CPABC **INFOCUS**

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025

Sustainability reporting

Will it improve sustainability performance?

PM 40069584

CPA CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS BRITISH COLUMBIA

Amrita Brar

Jacky Chau

Jaskaran Sandhu

Jason Lee

Luc Myre

Shaun Why

Proudly Building the Future

Smythe proudly recognizes the remarkable achievements of our six successful 2024 CFE writers! After years of dedication and countless hours of preparation, this talented group has reached a significant milestone in their careers.

Their success reflects not only their hard work, but also their unwavering commitment to excellence. We are thrilled to welcome their skills and fresh ideas to the firm as they help shape the future of the accounting profession.

Congratulations to this outstanding group—you've earned every bit of this success, and we're excited to support you on the next stage of your journey!

Contents

Cover Story

Recurring Columns

In Focus

Brit Kwasney Photo

Cover image: Kitinut/iStock/Getty Images

CPABC INFOCUS

January/February 2025, Vol. 13, No. 1

CPABC in Focus is the flagship magazine of BC's chartered professional accountants.

CPABC in Focus

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About

CPABC in Focus is published in British Columbia six times a year and is sent to approximately 30,000 CPA members, candidates, and students. Opinions expressed are not necessarily endorsed by CPABC.

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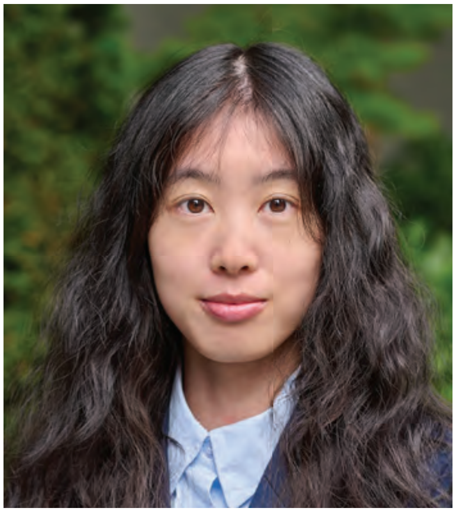
CONGRATULATIONS
to D&H Group LLP's successful 2024 CFE writers.


Serena Gill


Gira Lee


Ying Lu


Milayi Reyimu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Congratulations to our successful 2024 CFE writers

Deloitte proudly congratulates our successful 2024 CFE writers. May the hard work and success of our colleagues be a reminder for all of us to pursue our goals and keep reaching new heights.

Special congratulations to Ivan Chau, who placed on the 2024 National Honour Roll.

Amina Nsouli
Angela Zhao
Ashley Kask
Behrooz Kianian
Chris Loh
Christina Chan
Christine Hall
Damon Mann
Emily Bailey
Emily St Cyr
Harvey Ying
Ingrid Mo
Ivan Chau
James Johnston
James Nguyen
Jessie Au-Yeung
Lissa Murakami
Madison Markey
Manessa Man
Matthew Ahn
Maximillion Weisberg
Michelle Lauschner
Oderah Rhodes
Owen Scott
Ravleen Rattan
Rowan Damant
Vishaal Baladas
Vivien Li

We're working on big things.

At Deloitte, we believe our work has the potential to reach all Canadians. To make their lives better by creating an impact that matters.

New Year, Big Plans

Peter Guo, CPA, CA
CPABC Chair

On December 6, candidates across Canada celebrated their success on the September 2024 CFE, including 595 writers in BC and the Yukon. Warmest congratulations to all of you! A special recognition goes to the five BC candidates who made the National CFE Honour Roll—my phone calls to share this exciting news were moments of pure joy and gratitude! (See pages 40-45 for profiles of both the May and September 2024 CFE Honour Roll candidates.) You, your loved ones, and friends must be so proud. This year, my family shares this milestone with all of you, as our son wrote and passed the CFE in Ontario.

Early December also saw us wrap up our annual CPABC Leadership Update sessions, during which Lori and I shared information on the new CPA certification model. The model was approved in spring 2024 after extensive research—with trends in higher education, changing learner needs, and the practices of global accounting bodies and other professions and designations factoring into its design, as did the input of more than 4,000 stakeholders across Canada.

This is the foundation for the new CPA certification program, which we anticipate will launch by early 2027. While there will be some differences between the current program and the new one, what will remain unchanged is the profession's adherence to its existing high standards, uniformly across the country. Protecting the public, maintaining standards, and preparing new CPAs for their careers will remain fundamental to the certification program, whether learners qualify under the current program or the new one. We will share more information as it becomes available.

