



Center for  
U.S.-Canada Relations

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Centre for International  
Governance Innovation

# Commission for the Second Century of Canada–U.S. Relations Launch

MAY 27, 2026

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Program

# Agenda

## Wednesday, May 27, 2026

The Westin Ottawa, Confederation II

**2:30 p.m.–2:50 p.m.**

### **Guest Arrival, Registration and Informal Networking**

**2:50 p.m.–3:00 p.m.**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Speakers:

- **Dianna H. English**, Director, Programs, Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) (MC)
- **Paul Samson**, President, CIGI (Welcome)

**3:00 p.m.–3:20 p.m.**

### **Scene-Setting Reflection from the Two Second Century Commission Co-Chairs**

- **The Honorable Jane Harman**, Former United States Representative
- **The Honourable Lisa Raitt**, Vice Chair, Office of the CEO, CIBC

**3:20 p.m.–3:35 p.m.**

### **Commission Plans**

Remarks from the executive co-directors outlining the rationale, scope and 18-month work plan for the Commission.

Speakers:

- **Christopher Sands**, Director, Center for U.S.-Canada Relations, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies
- **Paul Samson**, President, CIGI
- **Jennifer M. Welsh**, Distinguished James McGill Professor in Global Governance and Security and Director of the Max Bell School of Public Policy, McGill University

**3:35 p.m.–3:45 p.m.**

### **Open Q&A**

**3:45 p.m.–4:00 p.m.**

### **Health Break**

4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

**Strategic Issues Panel: Canada-U.S. Relations in an Age of Economic Security**

The Canada-U.S. relationship is being reshaped by a world in which economic strength, technological leadership, and national security are increasingly intertwined. This discussion will consider medium-term strategic questions facing both countries and the types of bilateral frameworks required to sustain cooperation, resilience and shared advantage in a more contested international environment.

Moderator: **Jennifer M. Welsh**

Speakers:

- **Vass Bednar**, Managing Director, The Canadian Shield Institute
- **Ben Chalmers**, Senior Vice President, Mining Association of Canada
- **The Honourable Stéphane Dion**, Former Liberal Leader, Minister and Ambassador; Diplomat in Residence, Faculty of Arts and Science, Université de Montréal
- **Marti Flacks**, President and CEO, Cleveland Council on World Affairs
- **Brigham A. McCown**, Senior Fellow and Director, Initiative on American Energy Security, Hudson Institute

# Speaker Biographies

## Co-Chairs



### **THE HONORABLE JANE HARMAN**

Former United States Representative

Jane Harman is a former nine-term U.S. Congresswoman whose Southern California district included major aerospace facilities. She served as ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee after 9/11, playing a central role in modernizing congressional oversight of the U.S. intelligence community. Following nearly two decades in Congress, Jane remains a respected voice on national and homeland security, defence and foreign policy.

In 2011, Jane became the first woman president and CEO of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, leading the institution for a decade and continuing as president emerita. She later chaired the bipartisan Commission on the National Defense Strategy, which issued a unanimous report in July 2024, and was reappointed to serve on the Commission in 2026. Jane has served on advisory boards across the intelligence, defence, homeland security and foreign policy communities; received numerous awards, including the CIA Director's Medal; and recently co-chaired the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on U.S. Space Management Policy. She is a member of the Aspen Strategy Group and the Advisory Council of the Munich Security Conference, and a trustee of the Aspen Institute, the Trilateral Commission, Freedom House, Eisenhower Fellowships and the University of Southern California.



### **THE HONOURABLE LISA RAITT**

Vice Chair, Office of the CEO, CIBC

The Honourable Lisa Raitt joined CIBC Capital Markets as a vice chair in January 2020, having previously worked in both the public and private sectors. Lisa's current focus is on senior client coverage and business development with clients in the energy, infrastructure and industrial sectors, which align closely with her deep expertise.

Prior to her current role, Lisa was the president and CEO of the Toronto Port Authority. She was elected to the House of Commons in 2008, where she went on to hold three senior portfolios serving as minister of natural resources, minister of labour and minister of transport. Most recently, Lisa was the deputy leader of the Official Opposition and the Conservative Party of Canada.

Lisa holds a bachelor of science degree from St. Francis Xavier University and a master of science (chemistry) from the University of Guelph. She possesses an LL.B. from Osgoode Hall Law School, was called to the Ontario bar in 1998 and was a Harold G. Fox Scholar at the Inns of Court in London, U.K.

Currently, Lisa is a director on the boards of LFL Group, Investment Management Corporation of Ontario, Baycrest Health Sciences and the Global Risk Institute. She also is the chair of the board of governors of St. Francis Xavier University, vice chair of CARE Canada and co-chair of the Coalition for a Better Future.

