

## Ford hires 400 for Canadian connected car research

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Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, center, and Ford Motor Company of Canada CEO Mark Buzzell applaud during an announcement at the Ford Essex Engine Plant in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, on Thursday, March 30, 2017. Ford Motor Co. is hiring more than 300 engineers for a new connected-vehicle research center in Ottawa, Ontario, the automaker said Thursday. (Dave Chidley/The Canadian Press via AP)

Ford Motor Co. will hire approximately 400 employees from software company BlackBerry Ltd. as part of sizable new investments in Canada

that include a connected-vehicle research center in Ottawa, company officials said Thursday.

Ford said the Ottawa research center is part of a \$500 million Canadian (US\$376 million) investment. It comes amid a race by automakers to secure engineering talent to ensure they don't get left behind as vehicles become increasingly automated and connected to each other and the world around them, analysts said.

The new Ottawa Research and Engineering Centre in Canada will focus on research and development across infotainment, in-vehicle modems, gateway modules, driver-assist features and autonomous vehicles, said Ford. Additional facilities will be located in Waterloo and Oakville, Ontario, as well as Cary, North Carolina and Sunrise, Florida. It will be Ford's first center focused on connectivity research and advanced technology in Canada.

Ford also plans to increase sustainability and fuel-economy research at its Windsor and Oakville operations. The company said it will hire approximately 300 engineers in Canada and 100 additional hardware and software engineers in the U.S. to support the work of the Canadian team.

BlackBerry spokeswoman Sarah McKinney confirmed that 400 employees would be transferred from her company, saying it was part of the "pivot from hardware to software" for the company that grew famous as a maker of smartphones.

Ford has said it expected to have a self-driving taxi available by 2021. Last month, the carmaker invested \$1 billion over five years in Argo AI, a startup that makes autonomous vehicle software.

Autotrader analyst Michelle Krebs said her company has done tech studies for the last three years and the one thing that comes up

repeatedly is that millennials want a seamless transition from outside of the car to inside of the car.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks at the Ford Essex Engine Plant in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, on Thursday, March 30, 2017. Ford Motor Co. is hiring more than 300 engineers for a new connected-vehicle research center in Ottawa, Ontario, the automaker said Thursday. (Dave Chidley/The Canadian Press via AP)

"They want to use their phone for a lot of functions in the car like navigation and music. So these systems are being developed and refined," Krebs told The Associated Press.

"Ford is being very aggressive but so are many others so they've got a lot of competition. What you're seeing is that companies are looking for the talent where ever they can find it. A lot of them have gone to Silicon

Valley but since the demand for tech advancement is so high, I'm not surprised they're looking everywhere, including Canada."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne said Thursday that federal and provincial governments will provide Ford with conditional grants of up to \$102.4 million Canadian dollars (US\$77 million) for the projects.

"Today's investments will help create and maintain almost 800 great jobs for Canadians in Windsor and across Ontario, while equipping Canadians with the skills they need to design and build the cars of the future," Trudeau said in a statement. "This is about positioning Canada as a global center for automotive innovation, creating better opportunities for Canadians, and keeping Canada's automotive manufacturing sector competitive."

The three largest North American automakers committed to pumping more than 1 billion Canadian dollars (US\$751 million) combined into their Canadian operations last year.

Raj Nair, Ford executive vice president, global product development and chief technical officer, said that connectivity is critical to the future of mobility.

"Whether it's providing information to help reduce congestion in cities, allowing vehicles and infrastructure to communicate to keep us safer on the road or simply knowing all your personal settings when you enter a self-driving vehicle, connectivity is the key," Nair said.

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