This new year marks a significant anniversary for the CPA profession in BC. In June, it will be 10 years since the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* came into force and we unified as CPAs. As we honour our past and look forward to the future, we continue to evaluate our initiatives and enhance offerings. This includes a new conference in November: CPABC Infinite, which promises to be a great opportunity for both learning and networking. See you there! ■

Hot Topics in 2025

Lori Mathison, FCPA, FCGA, LLB
CPABC President & CEO

First, I want to wish you all a very happy and healthy 2025. As we focus on the year ahead, I also want to provide a brief update on the efforts to revamp the collaboration accord between CPA Canada and the provinces and territories.

At the time of this writing in early December, we're working together to transition to a new national collaboration framework—one that will enable us to maintain the profession's primary focus on protecting the public interest. This includes ensuring that important national work, such as standards setting, is done collaboratively.

Effective December 20, 2024, CPA Ontario and CPA Quebec will no longer be parties to the national Collaboration Accord; however, in early October, both organizations reached an agreement with CPA Canada to confirm the funding of, and access to, standards. This agreement built on their binding agreement regarding education, which maintains common standards of entry into the profession across the country.

The unified CPA profession is strong, and I'm confident that it will continue to thrive under the new framework currently being considered. While this is a period of change, significant progress has been made, and CPABC remains committed to working in partnership with all CPA bodies in Canada and Bermuda. We will communicate any updates on these matters in the coming months.

As Peter noted, 2025 marks the tenth anniversary of CPABC's creation. The profession has seen remarkable growth under the CPA banner over the past decade, and we remain committed to supporting CPAs as they continue to protect the public interest in the years ahead. To that end, we continually seek to better understand where we can provide the greatest value to members, candidates, and students; enhance existing programs; and ensure that the organization and our members are prepared for the future.

Before signing off, I'd like to join Peter in recognizing the hard work and dedication of our successful CFE writers and our honour roll candidates. Congratulations on your tremendous achievement! ■

SPONSORSHIPS

Celebrating Outstanding Leaders in the C-Suite

The 2024 BC C-Suite Award winners (l to r): Crystal Prystai, Jeff Norris, Don Murray, Sheila Vokey, CPA, CA, Ernie Daniels, CPA, CGA, Tom Bell (accepting on behalf of Michael Yang), and Carla Guerrera. Photo courtesy of *Business in Vancouver*.

CPABC was proud to serve as a returning sponsor for *Business in Vancouver* magazine's C-Suite Awards in 2024. These annual accolades recognize outstanding CEOs and CFOs in BC who are leading private, public sector, and charitable or not-for-profit organizations. The honourees were celebrated at a luncheon held at Vancouver's Pan Pacific Hotel on October 23, 2024.

We would like to congratulate the award winners, each of whom was chosen by a panel of judges for their proven ability to help companies grow through sound business principles, financial reporting, and strategic decision-making.

Nominations for the 2025 C-Suite Awards will open in early 2025.

The CEO Award recipients are:

- ***Small private category:*** Carla Guerrera, Purpose Driven Development
- ***Non-profit category:*** Jeff Norris, Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation
- ***Publicly accountable category:*** Ernie Daniels, CPA, CGA, First Nations Finance Authority
- ***Mid-market category:*** Don Murray, Safe Software
- ***Large organization category:*** Sheila Vokey, CPA, CA, Central 1 Credit Union

The CFO Award recipients are:

- ***Large Public Category:*** Crystal Prystai, Teck Resources Ltd.
- ***Large Private Category:*** Michael Yang, UniUni

NEWS FROM THE OAGBC

Acting Auditor General Appointed

Sheila Dodds, CPA, CA, CIA, has been appointed acting auditor general for BC following the retirement of Auditor General Michael Pickup, FCPA, FCA. The appointment took effect on November 15, 2024, and Dodds will remain in the role until the Legislative Assembly of BC appoints a permanent replacement.

Dodds has extensive experience in both the private and public sectors, and her work with the Office of the Auditor General of BC includes 10 years as assistant auditor general. She was appointed deputy auditor general in 2021 and has the distinction of being the office's first equity, diversity, and inclusion lead.

Sheila Dodds, CPA, CA, CIA, BC's acting auditor general

STANDING OVATION EVENTS

Celebrating Achievement and Camaraderie

In October 2024, CPABC partnered with its Pacific Northwest, Kootenay East, and Peace Region chapters to host three "Standing Ovation" events that gave members and guests (more than 50 in all) a chance to connect, celebrate members' career milestones, and welcome new designees.

Each event featured an engaging lineup of speakers, including CPABC President and CEO Lori Mathison, FCPA, FCGA, LLB, who provided an economic update relevant to both the profession and the respective regions. Ashling Diamond, CPABC's chapter program specialist, was also on hand at all three events, delivering a brief presentation on the benefits and impact of chapter volunteerism and encouraging members to deepen their involvement.