## Executive Co-Directors



**PAUL SAMSON**

President, CIGI

Paul Samson has more than 30 years of experience across a range of global policy issues, working with international partners from around the world, and has been president of CIGI since 2022. During two decades with the Government of Canada, Paul's positions included assistant deputy minister-level roles with Global Affairs Canada and with International Trade and Finance, Finance Canada. At the Privy Council Office, he held several positions during the tenure of three different prime ministers. His last position was as associate deputy minister with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Paul served as director for Canada, Egypt and Ethiopia at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (2018–2019). He served as Canada's deputy for finance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum from 2015 to 2019. He was co-chair of the G20 Framework Working Group on the global economy from 2015 to 2019.

Earlier in his career, he worked at several think tanks and universities in Geneva; Washington, D.C.; Oslo; and Boston. Paul has a B.A. from the University of British Columbia and a doctorate in international relations from the Graduate Institute, Geneva. He completed post-doctoral studies at Harvard University in global environmental assessment.



**CHRISTOPHER SANDS**

Director, Center for U.S.–Canada Relations; Adjunct Lecturer,  
Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Christopher Sands is director of the Center for U.S.–Canada Relations at the Johns Hopkins University SAIS in Washington, D.C. He also co-chairs the SAIS Academy for North America, an executive education initiative with Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan. His current research focuses on the Second Century of Canada–U.S. Relations, a long-term initiative examining the future of one of the world's closest bilateral partnerships.

At SAIS, Christopher has served as interim director of the Latin American Studies Program, faculty lead for technology and innovation, and as the school's representative to the Johns Hopkins University Research Administration Faculty Advisory Committee. He is lead editor of the *Encyclopedia of U.S.–Canadian Relations* (Sage CQ Press, forthcoming 2027) and co-editor of *Canada and the United States: Differences That Count* (5th ed., University of Toronto Press, 2023) and *Canada–US Relations: Sovereignty or Shared Institutions?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

Beyond SAIS, Christopher is a visiting fellow in the Global Economy and Development program at the Brookings Institution, where he leads the USMCA initiative. He also leads the Canada seminar at the U.S. Department of State's National Foreign Affairs Training Center and the "How Washington Works" seminar for the Canada School of Public Service.

He holds a B.A. from Macalester College and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. A native of Detroit, Michigan, he is often mistaken for a Canadian.



## JENNIFER M. WELSH

Distinguished James McGill Professor in Global Governance and Security and Director of the Max Bell School of Public Policy, McGill University

Jennifer M. Welsh is Distinguished James McGill Professor in Global Governance and Security at McGill University, and the Director of the Max Bell School of Public Policy. She was previously chair in international relations at the European University Institute and professor in international relations at the University of Oxford, where she co-founded the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict. From 2013 to 2016, she served as Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, on the Responsibility to Protect. She currently sits as a member of the IDP Protection Expert Group, based in UNHCR, and as co-chair of the Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Jennifer's research has focused on contemporary challenges in global governance, conflict management and Canadian foreign policy, including humanitarian action, collective responses to genocide and war crimes, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and forced displacement. Her CBC Massey Lectures were published in 2016 as *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration and Geopolitics in the 21st Century*. Jennifer's research and policy engagement have been recognized through her election as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and as an international member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

## Speakers



## VASS BEDNAR

Managing Director, The Canadian Shield Institute

Recognized as one of Canada's sharpest policy minds, Vass Bednar is known for cutting through corporate jargon and bureaucratic inertia to ask the questions others won't. With a career spanning think tanks, government, academia and media, Vass has built a reputation as a fearless and independent voice on the policies that shape our daily lives. In 2020, she co-founded the Master of Public Policy in Digital Society program at McMaster University, where she also taught courses on policy design.

Vass is a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, a fellow at the Public Policy Forum, and an advisor to both the Canadian Anti-Monopoly Project and Social Capital Partners. She is the co-author of *The Big Fix: How Companies Capture Markets and Harm Canadians* and writes for *The Globe and Mail's* Report on Business where she focuses on the policies, technologies and corporate forces that shape our everyday lives and economic futures.



## BEN CHALMERS

Senior Vice President, Mining Association of Canada (MAC)

Since joining MAC in 2011, Ben Chalmers has been responsible for the Towards Sustainable Mining initiative, MAC's award-winning program focused on enabling mining companies to meet society's needs for minerals, metals and energy products in the most socially,

economically and environmentally responsible way. As senior vice president, Ben is also responsible for overseeing MAC's work related to public affairs and communications, and government relations. Ben began working in the mining industry in 2004 at the Myra Falls Operations in British Columbia as an environmental supervisor. Prior to MAC, Ben served as vice president, environment and technical affairs, for the Mining Association of British Columbia and was also a senior policy analyst with Natural Resources Canada.



