

A RESOURCE FOR BUSINESSES



Vol. 62. Issue 6  
June 2025



## JUNE HIGHLIGHTS

*Diversity, Creativity, Celebration  
& The Voices Shaping Tomorrow*



**Business Link**  
Media Group

# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

As we step into June, we are excited to present a vibrant edition of Business Link Digital, filled with inspiring stories and critical insights that reflect the dynamic landscape of our business community.

In this issue, we celebrate the **Niagara 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards Ceremony**, recognizing the remarkable contributions of young leaders who are shaping our economy. We also delve into the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our feature "**Why DEI Matters: One Community, Many Perspectives**" highlighting the strength that comes from embracing varied viewpoints.

Join us in commemorating the **FirstOntario PAC's 10th anniversary**, a decade marked by community engagement and creativity. Additionally, we proudly acknowledge the **Leadership Niagara 2024–2025 Community Leadership Graduates**, who are poised to make a meaningful impact in our region.

This month's publication also brings you highlights from the **Niagara Canada International Film Festival (NCIFF) 2025**, an event that showcases innovative ideas and initiatives in the film industry. In light of recent economic challenges, we examine the potential repercussions of U.S. tariffs on our local economy in "**Hamilton Braces for Billion-Dollar Blow from U.S. Tariffs**" and discuss the proactive measures Ontario is taking to safeguard workers amid uncertainty.

Understanding consumer behavior is crucial, especially as we explore "**The Gen Z Consumer Shift: What Modern Brands Need to Know**" providing valuable insights for businesses aiming to connect with this influential demographic. Lastly, we celebrate Google's commitment to education and innovation with their investment of **\$13 million to train 2 million Canadians in Artificial Intelligence**, a significant step towards equipping our workforce for the future.

We hope you find this edition enlightening and engaging. Thank you for being part of our community and for your continued support of local business initiatives.

Yours in Business  
Marilyn Tian, M.B.A  
President & Co-Publisher  
Business Link Media Group



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# Business Link Celebrates Niagara's Emerging Leaders at the 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards Ceremony

May 30, 2025 | Niagara Falls, ON – On the evening of May 29, over 300 guests gathered at the Holiday Inn in St. Catharines to honour Niagara's next generation of leaders at the 22nd Annual 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards, hosted by Business Link Media Group.



The event recognized 40 exceptional individuals under the age of 40 for their leadership, business success, and community contributions across diverse industries. Serving as Masters of Ceremony, Jessica Potts (Class of 2006) and Zach Dadson (Class of 2018) led the evening with warmth and energy, introducing each award recipient to an enthusiastic audience of family, friends, employers, and community supporters.

## A Night of Recognition and Inspiration

The celebration welcomed several dignitaries, including Jim Diodati, Mayor of Niagara Falls; Sandra Easton, Mayor of Lincoln; and Regional Councillor Bob Gale, among others. Notably, congratulatory certificates were sent to each winner from MP Tony Baldinelli and MPPs Jennie Stevens, Wayne Gates, and Sam Oosterhoff. Over 20 alumni of the program also returned to support the newest cohort, reinforcing the strong community bond built over the program's two-decade history. Arie Barendregt, President of Triple Automation and the evening's Presenting Sponsor, delivered an inspiring keynote address highlighting the critical role of innovation and entrepreneurship in building resilient local economies.

## Spotlight on Lifelong Impact

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the 40 Under Forty Alumni Impact Award. Mayor Jim Diodati, a 2004 alumnus and the first recipient of the award, spoke about its significance before passing the torch. Brendon Buckler, Vice President of Niagara Commercial Financial Services at RBC, presented the 2025 award to 2010 alumna Madam Justice Leanne E. Standryk of the Superior Court of Justice, celebrating her enduring impact on the region.



From left to right: Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, Madam Justice Leanne E. Standryk, and Brendon Buckler.



*From left to right: Lindsey Mazza and Kelly Frechette*

The evening also included a sneak peek at the upcoming 2025 40 Under Forty Alumni Summit, introduced by 2004 and 2007 alumna Vittoria Wikston, who is leading its organization. Guests enjoyed dinner before the much-anticipated awards presentations.

### Honouring Excellence Across Niagara

The 2025 class of recipients was presented with their awards by Bob Gale and Arie Barendregt. In a special moment, 2023 alumna Kelly Frechette, Co-owner of Board Boss Drywall Inc., presented the Best in Class Award to Lindsey Mazza for her exceptional leadership and dedication to the community.

In her closing remarks, Marilyn Tian, President of Business Link Media Group, expressed gratitude to sponsors, alumni, and volunteers, emphasizing the role of collaboration in strengthening Niagara's business landscape. "The 40 Under Forty program is more than an award—it's a growing community of leaders lifting each other up," she noted.