Following the presentations, attendees turned their attention to the celebratory part of the evening, applauding members who'd reached significant milestones in their CPA careers—two 10-year members, two 25-year members, three 40-year members, and one 60-year member across the three events—and congratulating individuals who'd earned their CPA designations within the past year. Door prizes were also offered at each event, and three lucky winners took home a gift certificate for a one-day CPABC PD seminar.

CPABC and the three chapters would like to thank everyone who participated.

Top left: CPABC President & CEO Lori Mathison, FCPA, FCGA, LLB, with (l to r) 40-year members Lynn Armstrong Noble, CPA, CGA, and Nancy Jenkinson, CPA, CA, at the Kootenay East event. Top right: Lori Mathison congratulates 10-year member Khalie Genereaux, CPA, CMA, at the Pacific Northwest event. Bottom: Members at the Peace Region event.

REGULATORY REMINDERS

2024 CPD Reporting Deadline Is January 31

CPABC would like to remind members that the deadline to report 2024 continuing professional development (CPD) activities is **January 31, 2025**. To report your CPD activities, visit CPABC's Online Services site at **services.bccpa.ca**.

For more details about the CPD requirements, visit **bccpa.ca/cpd** or email us at **cpd@bccpa.ca.**

Kristinka_/iStock/Getty Images

Keep Your Contact Information Current

miniseries/E+/Getty Images

Is your contact information up to date?

This is a friendly reminder that the *CPABC Bylaws* require members and candidates (students enrolled in the CPA Professional Education Program) to provide CPABC with the following contact information:

- Your current email address;
- Your current mailing address;
- Your current business or employment address; and
- Your current municipality of residence.

You are required to keep your contact information up to date by immediately informing CPABC of any changes. This is to ensure that you don't miss any important communications from CPABC, including information about your annual dues and other fees. In addition, every member with a public practice licence is required to provide CPABC with the current street address for every authorized practising office in BC.

How to update your contact information

- **Members:** Log in to **services.bccpa.ca** and select the "Profile" tab. Contact CPABC at **memberrecords@bccpa.ca** if you need assistance.
- **Public practitioners:** To update a firm address, office address, or professional accounting corporation address, contact **publicpracticelicensing@bccpa.ca**.
- **Candidates:** Log in to the My CPA Portal at **my.cpawsb.ca**. Contact CPAWSB at **cpaapplication@cpawsb.ca** if you need assistance.

To protect your privacy and security, be sure to use the email address that is on record with CPABC whenever you communicate with us via email.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the Dates: Gala Events in 2025

CPABC Infinite conference

On **November 27 & 28, 2025**, CPABC will be hosting “CPABC Infinite,” a member conference featuring exciting speakers, courses, and networking opportunities in a hybrid format (in-person offerings will be held at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver).

Be sure to subscribe to e-News, Engagement Activities, and Professional Development news to get the latest updates on CPABC Infinite. Not sure you’ve subscribed? Log in to online services at **services.bccpa.ca** to confirm or update your communication preferences (see page 19).

Member Recognition Dinner: Honouring excellence

Each year, we are proud to celebrate outstanding CPAs through CPABC’s Member Recognition Program. This tradition includes hosting an awards event where family, friends, and colleagues can gather to congratulate the honourees and learn about their inspiring and diverse accomplishments as leaders, volunteers, educators, and innovators.

We invite you to join us at this year’s Member Recognition Dinner to help us celebrate! The event will be held on **April 2, 2025,** and you can find registration details in the News & Events section of **bccpa.ca** under the Events tab.

Convocation: Applauding achievement

On **May 9, 2025**, CPABC will be hosting two convocation ceremonies at the Vancouver Convention Centre West to celebrate the successful writers of the May and September 2024 CFE writings. Don’t miss out! Details for both events will be posted in the News & Events section of **bccpa.ca**, under the Events tab, as they become available.

nikkytok/iStock/Getty Images

KPMG

101 successful writers penning the next chapter of their story

Congratulations to our 101 successful CFE writers, continuing our legacy of trust and excellence, joining our exceptional team in British Columbia.

kpmg.com/ca

Max Abah
Daniella Abramowich
Tiffany Aurelia
Maria Backonja
Deidre Bartlett
Victor Chan
Raina Chau
Anmol Chauhan
Amy Chen
Rachel Cheng
Addyson Denton
Jordan Deshane
Bhavneet Dhaliwal
Chanmeet Dhillon
Dilpreet Dosanjh
Lucy Guan
Ismael Hamadi
Matthew Harrison
Sam Henley
Benjamin Hickman
Satwik Khanna
Patrick Kniec
Eunhan Koh
Mitchell LaBossiere
Michael Lam
Sapna Malik
Cameron Mann
Pushpinder Mann
Khashayar Masoudi
Leanna Matonovich
Sydony Nugent
Hiroki Oishi
Liam Palmiere
Rachel Peters
Panida Rangkakulnuwat
Nancy Tse
Celine Tung
Justin Tung
Julie Vu
Jason Wang
Isabel Yang
Lauren Young
Doris Zhao
Kelly Zhu

