

# Women in Risk

LEADERSHIP IN AN INTERCONNECTED RISK ENVIRONMENT

• MONTRÉAL •



**GLOBAL  
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INSTITUTE**

**2:00 PM** **Opening Remarks**  
**Karrie Van Belle**, *Chief Operating Officer, GRI*

**2:15 PM** **Strategic Risk Oversight in a World of Interconnectivity**  
**David Latour**, *CRO, La Caisse*  
**Kim Thomassin**, *Executive Vice President, La Caisse*  
**Moderator: Sonia Baxendale**, *President and CEO, GRI*

The central challenge facing senior risk leaders today, particularly in the financial and investment landscape, is navigating an environment where risks are increasingly interdependent and volatility and uncertainty are defining conditions rather than exceptions.

**3:00 PM** **Shifting from Static Preparedness to Dynamic Resilience**  
**Elaine Lajeunesse**, *Board Director, Desjardins*  
**Kari Pries**, *Senior Manager, Geopolitical Risk, PSP Investments*  
**Nora Traum**, *Associate Professor, HEC Montréal*  
**Moderator: Linda El Ghordaf**, *National Risk Services Market Leader, KPMG Canada*

Geopolitics and macroeconomic risk have always been linked, but are more closely connected than ever as global powers use tariffs and sanctions as geopolitical strategy, and global connectivity transmits shocks rapidly across regions and sectors, requiring greater agility in organizational risk response plans. Leaders from across the financial sector discuss how risk teams can adapt to a new reality of interconnected threats.

**3:45 PM** **Break**

**4:00 PM** **Technology Disruption: Keeping Up with the Pace of Innovation**  
**Eve-Marie Cormier**, *Vice President, Information Security and Technology Controls (CISO), La Caisse*  
**Marie-Christine Custeau**, *Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, Laurentian Bank*  
**Rheia Khalaf**, *Director of Partnerships, Mila*  
**Moderator: Vanda Vicars**, *Executive Consultant, GRI*

Artificial intelligence and other rapidly emerging technologies are reshaping the competitive landscape, transforming how organizations operate and emboldening bad actors. With cyber threats escalating and adoption of advanced technologies accelerating, this session takes a hard look at how the pace of innovation is impacting operational resilience, and how oversight can evolve alongside rapid change and capitalize on the opportunities it creates.

**5:00 PM** **Networking Reception**

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**Sonia Baxendale**, *President and Chief Executive Officer, GRI*

Sonia Baxendale is President & CEO of GRI, bringing together leaders from industry, academia and government to focus on emerging risks to the Canadian financial system. She has extensive experience as an executive and non-executive in the financial services industry globally. Sonia sits on the boards of Laurentian Bank, Definity Financial Corp., and Intermediate Capital Group (ICG), and is past Chair of the Board of SickKids Foundation. Prior to joining GRI, she held senior roles at CIBC, including Senior Executive Vice President and President of CIBC Retail Markets, where she led the Retail & Commercial Banking and Wealth Management businesses.



**Eve-Marie Cormier**, *Vice President, Information Security and Technology Controls (CISO), La Caisse*

Eve-Marie has more than 15 years in the banking, pharmaceutical, and telecommunications sectors as an expert in operational risk, business continuity, and crisis management. She now specializes in technology governance, information security risk management, crisis management, and cybersecurity. At La Caisse, she oversees the governance, security architecture, security engineering, security operations, IAM, and information security teams, as well as the GRC and technology controls teams. She also leads the implementation of an integrated cybersecurity program designed to protect La Caisse against information security and cybersecurity risks, as well as to detect threats and respond to them efficiently.



**Marie-Christine Custeau**, *Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, Laurentian*

Marie-Christine Custeau is responsible for the development, execution, and ongoing evolution of Laurentian's strategic plan. She plays a key role in integrating risk, governance, and operational resilience considerations into strategic decision making. Marie-Christine brings nearly 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, including more than ten years in senior roles at Laurentian. Her expertise spans strategic planning, complex project management, process optimization, business continuity, data governance, as well as marketing and communications.



**Linda El Ghordaf**, *National Risk Services Market Leader, KPMG Canada*

Linda El Ghordaf has more than 20 years of experience in risk management. In addition to her role as Risk Services Market Leader, she oversees large-scale projects for the transformation or implementation of the risk management function and 3 lines of defense model in the financial sector. Her work covers operational risk management and resiliency, including the implementation of GRC platforms. Linda also leads projects on model development and model validation for credit risk, liquidity risk, stress testing, and capital management. Prior to joining KPMG, Linda worked for the Autorité des Marchés Financiers.