### From Recognition to Innovation

Since 2003, Business Link Media Group has honoured 880 individuals in Niagara and 440 in Hamilton through this prestigious program. As a company, Business Link has transformed from a traditional publisher into a full-service marketing firm, offering advanced business solutions, including cutting-edge AI technologies, to support local growth.

## BUSINESS LINK HONORING TWO DECADES OF LEADERSHIP

Sponsorship opportunities are available for the 2025 Alumni Summit. Partnering with this event allows your organization to showcase its commitment to Niagara's brightest leaders while gaining meaningful exposure within the 40u40 network. For more information on sponsorship packages, please contact us at [40u40@businesslinkmedia.com](mailto:40u40@businesslinkmedia.com) or visit [www.businesslinkmedia.com/2025niagaraalumnisummit](http://www.businesslinkmedia.com/2025niagaraalumnisummit)

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TUESDAY

09/23/2025

1PM TO 5PM

# WHY DEI MATTERS: ONE COMMUNITY, MANY PERSPECTIVES

## A MEANINGFUL GATHERING IN NIAGARA FALLS

The City of Niagara Falls proudly hosted the “Why DEI Matters: One Community, Many Perspectives” event this past week—a truly unifying occasion that brought together a diverse cross-section of community leaders, organizations, youth, and residents. Through a collaborative effort with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, the event set an inspiring tone for celebrating and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across all sectors of society.

### A Day of Meaningful Dialogue and Shared Commitment

Central to the event was an engaging panel discussion that not only deepened the community’s understanding of DEI but also showcased practical strategies for nurturing inclusive environments. The panel featured an impressive lineup of experts:

- **Dr. Cecil E. Ertorer** – Canisius University: Dr. Ertorer, serving as the event’s moderator, guided the conversation with thoughtful questions and reflections, setting the tone for a rich and inclusive dialogue.
- **Dr. Shaheen Shariff**, PhD, MBA, CHRL – University of Niagara Falls Canada: Dr. Shariff discussed how academic institutions can lead by example in integrating DEI into both their curricula and institutional cultures.
- **Celeste Turner** – Niagara Falls Community Health Centre: Turner shared strategies on ensuring that health services and workplace practices are reflective of and responsive to community diversity.
- **Zainab Awad** – Niagara Health System: Awad focused on the nuances of measuring impact and dispelling myths surrounding DEI, stressing that transparency and accountability are key.
- **Cassandra Ogunniyi** – Niagara Region: Ogunniyi brought insights into sustainable community initiatives, emphasizing how localized strategies can create ripple effects in promoting comprehensive inclusion.

Each panelist offered actionable takeaways, underscoring that DEI must be embedded in organizational strategy as a core commitment—not a fleeting trend. They encouraged audiences to pose bold questions such as, “Whose perspective is missing from this decision?” and to view every challenge as an opportunity for continuous learning and reflection.



## Spotlight on the DEI Awards

An exciting new development from the event was the introduction of the DEI Awards—a set of honors designed to recognize individuals and organizations making a lasting impact through their commitment to DEI efforts. The awards are presented in several categories:

- Workplace DEI Award: Celebrating organizations that prioritize diversity representation, deliver inclusive training, and demonstrate strong leadership accountability.
- Community Impact DEI Award: Recognizing local initiatives and advocates who are driving inclusive change throughout Niagara Falls.
- Youth Empowerment DEI Award: Honouring young changemakers and youth-focused programs that work to elevate underrepresented voices.

With the applications now open and the deadline extended to June 30, 2025, community members are encouraged to visit [survey.alchemer.ca.com/s3/50288437/DEI-Awards-Application](https://survey.alchemer.ca.com/s3/50288437/DEI-Awards-Application) for more information or to submit a nomination.



Scan the QR to nominated 

## Moving Forward Together

“Why DEI Matters” was not just an event – it was a statement. A statement that Niagara Falls continues to be a community where differences are celebrated, equity is prioritized, and everyone has a seat at the table.

As we reflect on the insights and energy shared during this gathering, we look forward to continuing these important conversations and turning them into action. DEI is not a one-time topic – it’s an ongoing commitment to creating spaces where all individuals feel valued, heard, and empowered.



2nd DEI Summit Group Photo

# ONTARIO ACTS TO PROTECT WORKERS AMID ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

As global markets remain unpredictable and economic pressures mount, the Government of Ontario is taking decisive steps to protect workers, support job security, and bolster the province's economy. Through targeted investments and policy changes, the province is focusing on worker training, wage support, workplace safety, and regulation of employment practices.