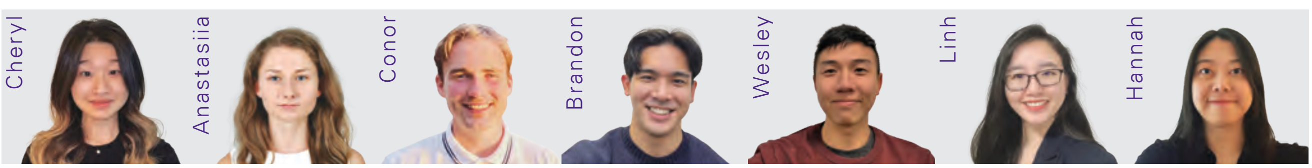
Bjorn Borren | Natasha Bussanich | Bronwen Campbell | Ada Cao | Frank Carson | Nicholas Carson | Bonnie Chan

Seungmin Cho | Rachel Chong | Arvin Chua | Nate Clark | Div Condal | Sean Curtis | Amir Davani

Ashley Drought | Dylan Factor | Michelle Fan | Cindy Gao | Akum Gill | Simran Gill | Amanda Greenshields

Lucas Hillier | Emily Hodgins | Anson Hou | Simran Jassal | Jesslynn Juan | Gurbind Kaur | Sabih Khan

Leah Lee | Yejee Lee | Lukie Leung | Cici Li | Yi Fei Li | Amy Lu | Christina Ma



Cheryl Meng | Anastasia Nechaieva | Conor Newby | Brandon Ng Mon | Wesley Ng | Linh Nguyen | Hannah Niu

Lucie Rimasson | Naina Sachdeva | Arsh Sidhu | Rehman Syed | Mark Takeuchi | Sidney Taki | Patrick Tran

Molly Wang | MJ Weng | Jada Wiebe | Andrew Wiens | Matthew Wu | Rikka Wu | Wilfred Wu

Special congratulations to *Daniella Abramowich,*

our National Honour Roll recipient from British Columbia.

VOLUNTEER TAX SERVICES

Help Your Community by Volunteering with the CVITP

With tax season approaching, it's time to put out the annual call for CPAs to volunteer with the CRA's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP). By volunteering to prepare income taxes through the CVITP, you can help to ensure that British Columbians with modest incomes are able to file their tax returns and access the benefits and credits available to them.

In 2025, the CRA will continue offering its free tax clinics in both in-person and virtual formats, giving volunteers the option of participating in person, by phone or video, or by using document drop-off arrangements. If you'd like to get involved with the CVITP and make a difference in your community, whether as a returning volunteer or a first-timer, here's what you need to know:

About the program

The CVITP helps community organizations across Canada host tax return preparation clinics. CPA members can participate in the CVITP by volunteering to prepare tax returns and/or by helping a community organization host a free tax return preparation clinic through the CVITP. *Note:* Most tax clinics are held in March and April, but some community groups offer tax clinics throughout the year. Visit **canada.ca/guide-taxes-volunteer** for a list of the community organizations that are hosting tax clinics and seeking volunteers.

If you decide to volunteer, there are two steps you'll need to take:

Step 1: Submit a volunteer registration form

The online form can be found on the CRA website at **canada.ca/guide-taxes-volunteer**. Once you've submitted the form, a CVITP co-ordinator will contact you to help you find a participating organization. *Note:* The CVITP volunteer registration form has a checkbox for CPA members that's used for statistical reporting and acknowledgement purposes.

Once you're approved as a volunteer, the CRA will send you information about its online training options for completing simple tax returns.

Step 2: Apply for your licensure exemption

Because the preparation of tax returns—even at volunteer tax clinics—is a regulated activity that would require licensing under normal circumstances, BC CPAs who are not already licensed for public practice must apply for an exemption from licensing before volunteering in this capacity; this includes members who are employed in public practice but who are not personally licensed, as well as those who hold the "Other Regulated Services – Non-Reviewable" licence.* This application for exemption will provide you with free professional liability insurance coverage.

You can apply for the exemption on the CPABC website by logging in to **services.bccpa.ca** and clicking on the "Other Services" tab. CPABC holds a blanket policy with CPA Professional Liability Plan Inc. for those who apply for this exemption. The policy applies to authorized CPABC members provided certain conditions are met, as detailed in CPABC's Volunteer Resource Centre at **bccpa.ca/volunteer**.

If you have any questions about applying for the licence exemption, please contact CPABC's member advisory services department at **professionaladvisory@bccpa.ca**.