### **THE HONOURABLE STÉPHANE DION**

Former Liberal Leader, Minister and Ambassador;  
Diplomat in Residence, Faculty of Arts and Science, Université de Montréal

Stéphane Dion is a former Canadian diplomat and politician who served as Canada's ambassador to Germany from 2017 to 2022 and to France and Monaco from 2022 to 2025, as well as special envoy to Europe from 2017 to 2025. From 2006 to 2008, he was leader of the Opposition and led the Liberal Party of Canada. He also served as minister of foreign affairs (2015–2017), minister of the environment (2004–2006) and minister of intergovernmental affairs (1996–2003). He represented the district of Saint-Laurent—Cartierville (later renamed Saint-Laurent) in the House of Commons from 1996 to 2017.



### **DIANNA H. ENGLISH**

Director, Programs, CIGI

As the director of programs, Dianna H. English is at the nexus of CIGI's policy research and operations while driving outcomes aligned to the organization's strategic goals and priorities. Dianna also leads the Digital Policy Hub Fellowship and CIGI's program on Africa's Digital Transformation.

Dianna is a seasoned democracy, governance and human rights professional with experience in government, international organizations, non-profit organizations and the private sector. She spent 10 years working in the US government, including serving as a director for African affairs on the National Security Council staff and as special assistant to the under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights, for whom she was an expert policy advisor focused on security sector reform and transitional justice. She also served as the rule of law programs director at the US embassies in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in South Sudan.

Prior to joining the US State Department, Dianna worked in research for the International Criminal Court in The Hague and as a research consultant with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Dianna served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania, where she focused on HIV/AIDS prevention. She has volunteered with a refugee resettlement agency in New Haven, Connecticut, and as an emergency room crisis counsellor for the DC Rape Crisis Center in Washington, D.C.

Dianna is also a consultant with Lexpat Global Services and a fellow with the Truman National Security Project.

Dianna holds a B.S. in international studies and social policy from Northwestern University and earned her M.A. in international relations with a certificate in international security studies from Yale University. She speaks English and Swahili.



## **MARTI FLACKS**

President and CEO, Cleveland Council on World Affairs

Marti returned to her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, to serve as president and CEO of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs in September 2025. Prior to that, she spent more than two decades in Washington, D.C., in a variety of foreign policy roles. Most recently, Marti served as the first deputy assistant secretary for the Supply Chain Center in the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. Earlier, Marti worked as director of African affairs at the U.S. National Security Council, covering East and Southern Africa and continent-wide security and economic issues, and in senior positions in the State Department's Energy Resources and Africa Bureaus. Outside of government, Marti served as Khosravi Chair in Principled Internationalism and director of the Human Rights Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a leading foreign policy think tank, and as deputy director of the Business & Human Rights Resource Center — an NGO that promotes responsible business conduct by companies around the world. She received her B.S. in foreign service from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, her M.A. in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University and her J.D. from Columbia Law School.



## **BRIGHAM A. MCCOWN**

Senior Fellow and Director, Initiative on American Energy Security,  
Hudson Institute

Brigham A. McCown is an independent director, senior executive and strategic advisor whose career spans federal government, corporate leadership, military service, academia and public policy. He is widely recognized for his work across infrastructure, energy, national security, regulatory strategy, industrial policy and organizational resilience, particularly in highly regulated and safety-sensitive sectors.

He previously served as president and CEO of an Arctic energy company and held senior leadership roles within the federal government, where he directed national regulatory and safety programs across multiple infrastructure sectors during four presidential administrations. He has overseen billion-dollar operations, major capital and operating programs, and enterprise-level profit and loss and risk responsibilities in both the public and private sectors.

A retired naval aviator and attorney who has practised before the U.S. Supreme Court, Brigham has also participated in three presidential transition teams and continues to advise boards, executives and public sector leaders on governance, risk oversight, energy strategy, and long-term strategic planning. He serves on multiple advisory and governing boards as an independent director and is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute, where he leads the Initiative on American Energy Security.

## About the Second Century Commission

The Commission for the Second Century of Canada–U.S. Relations is a new initiative shaping the next era of one of the world's most consequential partnerships. Marking 100 years of formal diplomatic ties, the Second Century Commission brings together leading institutions and thinkers to look beyond current bilateral tensions and strategize for the long-term collaboration between these two countries.



### Wi-Fi Access

Network: Westin\_Conference

Access Code: CIGI2026

If you have any questions or require assistance, please reach out to the following:

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