## Investing in Skills and Workforce Resilience

At the heart of Ontario's plan is a major expansion of the *Skills Development Fund*, which will see nearly \$1 billion invested over the next three years. This brings the total fund to \$2.5 billion, aimed at helping workers impacted by layoffs or economic shifts. The goal is to provide upskilling opportunities and connect individuals with good-paying, in-demand jobs, while building a more adaptive and resilient workforce.



## Boosting Workplace Safety and Reducing Costs

To further support employers and enhance worker safety, Ontario will reduce the average WSIB premium rate from \$1.30 to \$1.25 per \$100 of insurable payroll, starting in 2025. At the same time, eligible businesses will receive a one-time WSIB surplus rebate, giving them more flexibility to invest in health and safety measures or retain staff. These moves aim to improve working conditions while easing cost pressures on businesses.



## Regulating Temporary Work and Recruitment

In response to growing concerns about worker exploitation, Ontario has implemented new licensing requirements for temporary help agencies and foreign worker recruiters, effective January 1, 2024. This regulation is designed to ensure fair treatment of workers across sectors and hold agencies accountable for ethical hiring practices.



## Raising the Bar with a Higher Minimum Wage

The government has also responded to the rising cost of living with a minimum wage increase to \$16.55 per hour, in effect since October 1, 2023. This increase is expected to benefit nearly one million workers across the province, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, retail, and service, offering greater financial stability to lower-income earners.



## A Proactive Approach to Uncertain Times

These measures reflect Ontario's broader commitment to safeguarding its workforce in the face of economic headwinds. By balancing business support with worker protections, the province aims to sustain economic growth while prioritizing the wellbeing and dignity of its labor force.

Source: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1005740/ontario-taking-action-to-protect-workers-amid-economic-uncertainty>

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Incentives cover up to **100%** of total installed costs\*

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\$19,500** per unit

**10,001 – 15,000 CFM exhaust  
\$24,500** per unit

Visit [enbridgegas.com/installdkv](http://enbridgegas.com/installdkv) for program details.



Email [energyservices@enbridge.com](mailto:energyservices@enbridge.com) today to confirm you qualify.

\* Terms and conditions apply. Visit program websites for complete details.

<sup>†</sup> Any references to energy savings are based on the assumption that the participant is reducing their natural gas consumption through participation in the Small Business Program. The savings claim is solely intended for informational purposes and is in reference to the Ontario Energy Board Technical Resource Manual. Actual savings may vary substantially for each project depending on variables including, but not limited to building type, operational output, building energy consumption and equipment operations and usage.

\*<sup>TM</sup> Save on Energy is a trademark of the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO). Used under license.

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# A Decade of Culture: FirstOntario PAC Celebrates 10 Years of Community and Creativity

This year marks a major milestone for the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre (PAC) in downtown St. Catharines as it celebrates its 10th anniversary. Since opening its doors in 2015, the PAC has become a cornerstone of Niagara's cultural landscape—a place where creativity thrives, community gathers, and live performance takes centre stage.

Over the past decade, the PAC has hosted hundreds of performances featuring both local and international artists across music, theatre, dance, film, and more. It has offered audiences unforgettable experiences while also serving as a launchpad for emerging talent and a stage for voices that reflect the rich diversity of the region.



But the PAC's impact reaches far beyond the stage. It has welcomed thousands of visitors, engaged youth through educational programs, and collaborated with artists, schools, and cultural groups across Niagara. Its presence has helped energize the downtown core, offering an inclusive space where the community connects through the arts.

Now, as the PAC marks this milestone, it looks ahead with the launch of a dynamic new season. This year's programming continues its mission to present bold, inclusive, and inspiring performances that spark conversation and celebrate identity.

From classical music to contemporary theatre, film, and multidisciplinary collaborations, the 10th anniversary season offers something for everyone—reflecting the PAC's lasting commitment to world-class artistry and local talent alike.

As it steps into its next chapter, the FirstOntario PAC does so with deep gratitude to the community that has supported it from the start. This anniversary honours not only the performers who've taken its stage, but also the audiences and partners who've helped shape its success.

For tickets and the full season lineup, visit [firstontariopac.ca](http://firstontariopac.ca).

# **My Mulan: A Fantasy Dance Drama**

## **Returns to Ignite the Stage This Summer**

**PRESENTED BY MY MULAN CULTURE INC.**

**PARTRIDGE HALL, FIRSTONTARIO PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE | AUGUST 8-10, 2025**

After sold-out performances and rave reviews, My Mulan returns this August to the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre for three nights only.

