



AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
AI, FUTURE SKILLS,
AND PRODUCTIVITY

PROGRAM

MAY 7-8, 2026

Keynote Speakers:



Anil Arora

ADJUNCT LECTURER,
HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL
FORMER CHIEF STATISTICIAN,
STATISTICS CANADA



Wendy Cukier

PROFESSOR OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION
FOUNDER OF THE DIVERSITY INSTITUTE,
TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



Richard B. Freeman

HERBERT ASCHERMAN
CHAIR PROFESSOR IN ECONOMICS,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Daniel S. Hamermesh

CHAIR PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS
ROYAL HOLLOWAY
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN

AI, Future Skills, and Productivity Program Overview:

In the wake of the pandemic, generative AI tools such as GPT, Claude, and Gemini are transforming the global labour market. Despite popular fears of a “job apocalypse,” AI is also giving rise to new roles, for example, training AI agents. However, the broader implications for productivity, skills, and career development remain poorly understood. This conference provides a forum for knowledge exchange among academic, policy, and practitioner communities.





Emera Innovation Exchange Conference Centre, Memorial University
100 Signal Hill Rd, St. John's

8:30 – 9:00 | Registration and breakfast

9:00 – 9:20 | Opening Remarks

MC/Chair: Rob Greenwood, Former Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development and Engagement, Chief Economic Development Officer, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

- Christine Helen Arnold, Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Dean of Students, Memorial University
- Dennis Peters, Interim Associate Vice-President (Academic), Memorial University
- Natasha Hurley, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Memorial University

9:20 – 10:00 | Keynote Speech

Anil Arora

Former Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada

“AI, Skills, and the Productivity Imperative: Growth and Living Standards in the Age of Intelligent Machines”

10:05 – 10:45 | Keynote Speech

Wendy Cukier

Professor of Entrepreneurship & Innovation and Founder of the Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

“Drivers and Barriers to AI Adoption”

10:45 – 11:00 | Morning Break

11:00 – 12:00 | Session 1: AI and Recent Employment Trends

Chair: Guang Ying Mo, Director of Research, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

1. Stephen Tapp, CEO and Chief Economist, Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CSLS)
2. Tahsin Mehdi, Senior Research Economist, Statistics Canada
3. Wulong Gu, Senior Advisor, Statistics Canada

12:00– 13:00 | Networking and Lunch

13:00 – 13:40 | Keynote Speech

Richard Freeman

Herbert Ascherman Chair Professor of Economics, Harvard University

“Whatcha gonna do when AI does your job better’n you”

13:40 -14:50 (Hybrid) | Session 2: AI Adoption, Labour Market and Productivity

Chair: Sara Wray Enns, Assistant Professor of Economics, Memorial University

1. Rafael Gomez, Professor and Director, Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, University of Toronto
2. Carl Lin, Professor and Associate Dean of College of Arts & Sciences, Bucknell University
3. Emin Gahramanov, Professor of Economics, American University of Sharjah (Virtual)
4. Kendra MacDonald, CEO, Oceans Supercluster (Virtual)

14:50– 15:00 | Afternoon Break

15:00– 16:10 (Virtual) • 11:30–12:40 (MDT) • 13:30–14:40 (EST)

Session 3 (Virtual Panel): Responsible AI and Cyber Security

Chair: Mohamed Elmi, Executive Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

1. Judith Borts, Senior Director, Rogers Cybersecurity Catalyst
2. Shannon Lundquist, Vice Chair and Senior Client Partner, Deloitte
3. Joe Rowsell, Director of Regulatory Affairs, Telus Communications
4. Nadia Delanoy, Director of Student Experiences, University of Calgary
5. Atefeh (Atty) Mashatan, Canada Research Chair & Associate Professor, Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University

16:10 – 17:20 (Hybrid) | Session 4: ADT and AI Solutions to Bridge the Skills Gaps in the Labor Market

Chair: Rob Greenwood, Former Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development and Engagement, Chief Economic Development Officer, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

1. Dave d’Entremont, Founder and President, Breton Group
2. Tony Bonen, Executive Director of Economic Research, Signal49 Research (Virtual)
3. Sharon McLennon, Director, NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC)
4. Rhonda Tulk-Lane, CEO, Atlantic Chamber of Commerce

17:20 – 17:30 | Closing Remarks for Day 1



R. Gushue Hall (DH2002), Memorial University
9 Irwins Rd., St. John's

8:30 – 9:00 | Breakfast

9:00 – 9:05 | Opening Remarks

Lynn Gambin
Head of Economics Department, Memorial University

9:05 – 9:45 | Keynote Speech

Daniel S Hamermesh, Sue Killam
Chair Professor, Emeritus University of Texas at Austin
“Work Timing and Work Location: The Role of AI”

9:45 – 10:45 (hybrid) • 14:15 – 15:15 in Rome (CEST)

Session 5: AI and Labour Market in Other Countries

Chair: Derek Messacar, Associate Professor of Economics, Memorial University

1. Mingwei Liu, Professor and Associate Dean for Research, School of Management and Labour Relations; Director, Center for Global Work and Employment, Rutgers University
2. Zijun Luo, Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Nebraska at Omaha
3. Yiming Xu, Lecturer, University of Toronto (Virtual)
4. Jelena Reljic, Assistant Professor in Economic Policy, Sapienza University of Rome (EU perspective)

10:45 – 11:55 | Session 6: AI, Skills and Education

Chair: Lynn Gambin, Head of Economics Department, Memorial University

1. Emad Rizcalla, CEO and Founder, Bluedrop
2. Guang Ying Mo, Director of Research, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University
3. Steve Taylor, Executive Vice President, Keyin College
4. Tahsin Mehdi, Senior Research Economist, Statistics Canada

11:55 – 12:55 | Session 7: Immigration, Labour Market and AI

Chair: Jodi Ann Francis-Walker, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

1. Ather Akbari, Professor and Chair of Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity, Saint Mary's University
2. Katerina Palova, Adjunct Professor, University of British Columbia; Director, Research and Program Strategy, The Immigrant Education Society (TIES)
3. Kreisha Hilario, Manager, Centre for Immigrant Research, The Immigrant Education Society (TIES); Researcher, University of British Columbia
4. Graham King, MA student, University of British Columbia

12:55 – 1:00 | Closing Remarks for Day 2

THANK YOU!

