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MEDIA RELEASE

ACTUA RELEASES FIRST OF-ITS-KIND CANADIAN SURVEY ON KIDS ATTITUDES ABOUT CODING ***Major gender gaps and lack of opportunities among chief findings***

February 21, 2018, Ottawa, Ontario - Today, Actua released the results of a first-of-its-kind survey, which assessed the confidence and attitudes of Canadian kids and parents toward coding, and jobs of the future. The results revealed a largely enthusiastic cohort of students and parents, but also a persistent gender gap, a socio-economic divide, and a concerning lack of opportunity to learn to code inside and outside of Canadian schools.

The national survey, conducted by Abacus Research in January 2018, surveyed 1,500 young Canadians and their parents to unearth their attitudes and interest in education and careers that involve using, understanding and producing digital technologies – especially coding. The survey also looked at the extent to which these students had access to educational opportunities to learn coding both inside and outside of the traditional school environment.

“We know that we have a generation of enthusiastic users of new technology like smartphones, texting, video gaming and social media,” says Jennifer Flanagan, CEO and President, Actua. “What we were seeking was a better understanding of their attitudes and interest about future careers in coding and programming and their access to learning opportunities.”

Among the most revealing findings of the survey:

- **A healthy enthusiasm** among children and parents. Over 92 per cent of students and parents believe that knowing how to use digital technology will be very or extremely important to their future careers.
- **Access is a problem.** More than 50 per cent of youth want more opportunities to learn to code but only 1/3rd said they have access to that kind of opportunity.
- **The gender gap is deep.** Over 50 percent of boys were very or extremely interested in careers involving coding or programming, but only 27 per cent of girls expressed the same interest.
 - o Boys also express more confidence in their ability to code (41%) vs girls at only 28 per cent.
 - o Boys are twice as likely as girls to participate in a coding program outside of schools.
- There remains **a socio-economic divide.** Parents with a higher education and income regarded digital technologies and careers as more important than those with a lower education and income level.

“We have to do better for our girls,” says Flanagan. “Through access to coding in schools and workshops and by promoting female role models, we can begin to break down the persistent gender barriers that still prevent girls from actively seeking opportunities in the most important skills area for jobs of the future.”

We need girls to have the same exposure as boys to coding programs and we need to shift the narrative away from how girls need to change to fit into technology to how technology needs to change to welcome and support girls and women.

Actua was recently awarded \$10 million of the Government of Canada’s \$50 million CanCode program to support the charity’s initiatives. The funding will be used to support expanded coding programs for girls and young women, Indigenous and other at-risk youth, as well as teacher training (providing teachers training in coding and digital skills as well as resources they can use in the classroom). Over the two-year period, Actua will engage 500,000 youth across every province and territory.

“We are on the cusp of major global shift toward careers that will require sophisticated digital skills,” said Flanagan. “Canada cannot afford to get it wrong. Our competitiveness and our economy will rely on our children having access to world-class coding, programming and STEM education.”

The full report can be found [here](#).

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For more information, and to schedule and interview, please contact:

Chrissy Roebuck, Pomp & Circumstance PR, 416-560-5712 or chrissy@pomppr.com

Kristina Martin, Director of Communications, Actua, 613-882-8432 or kristina.martin@actua.ca