This all-original fantasy dance drama tells a powerful story of courage and connection through stunning visuals and world-class choreography. A modern girl, a legendary warrior, and a cross-cultural journey that speaks to every generation.

This year's production proudly features a number of exceptional local dancers, selected through open auditions, who will perform alongside professional artists and choreographers to bring this moving story to life. It's a true celebration of local talent and the strength of community arts.

**Whether you love dance, theatre, or inspiring family adventures,  
My Mulan is the must-see performance of the summer.**



### **Ticket Details & Show Dates**

#### **Performance dates:**

August 8-10, 2025

#### **Location:**

FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre  
250 St. Paul St, St. Catharines

#### **More info and tickets:**

[www.mymulan.ca](http://www.mymulan.ca)



### **Exclusive Offer for Niagara's 40 Under Forty Awards Winners**

We are excited to extend a special offer to the talented individuals who were recognized in the Niagara 40 Under Forty Awards. To celebrate your achievements, we're offering an exclusive discount on tickets for **My Mulan: A Fantasy Dance Drama**.

Use code **40under40** at checkout to receive a discount on your tickets.

This is the perfect opportunity to enjoy a world-class performance while supporting local talent and celebrating your success. Don't miss out on this exclusive offer—get your tickets today and experience the magic of My Mulan.

**SPECIAL OFFER**



**LEADERSHIP NIAGARA**  
INSPIRING LEADERS. BUILDING COMMUNITY.

## **LEADERSHIP NIAGARA CELEBRATES 2024-2025 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP GRADUATES**

Leadership Niagara proudly celebrated the graduation of its 2024-2025 Community Leadership Development Program cohort. Beginning their journey in Fall 2024, participants spent their final learning day reflecting on their personal growth and showcasing impactful projects developed in collaboration with local nonprofit partners.

Organizations including ATTCH, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Corners Run Crew, Positive Living Niagara, REACH Niagara, Wellspring, and Niagara Health's Withdrawal Management Services benefited from team-led initiatives. Projects ranged from strategic planning to fundraising and safety development, providing valuable experience for participants while contributing positive growth to Niagara's nonprofit sector.





Each team presented their work and shared the leadership lessons they gained throughout the program. The event highlighted not only their professional growth but also their lasting contributions to the community. Teams worked on projects such as strategic, fundraising, and safety plans, which provided opportunities for participants to apply competencies developed in the program, while advancing programming and funding opportunities for Niagara's not-for-profit sector. At our final learning day, the participants took the stage and shared their personal learning by explaining how they had supported these groups.

This transformative program was made possible through generous sponsorship. Visionary sponsors included Niagara Casinos NC Community and Niagara College. Business Link supported at the Corporate level, with the Niagara Association of Realtors as an Associate sponsor, and the Centre for Leading and Living as a Community sponsor. Additional Learning Day support came from Algoma, Niagara Health, Niagara Region, Niagara College Innovation Centre, RBC Financial, and Walker Industries.

**Leadership Niagara extends heartfelt thanks to all who made this year a success.**

**The Community Leadership Development Program could not take place without the generous support of our numerous program and learning day sponsors.**

**Applications for Leadership Niagara's next 2025-26 CLDP are open. Don't hesitate to apply today to secure your spot in a network of brilliant Niagara leaders!**

[leadershipniagara.ca/leadership-niagara-community-leadership-development-program-application](https://leadershipniagara.ca/leadership-niagara-community-leadership-development-program-application)

# A Cinematic Celebration in Niagara: Highlights from NCIFF 2025

The curtain has closed on another remarkable edition of the Niagara Canada International Film Festival (NCIFF), held June 6–8, 2025, at the iconic Greg Frewin Theatre in Niagara Falls. Now in its sixth year, the festival continues to shine as one of Canada's most inspiring platforms for global storytelling and cultural connection.



## An International Showcase in an Iconic Destination

Bringing the world to Niagara Falls through film, NCIFF embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion—spotlighting voices across continents and genres. Filmmakers shared compelling narratives that celebrated the complexity of human experience, fulfilling the festival's mission to build bridges between communities through the power of cinema.

## Notable Guests and Industry Presence

One of the standout moments of the weekend was the presence of VIP Guest of Honour Donna Smith, the first woman to head production at Universal Pictures. Under her leadership, more than 120 films were released, including iconic titles like Schindler's List, Jurassic Park, Apollo 13, and Back to the Future. Her insights into the film industry's evolution brought depth to the weekend's celebrations.

**Donna Smith**  
Film Producer



Local leaders such as Mayor Jim Diodati and Regional Councillor Joyce Morocco also showed support, affirming the city's commitment to fostering arts and culture in the Niagara region.

