



## EXECUTIVE SUMMIT AGENDA

### MAKING THE HARD CALLS: GOING ALL IN ON CANADA'S FUTURE

February 25th, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 5:15 PM | Reception to follow  
The Globe and Mail Centre | 17th Floor, 351 King St E, Toronto

#### HARD CALLS. BOLD BETS. REAL TRADE-OFFS.

The BHER Executive Summit 2026 convenes senior leaders from business, post-secondary, and government to explore what it will take for Canada to go “all in” on the next economy—and the systems that make delivery possible. Through candid, high-level conversations, we'll dig into the decisions behind scaling AI, modernizing energy, building mission-ready talent pipelines, translating post-secondary research into security and growth, advancing Canada's space ambitions, and renewing public confidence in post-secondary sustainability and accountability.

**8:30 - 9:00 AM**

REGISTRATION / BREAKFAST

**9:00 - 9:15 AM**

OPENING REMARKS: VAL WALKER, CEO, BHER



**Val Walker,**  
CEO, BHER

Title Sponsor Opening Remarks



**Hesham Fahmy,**  
Chief Information  
Officer, TELUS

**9:15 - 10:00 AM**

GOING “ALL IN” ON CANADA'S ECONOMY

Canada is at an inflection point—and the question is what it would take to go “all in” on Canada's next economy in a world being reshaped by AI, energy, and defence/space. This opening conversation will explore how Canada can make big bets, scale what works, and compete to win across these three critical domains.



**Heather Chalmers,**  
President & CEO, GE  
Vernova Canada



**Brian Gallant,**  
CEO of Space Canada  
& former Premier  
of New Brunswick



**Mike Serbinis,**  
Founder & CEO,  
League



**John Stackhouse,**  
Senior Vice-President,  
Office of the CEO, RBC  
(Moderator)

**10:00 - 10:45 AM**

**POWERING CANADA'S NEXT ECONOMY**

If Canada is going to go “all in” on its next economy, it will need to go “all in” on energy—modernizing how we generate, move, and manage power at a pace that matches global competition and net-zero ambitions. This conversation will explore what it will take: unlocking the next wave of generation and grid modernization; aligning regulation, investment, and infrastructure; and building the skilled workforce needed to deliver projects at scale.



**Angie Bruce,**  
Vice-President,  
Indigenous,  
University of  
Manitoba



**Nicolle Butcher,**  
President & CEO,  
Ontario Power  
Generation



**Mary Butler,**  
President & CEO,  
New Brunswick  
Community College



**Michele Harradence,**  
Executive Vice-  
President & President,  
Gas Distribution and  
Storage, Enbridge



**Heather Chalmers,**  
President & CEO, GE  
Vernova Canada  
*(Moderator)*

**10:45 - 11:15 AM**

**IN CONVERSATION WITH LESLIE CHURCH, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**



**Matt McKean,**  
Chief R&D  
Officer, BHER



**Leslie Church,**  
Parliamentary Secretary to the  
Minister of Jobs and Families  
(Persons with Disabilities)

**11:15 - 11:45 AM**

**BREAK**

**11:45 AM - 12:30 PM**

**MISSION READY: BUILDING CANADA'S DEFENCE TALENT PIPELINE**

To strengthen Canada's security in a fast-changing geopolitical and technological environment, Canada will need to modernize how it recruits, trains, and retains its people—building a mission-ready force that can learn faster, adapt under pressure, and stay ready for new demands. This conversation will explore what it will take to build stronger defence talent pipelines: improving recruitment and retention pathways; using AI and tech-enabled learning to accelerate readiness and training outcomes; and deepening partnerships with post-secondary institutions to strengthen skills development, credentialing, and talent mobility.



