private sector businesses' – a point ITAC and its members highlighted through its [2019 Pre-Budget Submission](#) to the Ford Government late last year.

"Ontario is now viewed as a global leader in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), cyber security and robotics – all of which have, and will have, tremendous impact on individuals and organizations alike," said Denise Shortt, interim president and CEO, ITAC. "Citizens increasingly expect government to be as efficient and effective and easy to engage with as the private sector. The Finance Minister notes in the Budget that the private sector, for the most part, has moved to technology modernization. Every government should look to do the same."

The Ontario Government's goal of being first province in Canada to achieve an all-of-government digital approach is a positive step forward. A strategy that improves digital platforms to make services more accessible and easy to use, that incorporates a digital-first approach to healthcare and focuses on education for digital skills are all important and welcomed measures.

However, the ICT industry is concerned about the ability of the government to implement these plans due to budget cuts in several departments. These include Government and Consumer Services, a key driver of digital government implementation, as well as the significant cut to the Ministry of Economic Development. Competing as it does in an international marketplace for tech investments, it is important for Ontario to have the resources to be proactive on this front.

International tech firms invest in Ontario is because of the quality of its talent. The province boasts some of the world's leading researchers and experts in high-demand fields like artificial intelligence and cyber security. But while today's announcement has a number of positive approaches to digital, the Government of Ontario must continue to aggressively invest in education as the source of the province's economic prowess. Ontario must we continue to develop its current talent resources, while investing in a skilled population that will be prepared to respond to disruptions in the economy of the future.

“Ontario has a great opportunity to solidify its position as a global ICT leader, but we need more people with ICT skills, complemented by essential skills like critical thinking, adaptiveness, leadership and self-management,” added Shortt. “Technology is impacting every system and every industry. Ontario has a leadership position in Canada and globally, but we cannot coast. We need ongoing government investment to defend and grow the Ontario economy.”

ITAC looks forward to facilitating continued collaboration between government officials and industry leaders to serve the interests of all Ontarians and Ontario-based businesses to compete effectively in the global digital economy.

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**About Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC)**

As Canada’s national ICT business association, the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC) champions the development of a robust and sustainable digital economy in Canada. A vital connection between business and government, we provide our members with the advocacy, networking and professional development services that help them to thrive nationally and compete globally. A prominent advocate for the expansion of Canada’s innovative capacity, ITAC encourages technology adoption to capitalize on productivity and performance opportunities across all sectors. A member-driven not-for-profit, ITAC has served as the authoritative national voice of the \$170 billion ICT industry for over 60 years. More than 36,000 Canadian ICT firms create and supply goods and services that contribute to a more productive, competitive, and innovative society. The ICT sector generates over one million jobs directly and indirectly and invests \$4.9 billion annually in R&D, more than any other private sector performer.

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