

# PRESS RELEASE

**The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – Canada (Award Canada)  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Award Canada Celebrates Launch of the Co-curricular Approach Pilot, Thanks Corporate Partners for Their Support**

*[Ottawa, Ontario]* The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – Canada (Award Canada) is thrilled to announce the successful launch of its *Co-curricular Approach* Pilot, a transformative project designed to provide young people across Canada with invaluable experiential learning opportunities. The Co-curricular Approach integrates academic learning with real-world experiences by connecting the Award's framework to curricular learning within publicly funded secondary schools. This initiative is made possible thanks to the generous support of our corporate partners, including BMO, our newest partner in this important work. Their dedication to youth development has helped bring this visionary project to life, and we are deeply grateful for their unwavering commitment.

These partnerships represent a powerful alignment between the private sector and education, amplifying Award Canada's mission to empower youth through the development of essential life skills. The Co-curricular Approach Pilot seeks to bridge the gap between formal education and real-world learning, ensuring young people are equipped with the skills and experiences they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

#### **A Powerful Synergy for National Impact**

Through this initiative, [Award Canada is partnering with Greater Essex County District School Board \(GECDSB\) in Ontario](#) to deliver a holistic, youth-centred model of personal growth. The pilot supports students earning their [Specialist High Skills Major \(SHSM\)](#) diploma, a program that allows students to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) while focusing on a specific economic sector. SHSM is available to students in all pathways – apprenticeship, workplace, college, or university. Award Canada will work with industry and educators to customize students' learning, validate their interests, and celebrate their chosen pathways. This collaboration sets the foundation for future expansion, with discussions underway to extend the initiative to other provinces.

“We have adjusted to living in a world of volatility and uncertainty, but now, perhaps more than ever before, young people are preparing to enter post-secondary education and job-market in a climate of profound economic, social, and technological change.” shared Mark Little, Incoming CEO of Award Canada. “The [Award Canada Way](#) is about unlocking, enabling and developing a Pathway to Potential for young people. Working with industry and educator partners, we are perfectly, even uniquely, positioned to address the current employability challenges, building in-demand skills for the jobs of tomorrow”

The Co-curricular Approach Pilot is grounded in the philosophy of the Award Canada Way, a framework that fosters holistic development through a mix of educational, experiential, and community-based learning. With the support of these visionary corporate partners, this initiative is poised to make a lasting impact on youth across the country, providing them with opportunities to grow, lead, and prepare for the challenges of adulthood.

## Voices of Impact

“BMO is committed to our Purpose, to Boldly Grow the Good *in business and life*, and we’re proud of our ongoing support for education in communities across Canada,” said Helen Seibel, Head, North American Employee & Community Giving, BMO. “By investing in the next generation, we are helping shape academic trajectories and future careers and driving progress for thriving economies and stronger communities.”

Vicki Houston, Director of Education of Greater Essex County District School Board [previously emphasized](#) the value of the framework, stating, "Imagine earning a globally recognized accreditation while participating in activities you love. This framework allows students to set personal goals, gain additional SHSM certifications, and align their learning with real-world experiences. Supporting the GECDSEB's commitment to building confident learners, this initiative will have a lasting impact on students' careers and lives."

It takes many partners to develop such a robust initiative and to make a true and lasting national impact. BMO is among our corporate partners who strongly believe in the resilience of young people and the importance of empowering them. Their support for experiential learning initiatives like this one demonstrates their commitment to better preparing young people for future careers.

As Award Canada continues to expand the reach of its Co-curricular Approach Pilot, it invites other organizations and educational institutions to strategically partner in shaping a brighter future for young people across Canada. Together, we can ensure that every young person has the opportunity to discover their full potential and become active, engaged citizens.

## Join Us in Making a Difference

Award Canada extends its heartfelt thanks to all our valued partners for their leadership and commitment to youth empowerment. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of young people in Canada, ensuring they are equipped for success in both their personal and professional futures.

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## **About Award Canada:**

*The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – Canada (Award Canada) is the national operator of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, a global framework that supports youth development leading to international accreditation. With guidance from adult mentors, each young person is encouraged to challenge themselves, identify and leverage their interests, abilities, and ambitions, then set personal goals in four areas: **skill, physical and mental health, community involvement, and teamwork**. The Award provides fun and motivation by empowering student voice and engagement, enabling them to undertake experiences that build character, personal belief, and lifelong skills.*

*We exist to equip every young person in Canada, regardless of background or life circumstance, with the necessary skills and experience to succeed in life. Whoever they are, wherever they come from, and whatever they define as success, the Award helps young people develop essential skills that only*

*come through experience. We have been supporting youth in Canada for over 60 years, transforming the lives of over 500,000 young people from all backgrounds, cultures, and abilities. Globally, the Award operates in over 130 countries, engaging 1.3 million participants.*

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