* *Candidates enrolled in the CPA Professional Education Program and students registered with CPAWSB who are taking preparatory courses may volunteer* ***only*** *in a non-preparer, non-client-facing capacity, and* ***only*** *under the supervision of CPA members who are licensed for public practice or who have obtained the exemption from licensure noted above. Candidates and students are not eligible to apply for the exemption themselves because they cannot be licensed for public practice.*

MORE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Share Your CPA Pride at CPABC's Recruitment Events!

PeopleImages/iStock/Getty Images

Are you interested in sharing your CPA story with prospective students? If so, CPABC's student recruitment team invites you to consider joining our volunteer roster. We're always looking for passionate CPA members and candidates to help us promote the profession and showcase the diverse career opportunities available to future CPAs. Here are two ways you can get involved:

Become a CPA Ambassador

Volunteer opportunities for member and candidate ambassadors include attending CPABC networking events and career fairs; speaking about your CPA career path at virtual and in-person events for high school, college, and university students, working professionals, and newcomers; and being a panellist or keynote speaker at CPABC gala dinners. You can participate as often as you want—there is no minimum time commitment to be part of this program! Visit **bccpa.ca/ambassador** to learn more and sign up.

Inspire high school students to consider the CPA profession

Want to share your CPA story without joining the CPA Ambassador Program? Not a problem! CPABC's student recruitment team visits high schools throughout the school year to give presentations about the CPA profession, and we're always looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join us.

We're also looking for guest speakers to join us at our presentations to high school students involved in programs run by Junior Achievement British Columbia (JABC) and Young Entrepreneur Leadership Launchpad (YELL). For most of these presentations, we're seeking members and candidates who are either entrepreneurs or have experience working with or for entrepreneurs. However, you don't have to be an entrepreneur to get involved, as some of these guest speaker opportunities are open to all members and candidates interested in sharing their insights.

For more information about volunteering as a guest speaker, email the student recruitment team at **highschool@bccpa.ca**.

Make a Difference with Your Local CPABC Chapter

Want to make a positive impact in both the profession and your community while growing professionally and expanding your network? Consider volunteering on a CPABC chapter committee!

Whether you're a recent designee or a seasoned CPA, your involvement is welcome.

CPABC's 16 regional chapters host a variety of social gatherings, professional networking opportunities, and community engagement activities for members, candidates, and students each year. If you'd like to join the roster of dedicated chapter volunteers across the province who help make these activities possible, email **chapters@bccpa.ca** for more information.

courtneyk/iStock/Getty Images

RECRUITMENT NEWS

CPABC Launches CPA Path to Success Event

The event's special guests. Back row (l to r): Cameron Mann (candidate); Nemo Wang (candidate); Gursimrat Gill (candidate); Hoang Nguyen, CPA (panellist); Jaden Hwang, CPA; Arshdeep Kaur (candidate); Lloyd Juliane, CPA. Front row (l to r): CPABC Board Chair Peter Guo, CPA, CA; Emily Heinrich, CPA, CPA (Oregon) (keynote speaker); Tara Thackeray, CPA, CAMS (panellist); Aseem Ghadiali, CPA, CA (India) (panellist). Photo by Jing Zhong.

On November 21, 2024, CPABC held its inaugural CPA Path to Success event at the Delta Hotels Vancouver Downtown Suites. This event is designed to give aspiring CPAs the chance to gain insights from CPAs with diverse educational and professional backgrounds as they describe their career journeys, including the challenges they've faced and overcome and the strategies they've used to secure employment opportunities.

The inaugural event kicked off with a keynote address from Emily Heinrich, CPA, CPA (Oregon),* a partner in US corporate tax with BDO, who emphasized the importance of CPAs in the business landscape and described what the future holds for designees. An engaging panel discussion with three seasoned CPAs followed: Aseem Ghadiali, CPA, CA (India), a partner with Advinor CPA Ltd., shared his experience as an international designee; Hoang Nguyen, CPA, a senior associate in assurance with PwC, shared his experience navigating BC's public accounting recruitment process; and Tara Thackeray, CPA, CAMS, a trust auditor with the Law Society of British Columbia, shared her experience as a career-changer with a non-business background.

Up next was a facilitated networking session during which the three panellists and additional guest CPAs and candidates—representing public accounting firms and industry and spanning junior to senior levels—were split into three groups. Attendees were invited to choose the group that best aligned with their backgrounds and interests. An open networking session with all guests and attendees followed, rounding out the evening.

The event attracted more than 80 aspiring CPAs, made up of post-secondary students, working professionals, newcomers to Canada, and internationally designated accountants.

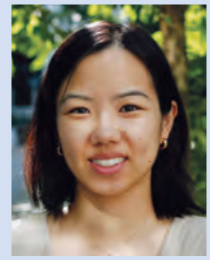
Visit **bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/events** to stay up to date on the latest recruitment events for prospective CPAs.