## A Three-Day Celebration of Storytelling

**Friday, June 6 – “Red Wine on Red Carpet”:** The weekend began with an elegant networking and wine event, setting a relaxed and celebratory tone for what was to come.

**Saturday, June 7:** A full day of screenings, filmmaker Q&As, and thought-provoking discussions welcomed audiences from morning to night, followed by a private after-party that allowed creatives and cinephiles to connect off-screen.

**Sunday, June 8:** The festival closed with more screenings and a finale that celebrated outstanding achievements in filmmaking across over 40 categories, from Best Documentary to First-Time Filmmaker, along with acting, directing, and screenplay awards.



**Gordon So**  
NICFF President

“Surround yourself only with people who can lift you up.”



**Jey Jeyakanthan**  
Executive Festival Director

“Build with faith, lead with integrity, and God will bless the work of your hands.”



**Elyza Valdez**  
Director of Sponsorship

“When God is your CEO, success isn’t just measured in profit — it’s measured in purpose, people, and divine timing.”



## Leadership Rooted in Vision and Creativity

The strength of NCIFF lies in its leadership. Gordon So, Founder and President, continues to cultivate a festival built on creativity, diversity, and integrity. As he reminded guests, “Surround yourself only with people who can lift you up.” Working alongside him, Jey Jeyakanthan, Executive Festival Director, leads with passion and vision. His words captured the spirit of the weekend: “Build with faith, lead with integrity, and God will bless the work of your hands.”

Equally impactful was the presence of Elyza Valdez, whose heartfelt words resonated with attendees: “When God is your CEO, success isn’t just measured in profit — it’s measured in purpose, people, and divine timing.”

Workshops, panels, and networking opportunities created space for meaningful connections and creative growth. From first-time filmmakers to seasoned producers, attendees left with more than just memories—they left with renewed purpose and inspiration.

For more information or to stay connected with the festival year-round, visit [niff.ca](http://niff.ca) or follow their journey on Facebook at Niagara Canada International Film Festival.

JUNE 15-JULY 15

# EVENTS

## *Espresso Yourself Pride Chat*

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Niagara Falls Public Library, 4848 Victoria Ave. Niagara Falls

Tickets: [www.unfc.ca/](http://www.unfc.ca/)

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## *Niagara Jazz Festival presents: Summer Mardi Gras*

Friday, June 20, 2025

Oakes Garden Theatre, 5825 River Rd, Niagara Falls

Event: [www.niagaraparks.com/events/event/niagara-jazz-festival?promocode=MARDIGRAS-EB](http://www.niagaraparks.com/events/event/niagara-jazz-festival?promocode=MARDIGRAS-EB)

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## *Canada Day Celebration at Firemen's Park*

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

Firemen's Park, 2275 Dorchester Road

Event: [niagarafalls.ca/events/annual-events/canada-day/default.aspx](http://niagarafalls.ca/events/annual-events/canada-day/default.aspx)

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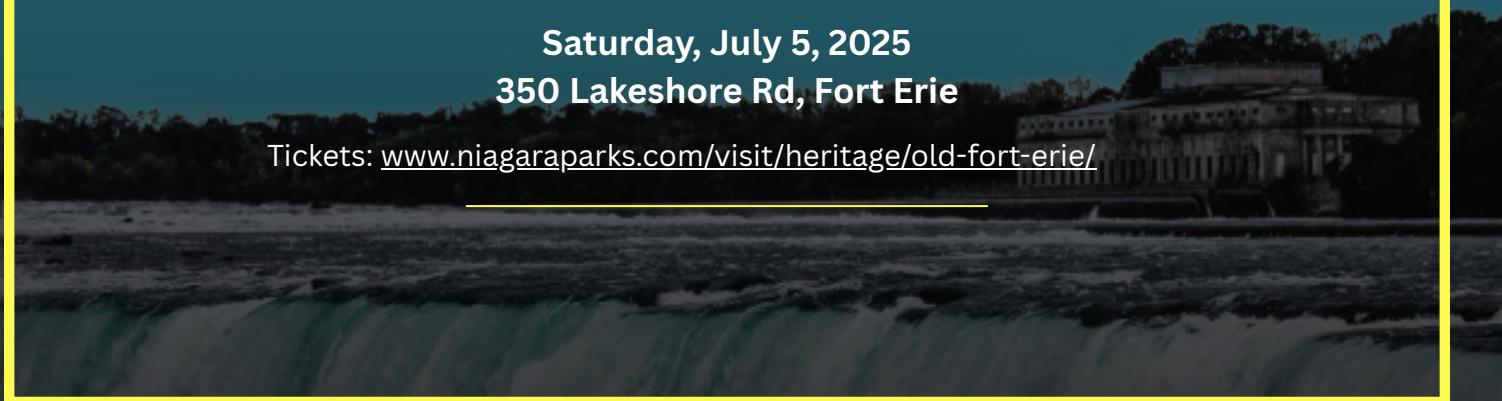
## *The Battle of Chippawa Commemorative Ceremony*

