



# AI at the tipping point

Why Canadian businesses  
must act now

Insights from the KPMG  
AI Made Real Summits

April-May 2025



**Every time a transformative technology arrives, the pattern is the same. Some experiment early. Others wait. Over time, the advantage shifts to the early movers, and waiting becomes a competitive risk.**

That’s where we are with AI.

Between April and May 2025, the KPMG AI Summits brought together 1,500+ business and technology leaders from across Canada at six events across the country. The message from every region was clear: AI is no longer experimental. It’s quickly becoming central to how businesses operate and compete.

These summits were designed to be practical and hands-on. The sessions gave leaders a chance to share what they’re learning inside

their own organizations, including real examples, early wins, and challenges they’ve faced along the way. Participants also engaged with live demos, tried out AI tools, and spoke directly with practitioners who are already putting them into action.

This briefing captures the key insights from those conversations and outlines the steps business leaders can take now to move from exploration to tangible results.

**1. AI is the electricity of our era**

When electricity first entered the industrial world, swapping out steam engines for electric motors wasn’t enough. The real value came when businesses reimagined their operations around the new capability.

We’re at the same inflection point with AI.

Some companies are using AI to improve isolated tasks or run small-scale pilots. That’s a good starting point, but the real gains come when AI is embedded across core functions.

The companies treating AI as a foundational capability – not just a side project in the innovation lab – are the ones reshaping their industries. The rest risk getting left behind.

**AI Made Real: KPMG AI Summits**

From April 2025 to May 2025, our AI Summit roadshow made stops in the following six Canadian cities

<b>Montréal</b>	April 10
<b>Vancouver</b>	May 1
<b>Toronto</b>	May 7
<b>Edmonton</b>	May 13
<b>Calgary</b>	May 15
<b>Kitchener</b>	May 27





## 2. Lead with the business outcome

Too many AI initiatives start with the wrong question: “What can this tool do?”

Effective leaders flip that question: “What business problem are we solving for?”

Whether it’s improving customer service, speeding up decision-making, or reducing manual work, the most impactful AI projects are rooted in clear business outcomes.

The model or platform matters, but it’s secondary. Start with the goal. Then use AI to get there faster and more effectively.



## 3. Perfect data isn’t the starting point

Good data improves AI performance. That’s true. However, insisting on perfect data before starting is one of the fastest ways to stall momentum.

No organization has flawless data, and waiting until you do means waiting forever.

The smarter path is to find use cases where the data is already strong enough to deliver a useful result. Launch from there. Then, as you learn, your organization can improve data quality where it matters most.

Think of it as a feedback loop: each successful AI project gives you more justification—and more insight—to improve your data, which unlocks bigger opportunities down the line.



## 4. Your people can make or break your AI program

AI isn’t just a tech upgrade. It’s a change in how people work. Employees are open to new tools, but that openness fades fast if they’re left out of the process or made to feel replaceable.

Organizations that get this right show their teams how AI will help them—not replace them. They invest in training, create room for experimentation and failure, and make AI part of the everyday conversation.

The best tech means nothing without employee buy-in.

## 5. Canada has an edge, but we’re at risk of losing it

Canada is rightly known for its leadership in AI research. We have top-tier universities, respected labs, and globally recognized experts. Some of the world’s most important AI breakthroughs began here.

But academic excellence doesn’t automatically translate into commercial leadership.

Many Canadian businesses remain cautious. Productivity remains flat. In some sectors, a lack of competition creates the illusion that there’s no urgency to change.

That’s a mistake.

Your next competitor – whether from another country or another industry – is likely building an AI-enabled business model that’s faster, leaner, and more customer-centric.

The risk isn’t only falling behind. It’s becoming irrelevant.

## 6. Don't get stuck in the AI pilot loop

It's easy to launch an AI pilot. It's much harder to scale it.

Many companies find themselves in a loop of endless proof-of-concept projects that never make it into production.

The way forward is to adopt a two-pronged strategy:

- **Point solutions:** Fast, targeted wins that solve specific problems with minimal disruption.
- **System solutions:** Longer-term initiatives that rewire how the business operates—these unlock deeper value.

A useful framework for mapping out this strategy includes three levels of AI value:

- **Accelerate:** Make existing processes faster and more cost-effective.
- **Elevate:** Improve current offerings or expand into new areas.
- **Differentiate:** Create new markets or compete in ways that weren't possible before.

