POLICY INSIGHTS

The Policy Insights Forum Annual National Recognition

THE NORTH STAR AWARD GALA DINNER



Thursday, September 24, 2026
6:00 PM

Fairmont Château Laurier
1 Rideau Street, Ottawa ON
K1N 8S7



★ **2026 North Star Award Recipient** ★

Honouring **Kevin Ford**

Former CEO, Calian

The Policy Insights Forum is proud to present:

NORTH STAR AWARD GALA DINNER

OTTAWA ★ CANADA

The North Star Award



The North Star Award Gala Dinner, organized by the Policy Insights Forum (PIF), celebrates the remarkable achievements of an outstanding Canadian who has significantly impacted Canada and its people through their work and career. The event honours individuals whose leadership and service have made meaningful contributions to Canada and the world.

This year, we are delighted to recognize Mr. Kevin Ford, former Chief Executive Officer of Calian, for his exceptional leadership in Canada's technology, defence, and professional services sectors. During his ten year tenure as CEO, Kevin led the company through a period of significant growth, expanding its global presence through innovation, strategic acquisitions, diversification, and operational excellence. His accomplishments have earned him numerous honours, including CEO of the Year by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and Ottawa Business Journal, EY Entrepreneur of the Year, and Canada's Defence Executive of the Year.

Proceeds from the Gala will support the event and fund the establishment of an internship in the name of North Star Award recipient Mr. Kevin Ford. The PIF will administer and guide this internship, and Mr. Ford will be invited to mentor the selected intern. This initiative will help inspire and support the next generation of Canadian leaders while continuing his legacy of excellence, innovation, and service.

The Gala serves as a platform to emphasize the importance of service to Canada and its citizens, inspiring individuals to contribute to the public good through government, the military, public service, academia, not-for-profits, and business. Through the North Star Award and its ongoing initiatives, the Policy Insights Forum continues to recognize exceptional leadership while fostering future generations committed to Canada's prosperity and global leadership.

About the Policy Insights Forum



The Policy Insights Forum (PIF) is Canada's leading nonpartisan think tank focused on addressing strategic, over-the-horizon public policy challenges that define our national interest.

At the PIF, we conduct independent research, rigorous analysis, and targeted engagement on the complex issues shaping Canada's future—with a strong emphasis on economic resilience, national security, international affairs, sovereignty, disruptive technologies, and climate adaptation.

The PIF is equally committed to shaping the next generation of public policy leaders. Our national talent development programs include the Emerging Fellows Program, the Dr. Robert Spencer Internship, and our newest addition—the **Kevin Ford North Star Internship**—which recognizes exceptional promise in leadership, innovation, and service to Canada.

Together, we can shape Canada's future, one policy at a time.

The Policy Insights Forum—Engaging Canada's Best Minds®

About Kevin Ford



Kevin Ford, a distinguished Canadian business leader, served as Chief Executive Officer of Calian. Under his leadership, the company achieved significant growth through customer retention, diversification, innovation, and operational excellence, surpassing $700 million in annual revenue while expanding globally.

Mr. Ford's career spans more than 35 years in professional services, technology, and defence. Before becoming CEO, he served as President of Calian's Business and Technology Services Division for five years and spent 11 years at IBM as a Partner in Global Business Services.

Mr. Ford played a key role in Calian's growth, contributing to more than 20 strategic acquisitions that expanded the company's capabilities and international presence while maintaining its strong Canadian roots.

His leadership has been recognized through numerous honours, including CEO of the Year by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and Ottawa Business Journal in 2017, EY Entrepreneur of the Year in 2019, and Canada's Defence Executive of the Year by Canadian Defence Review in 2024.

Mr. Ford remains committed to community service, serving on the Board of the Ottawa Hospital Foundation and previously as Chair of the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI) from 2019 to 2023. He has also supported numerous charitable and community initiatives.

The North Star Award recognizes Mr. Ford's outstanding contributions to Canadian business, innovation, and leadership, as well as his commitment to strengthening Canada's economy and future generations of leaders.

CALIAN
Confidence. Engineered.

Calian is proud to support the North Star Award Gala and to celebrate the enduring legacy of Kevin Ford



During his many years as Calian's CEO, Kevin provided visionary leadership that strengthened the company, expanded its global reach and positioned it for continued success.

His commitment to excellence, innovation and service continues to be reflected in Calian's people, values and mission.