Saturday, July 5, 2025

350 Lakeshore Rd, Fort Erie

Tickets: [www.niagaraparks.com/visit/heritage/old-fort-erie/](http://www.niagaraparks.com/visit/heritage/old-fort-erie/)

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# The Gen Z Consumer Shift: What Modern Brands Need to Know

By Ryan Li

Now representing over 20% of Canada's population and spending more than \$15 billion every year, Gen Z is reshaping how companies think about marketing. As the first generation that grew up in the digital age and as young people coming of age in today's uncertain economic environment, businesses are quickly discovering that 30-second cable TV advertisements and boring graphics simply don't cut it anymore. Here are a couple tips to better reach the market's fastest-growing demographic, from a Gen Z'er myself:



## Be memorable.

We're online all the time, which means we're flooded with ads, influencers, memes, and content—most of which we'll forget in five minutes. To stand out, your brand has to be bold, weird, or funny (ideally all three). Social media accounts that don't take themselves too seriously tend to do best. From Duolingo's unhinged owl that threatens users if they forget to do their daily language lessons to Wendy's snarky Twitter replies promoting their burgers (seriously, go read them; they're hilarious), companies that embrace Gen Z humour win our attention and respect. They speak our language.

## Young people have no attention span.

All that time spent scrolling on TikTok or Instagram Reels has trained young people to expect instant information. They don't want to sit through long videos, read cluttered flyers, or click "read more" on Instagram captions that could've said it in two lines. Gen Z has an average attention span of eight seconds—the same as a goldfish. We have no time for firms to beat around the bush. Notice how these sentences are short and sweet: they don't make you wait. This is how Gen Z communicates.

Businesses need to ditch wordy slogans and get straight to the point. Think clean visuals, clear benefits, and fast-loading content. If you don't grab us in the first few seconds, we've already scrolled past you.





## Affordability and reliability are king.

Let's be real: the economy is rough. Rent is high, tuition is brutal, and groceries cost more than they used to. We don't have the disposable income that companies think we do. That's why price matters so much. But a low price alone isn't enough. We want to know that what we're buying will last, work well, and feel worth it. After all, dirt cheap prices and flashy advertising may attract us the first time, but it's product quality and effectiveness that makes us stay. After all, we can't afford to spend money on something that doesn't work —no matter how cheap or shiny it is. Branding is what gets you in the door, but performance is what makes you stay inside.

**Speak our language, respect our budgets, and make stuff that works. It's that simple. You'll get lifelong customers.**

### About the Author:

*Ryan Li is a dedicated Youth Journalist from Vancouver. He is known for his insightful reporting and passion for journalism. Currently, Ryan is studying public policy at Georgetown University in the U.S.*

### Sources:

- <https://www.thinkgenz.com/post/gen-z-spending-in-canada-revealed>
- <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021003/98-200-x2021003-eng.cfm>
- <https://www.goldenstepsaba.com/resources/average-attention-span>

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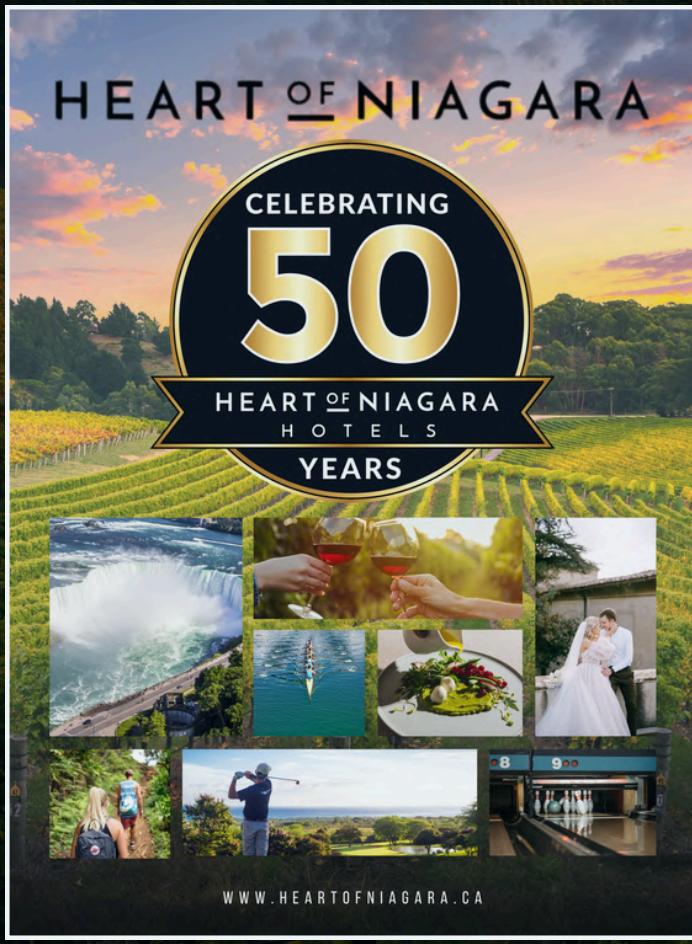


