



ITAC collaborates with Agorize, Microsoft and RBC Future Launch to unveil new upskilling initiative to help prepare students with future-ready skills to thrive in age of disruption and artificial intelligence

New AI Pathways Initiative aims to provide Canadian students with the training and skills development required in today's AI-fueled economy

Mississauga, ON (October 9, 2019) – Today, [Information Technology Association of Canada](#) (ITAC), through its Talent division [ITAC Talent](#), is pleased to announce the launch of the [AI Pathways Initiative](#). This new talent development program, created in collaboration with [Agorize](#), [Isobar Canada](#), [Microsoft Canada](#) and [RBC Future Launch](#), is designed to help unlock new opportunities for students and under-represented communities looking to pursue a career in artificial intelligence (AI).

The focus of this initiative is to equip Canadian students with the knowledge and skills needed to tackle the jobs of the future and be active participants in the digital economy through relevant training, networking, and employability opportunities, including those offered by RBC and Microsoft.

“It’s not enough to meet the demand for tech skills. We must extend our global leadership in innovation and technology,” explains Angela Mondou, president and CEO, ITAC. “Our role as an industry leader is clear: find people with cutting-edge skills in AI, business or leadership, and shape what tomorrow looks like. The AI Pathways Initiative will help to address both talent development and employer needs, establishing a Canadian talent pipeline that will help drive a successful economy.”

AI Pathways is funded in part by the [Government of Canada](#), and is rooted in a mandate to inform and educate Canada’s youth about the expanse of learning pathways and career strategies that are available to them, and the new tech and multi-disciplinary hybrid AI careers these changes are creating. This is important given that Canada’s need for qualified AI workers is growing exponentially, and most the country’s educational institutions are struggling to keep up with the rapidly evolving field. ICTC projects that by 2021, approximately 216,000 new ICT jobs will need to be filled¹; many of which will incorporate AI skills and understanding.

The Initiative will include three key areas of focus, developed under the [Made by AI Campaign](#) brand. This includes the [AI for Societal Impact Challenge](#) (launched September 23, 2019) and [MadeByAI.ca](#), [AI Awareness Week](#) (March 2020), and the [AI Pathways Made By AI Forum](#) (March 4, 2020).

¹ https://www.ictc-ctic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ICTC_Outlook-2021.pdf

This Initiative is an important one for today's economy. Despite news reports of AI skills shortages and job opportunities, learning pathways and career strategies aren't all that clear to today's youth, guidance counsellors, parents – and in some cases, employers. In addition, interested students face a dearth of learning opportunities. Greater investment in Canada's future workforce through concrete learning opportunities, will help build a strong domestic AI industry and reduce inconsistencies in opportunities, education, social status and other disparities across the country.

Quotes

"Canada must continue to find ways to invest in AI-related infrastructure, research, education and innovation. We strongly believe in the value of collaboration and are pleased to work with our partners to help drive home the significance of AI skills development in Canada." Angela Mondou, President and CEO, ITAC.

"We're seeing a radical shift in the way we learn, live, and work. Artificial intelligence is one of the major driving forces of this shift. 65% of children in primary school today are going to have jobs that don't exist yet! For the past 8 years, Agorize has been actively helping students prepare for the skills requirements of the future. Our past 500 challenges and hackathons have given the opportunity to millions of students to learn, grow, and be hired at the world's most innovative companies. We are very excited to organize the AI Pathways challenge with ITAC, Microsoft, and the RBC to make AI talent blossom in Canada." Aurelie Wen, Managing Partner, Agorize Canada

"As the world continues to be transformed by technology, everyone should have access to the tools and digital skills critical for their future success. At Microsoft, we firmly believe that creating a culture in which technology blends with human potential is the key to thriving in this new cloud economy and are pleased to partner with ITAC and RBC to help upskill Canadians, particularly those in underserved communities." Kevin Peesker, President, Microsoft Canada

"As digital and machine technology advances, the next generation of Canadians will need to be more adaptive, creative and collaborative, adding and refining skills to keep pace with a world of work undergoing profound change. That's what RBC Future Launch is all about, and through our partnership with ITAC, we hope to enable young people to identify, articulate and build their skills—and help young Canadians develop them." Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship, RBC. "

"Working with organizations like ITAC, who likewise believe in the shared vision to champion the development of a robust and sustainable digital economy in Canada, is testament to our growing partnership as their Digital Agency of Record. And Initiatives like AI Pathways, where we combined the power of storytelling with the creative use of technology, to motivate consumer behaviour and engagement around the future of AI, is an exciting first in our partnership." Tara Macwilliam, Managing Director, Isobar Canada

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 \$184 billion ICT industry for over 60 years. More than 39,000 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 \$6.1 billion annually in R&D, more than any other private sector performer.

About ITAC Talent

[ITAC Talent](#) is the Talent division of ITAC, the Information Technology Association of Canada, Canada's ICT business association. ITAC Talent works with visionary business leaders, the public sector and educators to develop and implement a talent strategy designed to motivate young people to select technology-related careers, and to improve the availability and quality of post-secondary tech-related education. ITAC Talent has proven that tech sector employers will invest in partnership with government to create the strategically important skills to fuel growth. Through powerful collaboration, ITAC has improved the education of thousands of students, and brought together the immense power of stakeholders.

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