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August 18, 2025

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Finance and National Revenue
Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0G5
yourbudget-votrebudget@fin.gc.ca

Subject: Budget 2025: Strengthening Canada's Economy and Workforce Through Strategic Investment in Marketing and AI Skills

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA), the voice of Canada's marketing profession, we are pleased to submit our recommendations for the 2025 federal budget.

Marketing has never been more critical to Canada's economic success, with large national brands and thousands of small and mid-sized businesses relying on strategic and effective marketing to grow, compete, and remain resilient in an ever-changing marketplace. We believe that targeted investments in workforce development, particularly in high-growth and core business areas such as marketing, are essential to building the strongest economy in the G7.

The marketing profession itself has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade, driven by seismic technological advancements, evolving consumer expectations, and a surge in data-driven decision-making. This rapid pace of change necessitates continuous learning and upskilling for marketing professionals to ensure organizations remain competitive and successful. The demand for digital marketing skills has skyrocketed, with the Conference Board of Canada estimating a more than 90% growth in demand over the past five years.

Despite this widespread need, the profession faces challenges in recruiting and retaining diverse talent, particularly from equity-deserving groups. To address these critical needs and ensure Canada's economic prosperity and global competitiveness, we present two recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Invest in and Expand the Proven Upskilling for Industry Initiative, Prioritizing High-Growth and Core Business Areas Such as Marketing

The Government of Canada's **Upskilling for Industry Initiative**, launched in February 2023, has proven effective in enabling employers to scale industry-led approaches for upskilling and



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redeploying workers. Marketing stands out as a compelling case study for the success of this initiative.

The Digital Marketing Skills Canada (DMSC) program, created in 2023 by a consortium led by the CMA with partners Jelly Academy and Growclass, is a prime example of an initiative delivering **tangible results**. DMSC equips marketers at all levels with cutting-edge skills and knowledge in Canada's rapidly evolving digital marketing sector, emphasizing technical proficiency in emerging technologies, data-driven strategies, and ethical standards.

The DMSC program educates marketers on crucial skills and ethical implications, covering topics such as data analytics, digital marketing, content strategy, social media, customer relationship management, data privacy, transparency, and consumer trust.

Its outcomes are compelling:

1. A total of **1,527 mid-career Canadians were upskilled** between January 2024 and March 2025.
2. Over **1,200 applications were received** in the most recent quarter (April to June 2025)
3. **More than 65% of the latest quarter's participants come from equity-deserving groups** (women, BIPOC).
4. Approximately **80% of DMSC graduates from the first year of the program found employment, exceeding the target**.
5. More than 700 SMEs were supported with upskilled marketers who actively contributed to their success
6. More than **238 employer, industry, networking, and referral partners** were engaged in job demand validation and program design.

DMSC is on track to exceed its latest objective of training 500 mid-career Canadians by December 2025, while simultaneously strengthening new and untapped pipelines of diverse talent for Canada's best up-and-coming SMEs, helping them compete globally. The success of DMSC underscores the high demand for marketing upskilling and the effectiveness of the Upskilling for Industry Initiative.

Therefore, it is crucial to sustain and expand support for this initiative, making it accessible to marketers across various industry sectors and regions, including small and medium-sized enterprises. Renewed funding for employer-driven initiatives like the Upskilling for Industry Initiative will enable programs like DMSC to expand and help more Canadians contribute to a growing and resilient economy.



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Recommendation #2: Expand the Government of Canada's Investments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) by Establishing a National AI Workforce Readiness Program

While Canada has a foundational national AI strategy and has invested billions in AI and digital research since 2017, further government investments are needed to equip Canadians with the skills to adopt this evolving technology. As highlighted by Prime Minister Carney's mandate letter, timely access to education and training is essential for Canadians to find new rewarding careers created by AI.

A Q2 2025 Statistics Canada survey reveals a surge in AI adoption, with over 30% of Information and Communications Technology, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and Finance companies integrating AI by mid-2025.

These sectors alone contribute \$340 billion to GDP and employ 2.8 million workers. Government support for AI initiatives in these sectors, specifically training for workers in AI literacy, ethical AI principles, and human-AI collaboration skills, will significantly boost local, regional, and national economies.

The CMA is actively contributing to this need. We offer a wide range of training programs, including several on the ethical and effective use of AI.

In April 2025, the CMA released key resources such as the **CMA Guide on AI for Marketers: Using AI Safely and for Positive Business Impact**, along with **CMA Accountability Checklists for AI in Marketing**, and **Setting the Stage on AI: A CMA Primer on AI for Marketers**. These materials, developed by senior marketing leaders and endorsed by the Vector Institute, outline regulatory expectations, offer practical insights, and suggest best practices for ethical AI leverage. Additionally, in April 2025, the CMA launched the **CMA Mastery Series** of weekly AI Playbooks to equip marketers with the knowledge and skills to navigate AI's opportunities and challenges.

Building on the success of these materials, the CMA is well-positioned to play a vital role in providing workers and companies with the necessary skills and education to responsibly adopt AI.

Modern marketing has grown well beyond mass advertising. It is a sophisticated, analytical discipline driven by data that connects businesses with their ideal customers through relevant communications, ultimately driving revenue, enhancing customer experiences, and fostering long-term business success. The rapid evolution of this field necessitates continuous upskilling.



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Conclusion: Renew and expand funding for the Upskilling for Industry Initiative and establish a National AI workforce readiness program.

With your leadership and support, Budget 2025 will renew and expand funding for the Upskilling for Industry Initiative and establish a national AI workforce readiness program.

These investments are not merely expenditures but strategic imperatives that will empower Canadian workers, foster innovation, strengthen our businesses, and ensure Canada remains a competitive and thriving G7 nation in the digital and AI-driven global economy.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. We look forward to collaborating with you to build a skilled and adaptable workforce for Canada's future.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alison Simpson", is positioned below the "Kindest regards," text.

Alison Simpson
President & CEO
Canadian Marketing Association