

TECHNATION^{CA}

February 10, 2022

TECHNATION's 2022 Ontario Budget Submission: Maintain focus on digital transformation and innovation

[TECHNATION](#) urges the Government of Ontario to prioritize investment in health system transformation and digital health innovation, in procurement modernization to support digital government, and to focus on the technology sector as a key driver of our economic future, to help the province recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to set the path forward for sustainable economic success for all regions of Ontario.

Health System Transformation and Digital Health Innovation

TECHNATION applauds the Ontario Government's efforts to enable access to virtual care during the pandemic, utilizing existing and proven digital health technologies available to Ontario physicians. Access to virtual care for Ontarians will continue to play a significant role, during both recovery and post COVID -19 phases, with an efficient and effective balance between in person and virtual visits.

We support the priority investment in developing and implementing the provincial health data and digital strategies to further catalyze Ontario's health system transformation and digital health innovation. We also encourage further investment in the following innovative and technology-based areas:

- **Cybersecurity** – for continued safety, privacy and accessibility for Ontarians and the Ontario health system, and to avoid the potential of billions of dollars in costs for ransom payments.
- **Health Data and Interoperability Standards** – the selection, development, and implementation of nationally and internationally accepted standards¹ to provide healthcare data for clinicians and policy makers between point of care systems and provincial digital health assets, including Ontario's Long Term Care communities.
- **Ontario's Digital Health Regulation** – to ensure patients and caregivers get timely, digital access to their personal health information, so they are more informed and better able to manage their health, and to reduce costs for patients, caregivers, and government. Investment here is critical with the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in health care.

Ontario's *Digital First for Health Strategy* has proven to be a valuable plan, aligning best practices in decision making, governance and allocation of investment. We encourage the government to continue with this roadmap, to ensure the best quality and access to healthcare for all Ontarians.

Procurement Modernization to support Digital Government

The Ontario Government made critical investments in digital government prior to the pandemic, and these investments enabled the government to respond quickly to citizens' needs throughout the COVID-19 crisis. It is important that as we emerge from the pandemic, the Government continue with its modernization efforts, and that it fully embraces industry-leading innovations to deliver on the way

¹ For example, the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security guidance for security categorization of cloud-based services.

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forward. Ontario is home to a strong local industry, with a vast network of suppliers. The Government should further leverage its existing ecosystem to adopt solutions – not to develop in-house (“buy-tech, don’t build tech”).

TECHNATION also encourages the Government of Ontario to engage tech industry leaders early on, developing a true collaboration approach as we have been afforded by the federal government, to assist with the province’s digital transformation and procurement reform, in support of delivering online services to the citizens of Ontario.

Ontario should also consider piloting agile procurement, leveraging [Canada’s Digital Marketplace](#), to uncover innovative domestic solutions to its complex problems. This will afford the government a low-risk approach to working with tech scale-ups to experiment and prototype solutions across various ministries. Leveraging Ontario’s immense purchasing power is a unique lever to drive Ontario’s economic recovery that must not be ignored.

Ontario’s Tech Sector – Driving Economic Recovery

More readily than any other sector, Ontario’s tech industry (including large, medium and small enterprises), is positioned to drive Ontario’s economic recovery, fuel the creation of innovative, high-quality, well-paying jobs, and position our province for sustainable, long-term success.

TECHNATION urges the Ontario government to:

- Leverage existing programs such as TECHNATION’s [CareerFinder](#) to identify and communicate clear and barrier-free learning and career pathways, helping youth and displaced workers explore potential career opportunities in tech;
- Identify, fund, and promote remote learning opportunities for individuals seeking tech sector employment to reskill / upskill, while remaining within their communities in all regions of Ontario;
- Ensure the development of cybersecurity talent is a strategic priority for the province. In an effort to enhance skills in leading edge technologies (such as cybersecurity and AI), provincial funding opportunities (e.g., Skills Development Fund) must adopt this priority in its proposal selection criteria.
- Support technology adoption through targeted tax credits (such as the Ontario Cooperative Education Tax Credit) and programs to stimulate investment in digital transformation projects;
- Model relevant Digital Mainstreet activities to fit a broader scope of ‘off Digital Mainstreet’ companies and their much-needed tech adoption;
- Support work integrated learning for young people, offering wage subsidies to enable more employers to leverage this emerging talent stream; and
- Help close the digital divide with continued investments in rural broadband, working with industry to find creative methods of delivering this as quickly as possible.

TECHNATION would welcome the opportunity to present its recommendations to the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. For further information please contact Nevin French, Vice President, Policy, at nfrench@technationcanada.ca

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About TECHNATION

TECHNATION: Uniting technology, government and community for Canada's Future. As a national industry association, TECHNATION is the industry-government nexus for technology prosperity in Canada. We unite Canada's technology sector, governments and communities to enable technology prosperity from coast to coast to coast. We promote growth by connecting Canadian scale-ups with global tech leaders; engaging the global supply chain; filling the technology talent pipeline; and providing advocacy, professional development and networking opportunities across industry and government. We develop solutions to achieve both the national and global goals that Canada's \$184 Billion technology industry shares with governments of all levels. Technology prosperity that benefits everyone relies on a strong partnership between the private and public sectors. TECHNATION was formerly called the Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC).

As a prominent advocate for the expansion of Canada's innovation capacity, TECHNATION encourages technology adoption to capitalize on productivity and performance opportunities across all sectors. A member-driven not-for-profit, TECHNATION 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.

