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In the Cloud or Under One? How Canada Can Stop its Fall in Global I.T. Competitiveness

Mississauga, ON, November 16, 20xx--There are dark skies over Canada's IT Industry. The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) International IT Competitiveness Index, recently released for 20xx by the Business Software Alliance (BSA), shows that Canada has lost significant ground in Information Technology to other countries.

As quoted in a recent issue of "eWeekly Canada," writer Dave Chappelle cites BSA President and CEO Robert Holleyman, who comments that Canada has "slipped in this year's ranking," from fourth overall to only seventh, "because of its performance in legal environment"— how the government various and interest groups or citizens have not resolved the need to protect intellectual property.

The BSA reports rapid and large advances—of as many as 10 or 11 spots--from countries like India and Malaysia, respectively. And other competitors like Singapore, Mexico, as well as Austria, Germany and Poland improved across all of the categories (including human capital and research and development, and others) that the poll measures.

During its annual "IT Professionalism Week" (October 31-November 4), the Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS), Canada's only accreditation-providing I.T. Association, asked readers over Facebook and LinkedIn what Canada should do to stop its fall in Global I.T. Competitiveness. Two winners were randomly accepted and awarded by receiving their choice of a book, provided by the contest's sponsor, CIPS/McGraw Hill Ryerson's online bookstore.

Over LinkedIn, respondents including Goran Kulenovic offered perennial arguments of the need for better instruction in Maths and Sciences, in primary and secondary schools. One of the contest-winners, Don Clayton, wrote generally of the need for "a government who recognizes the value of IT."

For industry leaders, however, including CIPS Executives, Canada will never regain its lost competitiveness if the I.T. sector fails to advance in its "Professionalism"—which Scott Ambler, the other winner of the CIPS' contest, says is "to treat the IT Profession like a profession" and not like only a job.

CIPS Marketing Coordinator Jonathan Elias himself observes that compared to the Sciences or Business, the profession of IT is currently "an afterthought."

CIPS has provided professionalism for the past 20 years by certifying and annually re-certifying an IT practitioner as an "Information Services Professional" (ISP), and, since 2008, additionally, as an Information Technology Certified Professional" (ITCP).

In the *Globe and Mail* in 2006, Editor Shane Schick writes that the ISP Certification shows that practitioners belong to a professional governing body that can testify to their competence, and adherence to ethics (following laws such as confidentiality or privacy, protecting the public trust and avoiding conflicts of interest).

The ITCP designation shows employers, clients, students and others that practitioners understand how to use effectively and apply their organizational experience to projects.

Yet professionalism presents a vicious circle: unlike in Medicine or Engineering, the field of IT is populated by people with varied and undefined training—or none at all. IT is not introduced in high school as a viable field, particularly for women. The industry also lacks history (at roughly 50 years of age). These factors, and the speed of its changes— "too much, too fast," Elias says—make it a difficult field in which to test practitioners. But at the same time, he says, these challenges over certification must be met, as apathy does nothing to build the industry.

But Canada's technology industry has historically responded to the issue with just that-- apathy.

The attitude is one that Schick warns is "dangerous, as our dependency on computers grows." CIPS' Marketing Coordinator Jonathan Elias argues that Canada's I.T. industry urgently needs certification to regulate and maintain itself, when it experiences glitches in software, or malfunctionings like the recent multi-day failure of Canadian Research in Motion's BlackBerry device.

Through community engagement and professionalism, including online events like the recent CIPS/McGraw Hill Ryerson-sponsored online discussion, CIPS envisions itself as the voice of Canada's IT industry. It is also, Elias adds, a crucial platform for the industry to evolve soundly and consistently.

Industry leaders of CIPS, both past and present, observe that if Canada's IT practitioners don't soon remove their blinders over professionalism and legally-conscious community engagement, the industry will falter further. IT in Canada--and those who rely on it—may soon be stuck "under a cloud." Not running in one.

About CIPS: CIPS began in 1958 as a dedicated group of data processors, gathering to discuss common concerns and remains the only accrediting IT association in Canada. Xxxx.

The **Economist Intelligence Unit's** (EIU) **IT Industry Competitiveness Index 2011** is a leading resource for economic and business research, forecasting and analysis. Xxxx.

The **Business Software Alliance**, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a non-profit trade association, created to advance the goals of the software industry and its hardware partners. It is active in more than 80 countries and 11 offices around the world. Xxxx.

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