**Rheia Khalaf**, *Director of Partnerships, Mila*

Rheia Khalaf is the Director of Partnerships at Mila. She brings more than 15 years of expertise in actuarial science, artificial intelligence (AI) and risk management acquired through roles at leading organizations including IVADO, Fiera Capital and EY. She contributes to a wide range of initiatives that focus on responsible AI use, sustainable finance and climate risk, and has co-authored several publications on AI.



**Elaine Lajeunesse**, *Board Director, Desjardins*

Over a 30 year career, Elaine Lajeunesse served as Chief Risk Officer for four major financial institutions: BMO Insurance, Economical (now Definity), TD Insurance, and Central 1. She has led risk functions through regulatory overhauls, economic disruptions, and high-stakes decisions. At Desjardins Elaine sits on a number of committees, including the Risk Committee, which she chairs. She also sits on the Advisory Committee and chairs the Risk Committee for Athos Risk LLC. She previously served on the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers, all TD Insurance boards, and the board of OASIS Centre des Femmes.



**David Latour**, *CRO, La Caisse*

As Executive Vice-President and Chief Risk Officer at La Caisse, David is responsible for ensuring sound management of risks related to investment strategy and operations. He sits on the Executive Committee, co-chairs the Investment-Risk Committee and chairs the Operational Risk Committee. David has 20 years of experience in risk management and investing across various asset classes in both public and private markets. Prior to his current position, he was Managing Director, Strategy and Investment, Capital Solutions. Before joining La Caisse, David worked at RBC and GE Capital Canada.



**Kari Pries**, *Senior Manager, Geopolitical Risk, PSP Investments*

Dr. Kari Pries (her/she) leads a team focused on building foresight and thematic analysis methodologies that embed geopolitical scenarios into strategic asset allocation. Before joining PSP, she was Counselor for Canada on the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) Board of Executive Directors. She previously spent a decade in Economics and Country Risk with IHS Markit (now S&P Global) and has held policy advisory roles with the Government of Canada and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Dr. Pries sits on a number of academic and charitable boards in Canada and Europe.

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**Kim Thomassin**, *Executive Vice President, La Caisse*

As Executive Vice-President and Head of Québec, Kim Thomassin leads La Caisse's investment strategy in Québec and financing and support activities for medium and large companies in the province. She also oversees the Québec investment and operating partner teams. She sits on the Executive Committee and the Investment-Risk Committee. Before joining La Caisse in 2017, Kim was National Client Leader and Managing Partner for the Québec Region at McCarthy Tétrault. She is a member of the Québec Bar and the Canadian Bar Association.

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**Nora Traum**, *Associate Professor, HEC Montréal*

Nora Traum is Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Economics and holds the Chair in Macroeconomic Stabilization Policies at HEC Montréal. She previously spent eight years on the Economics faculty at North Carolina State University and held short-term visiting positions at various institutions including Duke University, the European University Institute, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Professor Traum's research focuses on empirical and theoretical models of macroeconomic policy, particularly as it relates to fiscal policy. Her work has been published in the American Economic Review, Journal of Econometrics, Journal of Applied Econometrics, and European Economic Review. She holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Indiana University.

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**Vanda Vicars**, *Executive Consultant, GRI*

Vanda Vicars is an Executive Consultant with GRI, focusing on strategic projects. She was previously Chief Operating Officer and Corporate Secretary from 2019 to 2024. A respected C-suite executive with 30 years of executive leadership experience in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector, Vanda has held senior roles at leading organizations including CEO, Canada Infrastructure Services, Capgemini; President, Capgemini Canada; Senior Vice President of ICT Solutions, Bell Canada; and Vice-President Technical Support, IBM Canada.

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**Karrie Van Belle**, *Chief Operating Officer, GRI*

Karrie Van Belle is Chief Operating Officer and serves as Corporate Secretary to the GRI Board of Directors. Karrie helps to guide strategy and execution of GRI's mandate, addressing challenges and developing and implementing policies and procedures to enhance operational effectiveness. Karrie has held roles leading marketing, communications, digital operations and investment product teams. Before coming to GRI, she was Chief Marketing & Innovation Officer at AGF Investments and previously held progressively senior roles at BlackRock Canada, Saint Elizabeth Health Care, Edward Jones and Canada Trust.

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