* *Emily Heinrich was recently interviewed for the Coffee Chats with CPABC podcast series—you'll find her episode at* ***cpabc.libsyn.com*** *and a companion article in the CPABC Newsroom.*

MENTORSHIP

Engaging CPABC Mentors with New Series

Henry Flowers, CPA



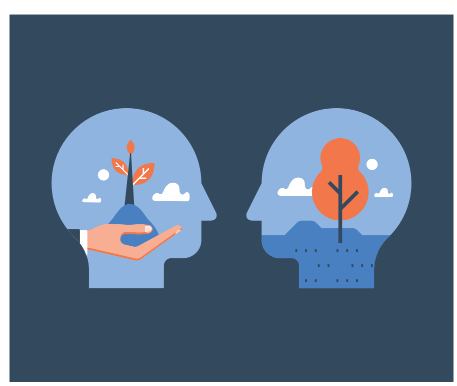
Felicia Truong, CPA

October 8, 2024, saw the launch of CPABC's new "Mentor Mindset" webinar series, designed to bolster the development of CPABC mentors.

During the inaugural event, which was hosted by CPABC's employer relations and talent development team, Henry Flowers, CPA, senior manager of risk services at PwC Canada, and Felicia Truong, CPA, a senior internal auditor with the Office of the Comptroller General in British Columbia, shared their experiences as mentees and highlighted how their mentors' guidance was pivotal to their success.

In addition to gaining insights on the perspectives of mentees, webinar attendees had the chance to reflect on, and consider how to enhance, their mentorship skills.

CPABC plans to host Mentor Mindset events on a quarterly basis. The next event is slated for early 2025, and details will be posted to **bccpa.ca/news-events** when available.



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YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

Members: Customize the Emails You Receive from CPABC

Did you know that you can customize the types of emails you receive from CPABC? You can select the following communication preferences for email:

- *eNews*
- Professional Development (including free PD)
- Chapter Communications
- CPABC Surveys
- Engagement Activities (including volunteer opportunities and member consultations)
- All Other (includes commercial electronic communications that do not fall into any of the preferences listed above)

Note that members *cannot* opt out of the regulatory communications CPABC is professionally and/or legally required to send out, such as the notice of the annual general meeting and notices for continuing professional development reporting and member dues renewal.

All members are asked to confirm their communication preferences as part of the annual online CPABC dues renewal process. To update your communication preferences at any other time of the year, sign into **services.bccpa.ca**, choose the Profile tab, and then select the "Communication Preferences" option.

If you find that you aren't receiving emails related to the categories you've selected, it's possibly because, at some point, you chose to opt out of all non-regulatory email using the global unsubscribe link that appears at the bottom of all CPABC emails. Clicking on the global unsubscribe link will override your past and new email communication preference selections. If stopping all non-regulatory email was not, or is no longer, your intention, email CPABC's member records team at **memberrecords@bccpa.ca** using the subject line "Communication preferences update" for assistance.

BENEFITS

Your Path to Wellness: Access Comprehensive Support with the TELUS Health One MAP


PeopleImages/iStock/Getty Images

With CPABC's TELUS Health One Member Assistance Program (MAP), members, candidates, and students (and your immediate family members) can access a variety of resources and services designed to support your mental, physical, social, and financial well-being.

Here are some of the many features of the CPABC MAP:

- Access is **free**;
- **Confidentiality** is key; and
- Resources and services include everything from tool kits to one-on-one counselling to the CareNow service, which gives users access to a range of programs designed to help with anxiety, depression, stress, and more.
- You can use the MAP to navigate a variety of life challenges, such as:
  - Stress, mental health concerns, and grief and loss;
  - Relationship and family issues, including childcare and eldercare;
  - Workplace concerns, including performance and work-life balance;
  - Legal matters, including separation/divorce and custody issues; and
  - Financial issues, including debt management, bankruptcy, and retirement planning.

How to access the TELUS Health One MAP

Make sure you always have the support you need at your fingertips:

- Download the app from Google Play (Android) or the App Store (iOS):
  - The app acts like a digital wallet card. You can contact a MAP advisor with just one tap—toll-free, 24/7—for expert advice, resources, and referrals.
- Visit **one.telushealth.com**; username: *bccpa* | password: *Lifeworks*.
- Call TELUS Health at 1-844-880-9142.

Davidson & Company
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS
Member of Nexia

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Congrats to Our 2024 CFE Writers!


