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MEDIA RELEASE

## **Safer Internet Day: Actua takes action to empower youth with tools to stay safe online**

*Ottawa, Ontario, February 11, 2020* — Today marked Safer Internet Day and the gathering of 20 cyber safety experts and thought leaders at Actua's national headquarters who put forward policy recommendations for youth cyber empowerment.

Safer Internet Day promotes safer and more responsible use of online technology. "For Actua, Safer Internet Day is about taking concrete action to empower youth with the skills and awareness they need to be good digital citizens," said Jennifer Flanagan CEO, Actua. "As an organization that supports technology use, we are responsible to give youth tools and training to ensure they are using it safely; just like we would train youth on lab safety and equip them with lab coats and safety goggles, we need to provide them with virtual safety equipment."

Today's roundtable was part of Actua's *Engage.Empower.Connect* (E2C) pilot program which is designed to increase knowledge and confidence among Canadian youth on how to navigate the online world safely. The first phase of this pilot includes consultations with a wide range of experts from law enforcement, cyber security, child psychology, education, youth and more to create the most applicable and effective cyber safety content for youth engagement.

"Building resiliency in the community through positive digital literacy in young people will mitigate risk that we in policing see daily. Whether it be victimization of young people, violence, or the prevalence of hate and bias through cyber mediums, digital skills can have a positive impact on the future of our young people and our community," said roundtable participant Nishan Duraiappah, Chief of Police, Peel Region Police.

Corporate industry representatives, including Microsoft Canada, a funder of Actua, were also at the table: "As the global landscape in digital safety shifts and changes it will take technology companies, governments, and non-profits working together to take further action to tackle these issues and ensure respect, safety and freedom online. Microsoft is committed to helping protect children online and promoting digital civility and applauds Actua for their promotion of cyber empowerment," said Marlene Floyd, National Director, Corporate Affairs, Microsoft Canada.

Actua consults youth at every stage of its program development. Today Kiona Osowski, a grade 12 student from Moncton who studies the effect of media on gender roles, gave her perspective: "Technology is changing and we have to too. Youth have the ability to have a positive relationship with the internet, and we have to embrace that."

Following today's roundtable, Actua will be forming an official advisory committee to continue to consult on this matter. *Engage. Empower. Connect* is supported by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

**About Actua:** Actua is Canada's largest science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) youth outreach network representing [40 university and college based members](#). Each year, Actua's growing network of member organizations reach over 300,000 young Canadians in 500 communities nationwide. Actua focuses on the engagement of underrepresented youth through specialized programs for Indigenous youth, girls and young women, at-risk youth and youth living in Northern and remote communities. Its national InSTEM program reaches over 35,000 Indigenous youth per year in over 200 Indigenous communities. Actua's major funding partners include: Government of Canada, Google Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, RBC Foundation, Suncor Energy Foundation, TD, Microsoft Canada, Finning Canada, Imperial, Toyota Canada Foundation, GE Canada, Mastercard, CIRA and Lockheed Martin Canada. For more information about Actua, visit [actua.ca](http://actua.ca).

- 30 -

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