# HEART OF NIAGARA

Promote Where Niagara Travels, Celebrates & Relaxes

## Advertise in the 50th Anniversary Edition of Heart of Niagara

Join us in marking five decades of welcoming visitors to Niagara. The commemorative edition of Heart of Niagara will highlight the region's best in hospitality, entertainment, and local charm.



Placed directly in guest rooms and suites across Heart of Niagara properties, and supported by enhanced digital visibility through the Business Link AI Chat Portal, your message will connect with travelers where they stay, explore, and plan their next move.



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## STEEL TOWN UNDER SIEGE: HAMILTON BRACES FOR BILLION-DOLLAR BLOW FROM U.S. TARIFFS

Hamilton is at the epicenter of rising tensions in North American trade after the U.S. imposed a 50% tariff on foreign steel. Known as Canada's steel capital, the city is bracing for a potential economic ripple effect that could stretch far beyond steel mills. Experts warn that every job lost inside the plants could impact several others in the surrounding economy—from logistics and engineering to local shops.

Economists like Colin Mang of McMaster University emphasize that the consequences extend to broader economic ecosystems, as Hamilton's steel supports national infrastructure and global trade. In response, local leaders are demanding action. City council is calling on the federal government to prioritize Hamilton-made steel for infrastructure projects like the Metrolinx LRT, and they're lobbying for a Canadian Border Services Agency office at the Port of Hamilton to ensure efficient exports.



The federal government has responded with retaliatory tariffs on U.S. steel and aluminum, and is pushing a national "Buy Canadian" movement. While symbolic efforts like these have sparked economic nationalism—encouraging local consumption and even some U.S. boycotts—many in Hamilton feel these gestures don't go far enough to protect long-term industry health.

For steelworkers, the concern is deeply personal. Generations have built their lives around the mills, and the fear of decline is palpable. Mayor Andrea Horwath voiced the city's defiant spirit, reminding the nation that Hamilton helped build Canada with its steel and refuses to be sidelined.

As policy battles unfold in Washington, Ottawa, and Queen's Park, Hamilton's fate hangs in the balance. Whether this historic industrial city can weather another storm—or be forced to reinvent itself—depends on swift, coordinated action in the face of global uncertainty.

Full article here:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/hamilton-reacts-to-50-per-cent-steel-tariffs-1.7552471>

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# **SMOKE WITHOUT BORDERS**

## *Canadian Wildfires Ignite North America's Air Quality Crisis*

### Canada's Fire Season Comes Early – and Furious

Fire season in Canada typically ramps up later in the summer. But this year, unusually warm, dry conditions and strong winds have fueled an earlier and more aggressive start. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, and parts of British Columbia have declared emergencies, with smoke and fire conditions threatening entire towns. As of this week, more than 25,000 Canadians have been forced to evacuate, leaving behind homes and communities in danger of being consumed by the flames.

The fires are not just large in number – they're behaving in alarming ways. So-called "zombie fires," which smolder underground throughout the winter and reignite in the spring, are resurfacing, further complicating suppression efforts. These fires, hidden from view and often burning through deep layers of peat, can be difficult to detect until they explode into open flame.

### From Canadian Forests to American Skies

As the fires burn, massive plumes of smoke have drifted far beyond Canadian borders, carried by jet streams into the heart of the United States. Air quality alerts have been issued across large swaths of the Midwest and Northeast. Cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee have experienced AQI (Air Quality Index) readings in the "unhealthy" range, with some areas peaking above 160 – levels that pose risks even to healthy individuals.

In New York, Pennsylvania, and parts of New England, residents woke up to a thick haze, the sun filtered into a dim orange glow. Schools canceled outdoor activities. Vulnerable groups – including children, the elderly, and those with respiratory issues – were advised to remain indoors. Health authorities urged people to wear N95 masks if they had to venture outside.



