

Advancing Canada's Ambitions

Ottawa, October 27-28, 2026

Concrétiser les ambitions du Canada

Ottawa, les 27 et 28 octobre 2026

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

All times in this program are in Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) | Plenary sessions available via zoom

7:30-8:30 a.m.

NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Ontario

3rd floor, Westin

8:45-9:15 a.m.

Governor General 2

4th floor, Westin

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND WELCOME REMARKS

Land acknowledgement by Grandmother
Louella Tobias

Welcome remarks by Gabriel Miller, President and
CEO, Universities Canada

9:15-10:15 a.m.

Governor General 2

4th floor, Westin

STATE OF THE NATION: CANADA 18 MONTHS INTO THE CARNEY GOVERNMENT

What is shaping Canada's political moment –
and what should university leaders see
coming? An expert panel will examine the
forces testing the government's agenda and
the economic and geopolitical pressures that
could change its course, and what this may
mean for leadership across Canada.

Moderator:

Vassy Kapelos, Chief Political Correspondent,
CTV News

Speakers:

- Joël-Denis Bellavance, Chef du bureau
d'Ottawa, La Presse
- Fred DeLorey, Partner, NorthStar Public
Affairs
- Meredith Lilly, Professor & Simon Reisman
Chair in International Economic Policy
Norman Paterson School of International
Affairs, Carleton University

10:15-10:30 a.m.

BREAK

10:30-11:30 a.m.

Governor General 2

4th floor, Westin

CANADA-EU ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE: UNIVERSITIES AS STRATEGIC PARTNERS

As the proposed Canada-EU Alliance for the
Future takes shape, how can universities help
strengthen economic security and resilience?
Ahead of the Canada-EU Summit in Montreal,
a conversation with John Hannaford will invite
presidents to explore how research,
innovation, talent and trusted partnerships
can make universities a strategic pillar of a
deeper relationship.

Speaker:

The Honourable John Hannaford, Personal
Representative of the Prime Minister to the EU



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11:30-12:30 p.m. LUNCH

Ontario

3rd floor, Westin

**12:30-1 p.m. KEYNOTE BY THE HONOURABLE
Governor General 2 LISA RAITT**

4th floor, Westin

How can universities help strengthen Canada's economy in a changing trade environment? Drawing on her experience in government and business, Lisa Raitt will explore how strong partnerships and relationships can help institutions advance Canada's trade and economic ambitions.

**1:15-2 p.m. WHAT CANADIANS EXPECT
Governor General 2 FROM UNIVERSITIES NOW**

4th floor, Westin

David Coletto will unpack new public opinion research on how Canadians view universities and what they expect from them today. He will explore how Canadians perceive universities' contributions to economic opportunity, innovation, workforce development and community prosperity, where confidence is strong and where gaps remain. The session will consider what these findings mean for university leadership, member communications, public engagement and the sector's role in addressing Canada's major challenges.

Speaker:

David Coletto, CEO, Abacus Data

**2-2:30 p.m. MAKING THE CASE:
Governor General 2 FROM EVIDENCE TO LEADERSHIP
ACTION**

4th floor, Westin

Crestview will share findings from the national public communications pilot campaign, highlighting the messages, stories and evidence that resonate with different audiences. Presidents will explore how these insights can inform their engagement with governments, boards, students, employers and communities, and help make universities' contributions more concrete, relevant and visible.

Speaker:

Erin Bonokoski, Partner, Crestview

2:30-2:45 p.m. BREAK

**2:45-3:45 p.m. PRESIDENTS' EXCHANGE:
FROM INSIGHT TO INSTITUTIONAL ACTION**

Concurrent sessions - available in person only

**Governor General 2 ADVANCING CANADA'S
4th floor, Westin RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
AMBITIONS**

A discussion among presidents on the next phase of Canada's research, talent and innovation agenda. The exchange will explore how university research can have greater impact, the institutional choices and partnerships needed to advance that contribution and where shared priorities create opportunities for collaboration.



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Moderator: Lisa Philipps, Interim President, York University		
Ontario 3 rd floor, Westin	LEADING AS A REGIONAL ANCHOR: MANDATE, PARTNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY	Regional universities are vital to their communities' economic, social and cultural life. Presidents will explore how to balance community expectations with institutional mandate and financial sustainability, build reciprocal municipal and community partnerships and strengthen recognition of universities' contributions to regional development. Moderator: Jason Dewling, President, Capilano University
Saskatchewan 3 rd floor, Westin	FRANCOPHONE PRIORITIES: SHARED INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION	What priorities could Francophone and bilingual universities advance together? Presidents will explore research and knowledge creation in French, attracting and retaining talent and ensuring federal policies reflect their institutions' circumstances, with a focus on shared interests and opportunities for collaboration and advocacy. Moderator: Stéphane Pallage, Recteur, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)
3:45-4:00 p.m.	BREAK	
4:00-4:45 p.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	CANADA'S AI AMBITIONS: A CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER EVAN SOLOMON	How can Canada turn its AI strengths into lasting economic and public benefits? A fireside conversation with Minister Evan Solomon will explore federal priorities for talent, research and responsible adoption, the importance of Canadian capacity and sovereignty, and how universities can help translate ambition into results. Speaker: The Honourable Evan Solomon, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation
4:45-5 p.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	WRAP-UP	
6-8:30 p.m.	EVENING RECEPTION METROPOLITAIN BRASSERIE 700 Sussex Dr.	An evening of conversation with parliamentarians and diplomats on the issues shaping Canada's future, hosted by AAU, APSN, COU, PACIU, RUCBC and UC.

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

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7:30-8:30 a.m. Ontario 3 rd floor, Westin	NETWORKING BREAKFAST	
8:30-9:30 a.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	UNIVERSITIES CANADA BUSINESS MEETING	Members are invited to join the business meeting of Universities Canada for discussion and votes on matters to advance the business of the organization. Updates on key policy files and other membership matters will also be provided.
9:30-10:15 a.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	ADDRESSING ANTISEMITISM: UNIVERSITY ACTION AND FEDERAL PRIORITIES	A conversation with Minister Marc Miller addressing antisemitism on campuses and the opportunities for universities and government to work together. The discussion will explore how university efforts and federal priorities can reinforce one another, what progress will require and how government can support institutions in addressing antisemitism. Speaker: The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture
10:15-10:30 a.m.	BREAK	
10:30-11:45 a.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	DEFENCE AND SOVEREIGN CAPABILITY	Canada's defence readiness depends on talent, expertise and innovation. A conversation with the Chief of the Defence Staff will explore priority needs, followed by discussion among presidents on how universities can contribute, the barriers they face and opportunities for collaboration to strengthen Canada's sovereignty. Moderator: Kim Brooks, President, Dalhousie University Speaker: General M.A.J. Carignan, Chief of the Defence Staff
11:45-1 p.m. Ontario 3 rd floor, Westin	NETWORKING LUNCH	
1-2 p.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	CLOSING KEYNOTE	At a moment of profound change, what will it take for Canada to translate its ambitions into lasting prosperity, greater independence and renewed national confidence? Andrew Coyne shares reflections on the Canada we are becoming and the Canada we aspire to be. Speaker: Andrew Coyne, Leading Political Analyst & Politics Expert, The Globe and Mail & CBCs The National
2-2:15 p.m. Governor General 2 4 th floor, Westin	ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT STEPS	Closing remarks by Gabriel Miller, President and CEO, Universities Canada



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