AI for All: Canada focuses on responsible adoption

June 8, 2026

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On June 4, Canada unveiled *AI for All*, its new national artificial intelligence strategy. Anchored in the principle that the benefits of AI must accrue to all Canadians, the strategy emphasizes the democratization of AI through expanded training, governance, and Canadian infrastructure.

A strategy centred on adoption

Canada's new national AI strategy rests on the premise that the benefits of AI will materialize only if individuals, businesses, and institutions are able to use it with confidence.

The government notes a significant gap between AI's potential in Canada and its actual adoption. According to Statistics Canada, only 12% of Canadian businesses used AI to produce goods or services between mid-2024 and mid-2025. The stated objective is to increase that rate to 60% by 2034.

To achieve this, the strategy is structured around six pillars: protecting Canadians and safeguarding democracy, developing skills, promoting adoption, building sovereign infrastructure, supporting Canadian AI champions, and strengthening trusted international partnerships.

Trust as a driver of adoption

The strategy emphasizes that trust is not presented as an obstacle to innovation, but rather as a condition for its adoption. In particular, the strategy provides for the modernization of privacy rules, protection against certain online harms, transparency of AI systems, and strengthened capacity for the Canadian AI Safety Institute.

The government also announced its intention to advance measures such as watermarking AI-generated content, transparent model evaluation, a Canadian certification program for trustworthy AI,

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and support for the standards ecosystem.

For organizations, this confirms an underlying trend: AI will not be assessed solely on the basis of technical performance, but also on its transparency, security, governance, and protection of personal information.

Training before broad deployment

The strategy places significant emphasis on AI literacy. Canada plans to create a National AI Literacy Initiative, provide training content to one million post-secondary students and more than 3,000 teachers, and give post-secondary students access to trustworthy AI agents.

This approach reflects the recognition that AI adoption depends not only on access to tools, but also on users' ability to understand risks, limitations, biases, misinformation, and privacy issues.

The strategy also extends training efforts to workers already in the labour market. It provides support for reskilling pathways for mid-career workers, practical training tailored to real-world AI use cases in workplaces, and employer-led training, particularly with the support of colleges, CEGEPs, and polytechnic institutions. The objective is to ensure that AI adoption benefits workers by strengthening their skills, productivity, and ability to participate in the transformation of their organizations.

Helping organizations move from experimentation to implementation

This component of the strategy is aimed particularly at small and medium-sized enterprises. The government observes that many organizations are already experimenting with AI, but that the transition to sustainable integration remains more difficult. Identified barriers include costs, access to expertise, and uncertainty about the first steps to be taken.

Measures announced include the Business Development Bank of Canada's LIFT program, a $500 million initiative to help Canadian SMEs access the financing needed to integrate AI tools into their operations, as well as a $500 million investment to strengthen the Regional Artificial Intelligence Initiative. The strategy also provides for AI literacy and readiness assessment tools to help businesses identify concrete use cases.

Health as the first "national mission"

The government plans to launch an AI missions program. The first mission will focus on health, with $200 million allocated to improving outcomes in that sector. The strategy specifically targets applications related to access to care, wait times, avoidable visits, and reducing physicians' administrative burden.

This mission-based approach reflects a desire to concentrate efforts on concrete problems rather than treating AI as an abstract technology. It also seeks to bring researchers, businesses, governments, and practitioners together around measurable objectives.

Sovereignty as a strategic issue

The strategy presents digital sovereignty as a central issue. It notes that several essential capabilities (computing, cloud infrastructure, connectivity, data, and talent) remain largely located outside Canada. This dependence can expose sensitive data, intellectual property, and critical infrastructure to foreign rules or decisions.

Canada plans, among other things, to build a world-class public supercomputer, expand sovereign computing and cloud infrastructure, and invest in secure digital systems for government operations.

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Supporting Canadian AI champions

The strategy also links sovereignty to the ability to grow Canadian businesses domestically. The government states that, in order to retain its most successful entrepreneurs and companies, as well as its most valuable intellectual property, Canada must strengthen its investment environment, support domestic commercialization, and enable companies to compete from within Canada. In this regard, the strategy provides, among other measures, an additional $700 million in affordable sovereign computing capacity for Canadian SMEs, allowing them to develop, test, and deploy their products on Canadian infrastructure rather than relying primarily on foreign platforms.

Establishing trusted international partnerships

Finally, the strategy presents international alliances as a lever for resilience, sovereignty, and market access. Canada intends to work with trusted partners to develop shared AI capabilities, harmonize standards, support more resilient supply chains, and offer alternatives to closed systems or systems that are not aligned with democratic values. This direction includes expanding the Sovereign Technology Alliance, supporting open-source AI, and using diplomatic and trade networks to attract investment, promote Canadian champions, and open new markets.

Key takeaways

The publication of the *AI for All* strategy confirms a shift observed for several years: the question is no longer whether organizations will adopt AI, but how they will do so.

For several years, discussions surrounding AI focused primarily on technological breakthroughs, investment, and competitiveness. Canada's strategy instead emphasizes the conditions required for sustainable adoption: trust, skills, governance, infrastructure, and organizations' ability to integrate these tools into their day-to-day operations.

This shift is significant. The question is no longer only what AI is capable of doing, but how organizations can use it effectively, responsibly, and in a manner suited to their context.

In this respect, the challenges facing organizations in the coming years will likely be less technological than organizational. The ability to develop a culture of innovation, train teams, implement appropriate governance mechanisms, and maintain stakeholder trust may prove just as decisive as the choice of tools themselves.

The federal strategy also acknowledges a reality that is becoming increasingly clear: AI is no longer solely a matter of productivity or innovation. It is gradually becoming an issue of sovereignty, economic resilience, and long-term competitiveness.

In this context, it will be particularly interesting to observe how organizations, institutions, and the various levels of government translate these directions into concrete practices. As is often the case with innovation, true transformation will not arise solely from the technologies that exist, but from the way they are integrated into the processes, decisions, and relationships of trust that shape our organizations.

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