You don't need to choose one over the other. A mix of both delivers sustainable progress.

## 7. AI agents are coming - get ready to redesign

AI agents are showing up more often in boardroom conversations. These are systems that can act independently on behalf of users—

analyzing information, making decisions, and taking action across platforms.

Most companies are still testing agents in narrow use cases, such as customer support or automating reports. Yet the biggest benefits will come when these tools are embedded into core operations.

Getting there will require more than plugging agents into existing systems. Companies will need to rethink how work gets done. This means redesigning workflows to remove unnecessary steps, documenting new ways of working, and creating new types of roles.

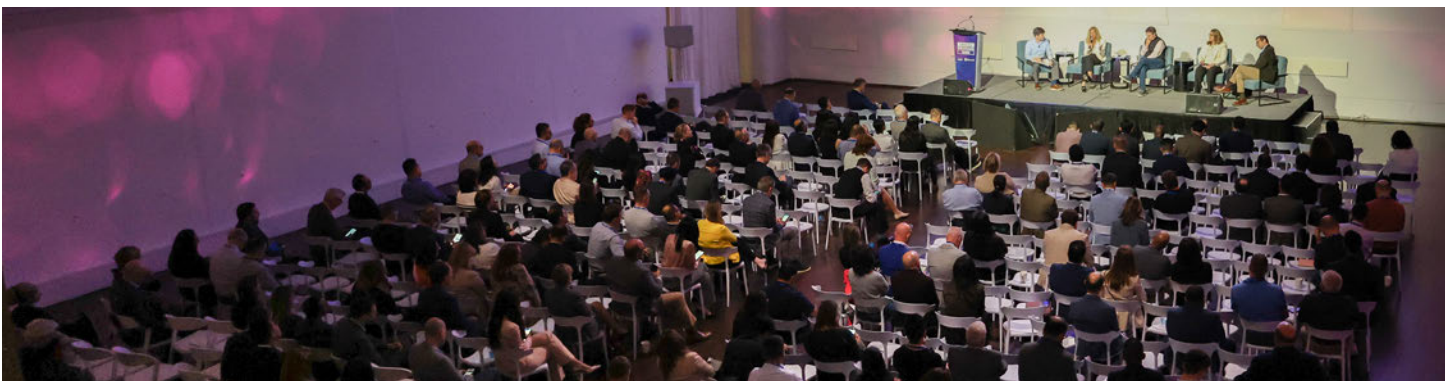
Rather than seeing agents as tools, think of them as digital team members.

## 8. Rethink the division of labour

A helpful way to think about AI's role is this: AI does prediction. People do judgment.

AI is great at generating options, forecasting outcomes, and summarizing information. However, it still struggles with weighing trade-offs, understanding context, navigating ambiguity, or making values-based decisions. These are capabilities that remain uniquely human.

The goal isn't to replace your workforce. It's to amplify their strengths. Let AI handle the repetitive, low-value work. Free up your people for what only they can do: solving complex problems, building relationships, and making judgment calls that require experience and context.





## 9. How the right advisors can help you get there

AI moves fast and the learning curve is steep. Having the right guidance shortens the path from idea to impact.

Experienced advisors don't just bring technical expertise. They bring perspective: what's worked elsewhere, where others have faltered, and how to adapt proven approaches to your specific context.

They help you move faster, avoid common traps, and unlock value sooner.

For many businesses, that kind of support is the difference between stalled potential and lasting transformation.

## 10. Progress beats perfection

There's a cost to waiting. Every month spent on the sidelines gives your competitors more time to learn, adapt, and gain ground.

You don't need to be first. You just need to move.

Start small. Focus on real problems. Build on what works. Scale when ready. Keep your people in the loop.

The future of AI isn't years away. It's already here. The leaders of tomorrow are already acting today.



## About the KPMG AI Made Real Summits

The KPMG AI Made Real Summits, presented in collaboration with Microsoft, brought together 1,500+ business and technology leaders from across Canada to explore how AI is reshaping industries—and what it takes to move from ideas to real impact.

**If you're interested in attending an upcoming session, or collaborating with KPMG in the future, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our [AI Services team](#) to learn more.**