"Kevin's visionary leadership helped shape Calian into the trusted global company it is today. We are proud to celebrate his remarkable legacy and his lasting contributions to Canada's business and defence communities."

Patrick Houston, CEO, Calian Group

About Calian



For 45 years, Calian has delivered mission-critical solutions when failure is not an option. Trusted worldwide, the company empowers governments and organizations in critical industries to overcome obstacles, manage risks and drive progress.

By combining the expertise of its people, proven industry insight, advanced technology and bold innovation, Calian delivers tailored solutions to complex challenges across defence, space, healthcare and nuclear energy. Its work protects lives, strengthens security, advances global connectivity and supports economic progress, making a lasting impact where and when it matters most.

Headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario, Calian employs more than 6,000 people worldwide, with offices and projects spanning North America, Europe and international markets.

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Evening Program



VIP Reception

General Arrival and Informal Networking
6:00 – 7:00 PM

Transition to the Adam Room
7:00 – 7:15 PM

Gala Dinner

Introduction of the Head Table by Jamie Bailie, PIF Liasion
7:15 – 7:20 PM

Land Acknowledgement by Meagan Boucher-Martin, PIF Intern 2024
7:20 – 7:25 PM

National Anthem
7:25 – 7:27 PM

Welcome Remarks and Sponsors Acknowledgement by Goran Samuel Pesic, PIF Chairman
7:27 – 7:35 PM

Dinner Service Begins
7:35 – 9:00 PM

Gala Dinner Program



Address by George Weber, former Chairman of Calian Group
8:00 – 8:10 PM

Address by Patrick Houston, Chief Executive Officer of Calian Group
8:10 – 8:15 PM

Address by Erin Benjamin, Executive Vice-President, Advocacy & Strategy, Ottawa Board of Trade
8:15 – 8:20 PM

North Star Award Presentation by Goran Samuel Pesic, PIF Chairman
8:20 – 8:25 PM

Keynote Address by Kevin Ford, North Star Award Recipient
8:25 – 8:40 PM

Conclusion of Formal Dinner Service
9:00 PM

Official Head Table Group Photograph
9:00 – 9:05 PM

Live Music Performance by Kevin Ford, Jeff Rolland, Donna Logan and Bruce Goodman
9:20 – 9:50 PM

End of Live Music
9:50 PM

Evening Concludes
11:00 PM

Appreciation & Recognition



The success of the **North Star Award Gala** would not have been possible without the dedication, partnership, and generous support of many individuals and organizations.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the **Policy Insights Forum** team, Jonas LeBlanc-Wilmink, Alienor Peyrefitte, Gio Petti, and Sunny Yu, for their tireless efforts in coordinating this memorable evening, and to the **Fairmont Château Laurier** for providing such an elegant and historic setting, and the **Encore** team for their audiovisual support. We are especially grateful to Goran Samuel Pesic our Gala Chair, for their outstanding leadership and vision in shaping tonight's celebration.

A sincere thank you to our distinguished sponsor, **Calian**, whose steadfast support continues to elevate our shared mission.

A heartfelt thank you to **Kevin Ford** and his family for their support and presence. Your leadership, contributions, and commitment to strengthening Canada through innovation, service, and excellence have truly inspired this evening.

To Kevin Ford, Jeff Rolland, Donna Logan and Bruce Goodman: thank you for your amazing music performance.

And finally, to all our esteemed guests, thank you for attending and for being part of this special celebration. Your presence tonight has made this occasion truly meaningful.

NORTH STAR AWARD GALA DINNER



Thank you for joining us!



About the Policy Insights Forum

The Policy Insights Forum (PIF) is a non-partisan Canadian think tank focusing on strategic over-the-horizon public policy issues through independent research, analysis and engagement.

Through high-level conferences, publications, roundtables, and convening sessions, the PIF brings together senior leaders across Canada, the United States, Europe, and allied nations to deliver actionable insights in economic security, national defence, international affairs, sovereignty and emerging technologies.

A cornerstone of this work is the NATO Private Sector Engagement (NPSE) program, an annual transatlantic mission that connects Canadian executives directly with NATO, EU, and allied defence institutions to strengthen industrial cooperation and strategic alignment.

The PIF is equally committed to developing future leaders through flagship initiatives, including the Emerging Young Leaders Program, the Dr. Robert Spencer Internship and the North Star Internship.

The Policy Insights Forum — **Engaging Canada's Best Minds®**

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