Manisha Kandola


Rod Lyons


Rumabel Mateo


Nyaradzo Nhubu


Joshua Penny

davidson-co.com

CPABC ONLINE

Follow CPABC on Social Media

Linkedin.com/company/cpabritishcolumbia

Facebook.com/cpabc

Instagram.com/cpabc

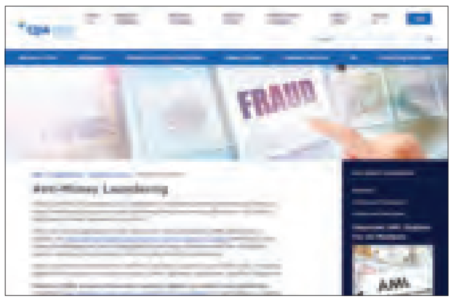
Tiktok.com/@cpabc

Access Resources on the CPABC Website

Newsroom

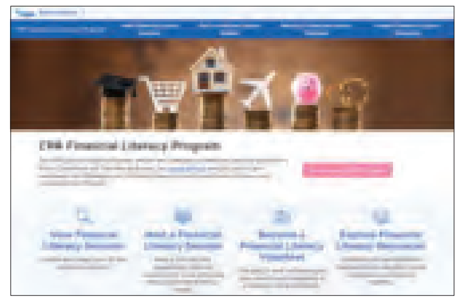
bccpa.ca/newsroom

Anti-Money Laundering



bccpa.ca/aml

Financial Literacy

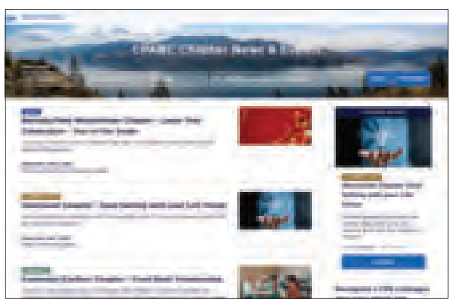


bccpa.ca/finlit

Public Practice Knowledge Base

bccpa.ca/kbase

Chapters



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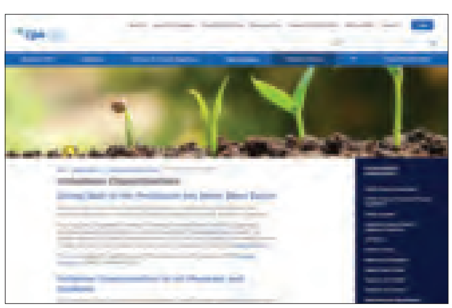
Protecting the Public

bccpa.ca/protecting_public

Employer Resource Centre

bccpa.ca/employer

Volunteer Resource Centre



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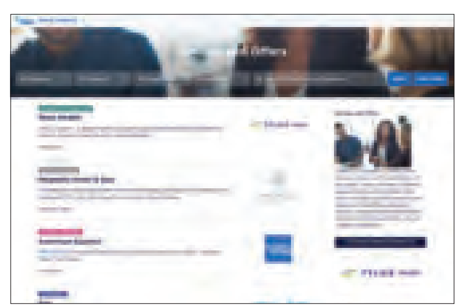
Savings and Offers



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Minelli Anthony


Nikhil Bahri


Mathieu Boucher-Allard


Matthew Busch


Loveleen Cheema


Elaine Chen


Janice Chen


Kelly Chen


Aidan Doherty


Mehrshad Kamali Khameneh


Sarah Kim


Stuart Orr


Mohit Owan


Spencer Pallard


Rebekah Price


Vissank Ramalingam


Harleen Rattan


Shoma Sasaki


Alisha Savet


Troy Townsend


Madison Yip

Cover Story

Will Sustainability Reporting Improve Sustainability Performance?

By Irene Herremans, PhD, and Douglas Stuart, CPA, CA

Kitinut/iStock/Getty Images

Whether sustainability reporting will actually improve sustainability performance is not just a question of frequent discussion among academics—it's also top of mind for accounting professionals. And it's a timely and important question given the movement towards sustainability disclosure regulation taking place around the world.

Take, for example, the European Union's mandatory Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which came into effect for some companies in 2024. What makes the CSRD notable is that it is the first mandatory reporting requirement that affects a wide range of companies, and not only in the European Union. Canadian companies who do considerable business in the EU may also have to report in the next few years, depending on their employee count, assets, and turnover. By requiring greater transparency in sustainability reporting, the intent of the CSRD is to motivate companies to lessen their negative environmental and social impacts.

Numerous academic studies have been published on this topic over the past 30 years, and while earlier studies reached different conclusions about the relationship between sustainability reporting and performance improvement, most of the studies conducted after companies gained experience in designing their sustainability performance and reporting systems showed these two metrics moving in the same direction. Additionally, the later research did identify variables that play an important role in determining whether an organization will meet its sustainability performance improvement objectives through enhanced reporting.


Kitinut/iStock/Getty Images

This article will describe these variables and set out a sustainability management and reporting system that is more likely to bring about real change for organizations by reducing some of the complexity.