**Jahanzaib Ansari,**  
Co-Founder &  
CEO, Knockri



**Vice-Admiral  
Angus Topshee,**  
Commander, Royal  
Canadian Navy



**Lieutenant-Colonel  
Jason Virtue,**  
Pilot, Royal Canadian  
Air Force



**Ann Marie Vaughan,**  
President and CEO,  
Humber Polytechnic  
*(Moderator)*

**CONTINUE →**

12:30 - 1:30 PM

## NETWORKING LUNCHEON AND KEYNOTE: SECURING CANADA'S LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL FUTURE



**Chris Madan,**  
VP, Customer Digital Solutions  
& Product and Head of TELUS  
Sovereign AI Factories, TELUS

1:30 - 2:15 PM

## DUAL-USE FRONTIERS: TURNING UNIVERSITY IDEAS INTO SECURITY AND GROWTH

Canada's universities produce world-class research with the potential to strengthen national security and open up new markets. But too often, discoveries stall before they become real-world technologies. This conversation will explore how Canada can translate leading university research into dual-use technologies that deliver civilian value while enhancing resilience and security. We'll focus on the intersection of space, defence, and life sciences, and on practical enablers like clearer IP pathways, mission-driven funding, and talent mobility between labs and firms.



**Rob Annan,**  
President & CEO,  
Genome Canada



**Dave Williams,**  
Retired Canadian Space  
Agency Astronaut,  
Physician, and CEO,  
Leap Biosystems



**Melanie Woodin,**  
President, University  
of Toronto



**Paul Wells,**  
Journalist  
(Moderator)

2:15 - 3:00 PM

## GOING ALL IN ON SPACE: TALENT, IDEAS, AND CANADA'S NEXT FRONTIER

To go "all in" on Canada's next economy and security, Canada will need to go "all in" on space—not as a niche science project, but as a fast-growing platform for climate solutions, communications, sovereignty, and entirely new industries. This conversation will explore what it will take: building world-class talent pipelines; turning research breakthroughs into missions, products, and companies; aligning public and private investment; and positioning Canada to lead—not just participate—in the next wave of the space economy.



**Ed McCauley,**  
President & Vice-  
Chancellor, University  
of Calgary



**Mackenzie Pereira,**  
Junior Fellow,  
Outer Space  
Institute, UBC



**Ewan Reid,**  
Founder & CEO,  
Mission Control



**Robert Thirsk,**  
Retired Canadian Space  
Agency Astronaut and  
Physician  
(Moderator)

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**3:00 - 3:15 PM**

**BREAK**

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**3:15 - 4:00 PM**

**GOING ALL IN ON AI: FROM EXPERIMENTS TO ENTERPRISE-WIDE IMPACT**

Most organizations are drowning in AI pilots that never scale. But Canada's productivity challenge – and the Carney mandate for public service efficiency – demands we move faster from proof-of-concept to enterprise-wide impact. The difference between success and failure often comes down to accessing and adopting high-performance infrastructure.



**Glenda Crisp,**  
CEO, Vector Institute



**Hesham Fahmy,**  
Chief Information  
Officer, TELUS



**Mike Serbinis,**  
Founder & CEO,  
League



**Ivan Semeniuk,**  
Staff Reporter, Science,  
The Globe and Mail  
*(Moderator)*

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**4:00 - 4:45 PM**

**THE POLITICS OF GOING ALL IN: MAKING BIG BETS ON RESEARCH, SKILLS, POST-SECONDARY, AND GROWTH**

For decades, governments have gone “all in” on research, R&D, innovation, and skills—launching big science funds, innovation agendas, and workforce initiatives aimed at productivity and job creation. But the results haven't always matched the promise, and today the pressure to show impact is higher than ever. This armchair conversation will unpack how “bet-the-farm” strategies actually get made in government: what worked, what fell short, and why – and what it would take to rebuild the case for going “all in” again.



**Tyler Meredith,**  
Partner, Meredith  
Boessenkool & Phillips, and  
former Economic Advisor to  
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau



**Jack Mintz,**  
President's Fellow, The  
School of Public Policy,  
University of Calgary



**Val Walker,**  
CEO, BHER  
*(Moderator)*

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**CONTINUE →**

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**4:45 - 5:15 PM**

**IN CONVERSATION WITH KARIM BARDEESY, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**



**Val Walker,**  
CEO, BHER



**Karim Bardeesy,**  
Parliamentary Secretary to  
the Minister of Industry

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**5:15 PM**

**CLOSING REMARKS: VAL WALKER, CEO, BHER  
AND NETWORKING RECEPTION**

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