## An Environmental Alarm Bell

Wildfires have always been part of Canada's ecological landscape, but their scale and intensity have grown dramatically in recent years. Scientists say this is a direct consequence of climate change: higher temperatures, earlier snowmelt, and prolonged droughts have created ideal conditions for megafires to thrive.

In 2023, Canada experienced its worst wildfire season on record, burning more than 18 million hectares. If the early trends of 2025 continue, this year could rival — or surpass — that devastating milestone.

## Global Reach, Local Impact

The smoke crisis isn't limited to North America. High-altitude winds have carried Canadian wildfire smoke across the Atlantic, with some particles being detected as far away as Western Europe. While not a health threat at that distance, the visibility of the haze is a potent reminder that environmental disasters are increasingly global in nature.

Meanwhile, the economic impact is mounting. Flights have been delayed due to poor visibility, agriculture is affected by sun-blocking haze, and hospitals are seeing spikes in respiratory-related visits. In hard-hit regions of Canada, tourism and local economies have come to a halt as communities focus on evacuation and survival.

## What Now?

Canada has ramped up its firefighting efforts, with federal support deployed and international aid on standby. But even as water bombers roar through smoky skies and firefighters labor on the ground, experts say the key lies in prevention, not just reaction.

Long-term solutions will require better forest management, updated emergency infrastructure, and — most importantly — a global commitment to addressing the climate crisis fueling these disasters. In the meantime, both Canada and the U.S. must continue to adapt to the reality that wildfire smoke is no longer an occasional nuisance — it's a recurring public health emergency.

As the smoke settles, the message is clear: in an interconnected world, what burns in one country can choke another. And unless the root causes are tackled, this may only be a preview of summers to come.

Sources:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz9yv2g07p0o>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/weather/wildfires/canadian-wildfires-trigger-air-quality-alerts-us-rcna210397>



# Canada's AI Leap

## Google Invests \$13 Million to Train 2 Million Canadians in Artificial Intelligence

Google Canada has announced a transformative \$13 million investment aimed at training over two million Canadians in artificial intelligence (AI). Through the newly launched Google.org AI Opportunity Fund – Canada, the initiative seeks to make AI education accessible to a wide and diverse population, focusing not only on professionals but also on underrepresented groups including Indigenous communities, newcomers, and job seekers.

The program is being delivered in partnership with four key organizations: the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (Amii), the First Nations Technology Council, Skills for Change, and the Toronto Public Library. Together, they will roll out training programs and workshops across Canada, covering everything from foundational AI skills to ethical considerations and real-world applications.

Amii will work with 25 post-secondary institutions to integrate AI education into the curriculum for more than 125,000 students. The First Nations Technology Council will ensure Indigenous learners receive culturally relevant training and expanded digital access. Skills for Change will focus on equipping marginalized groups with job-ready AI skills. The Toronto Public Library will provide free AI literacy workshops, covering practical tools, data privacy, and entrepreneurial applications.

This effort comes as generative AI is expected to contribute up to \$230 billion to Canada's economy. Despite high interest—especially among younger Canadians—access to quality training remains limited. Google's initiative aims to bridge that gap.

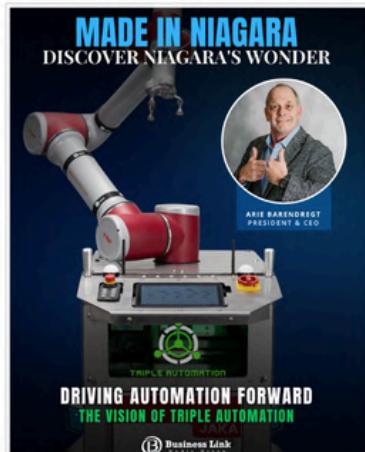
Ultimately, the fund is designed to democratize AI knowledge and prepare Canada's workforce for a rapidly evolving digital economy. By partnering with grassroots organizations and trusted institutions, Google hopes to reduce barriers and ensure that the benefits of AI are widely shared, reinforcing Canada's global leadership in AI innovation while empowering individuals in every community.

Read full article here: <https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/automation-ai/google-invests-13-million-for-ai-skills-development-training-across-canada/392676>



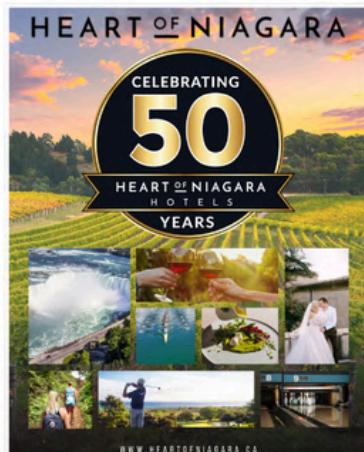
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