Standards are an important variable

Standards provide useful guidance not only in the reporting process but also in designing a sustainability management and reporting system that is more likely to improve performance.

The first global reporting guidelines were issued by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in 2000, and they identified stakeholder engagement as the initial step in developing a sustainability management and reporting system. Most—but not all—companies that were serious about performance and reporting improvement chose to follow these guidelines.

In 2016, GRI turned these guidelines into the first set of global standards, called the "GRI Standards." The GRI Standards emphasize a broader notion of materiality—referred to as double materiality—comprising both activities that affect financial results and activities that affect external parties. Notably, through its own stakeholder engagement, the GRI created industry-specific supplements that recognize the uniqueness of diverse industries; but while these supplements are useful, the GRI still recommends that organizations engage with their stakeholders individually to determine materiality.

Other similar standards followed, albeit with slightly different scopes. For example, the standards issued by the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) narrowed to metrics only for climate change, and those issued by the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) were targeted to publicly held companies only (primarily with their shareholders in mind).

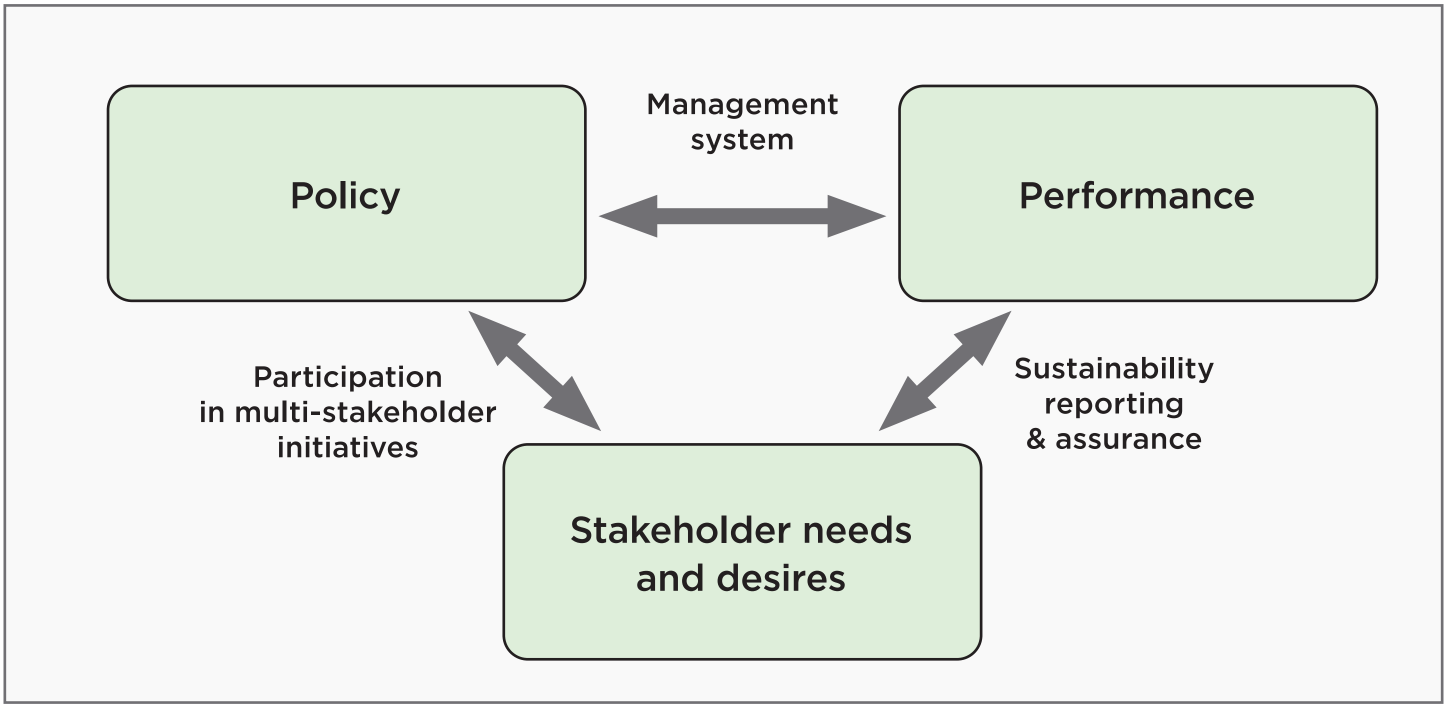
The latest sets of reporting standards include those issued by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) under the IFRS Foundation. Although most standards are similar, the ISSB standards seek to reduce confusion by consolidating previous frameworks and guidelines developed by other standard-setting bodies, such as the TCFD, the International Integrated Reporting Council, and the SASB. The ISSB standards lay out the first step in creating a sustainability system, which is deciding which aspects of sustainability are most material and pose the greatest risks. Per the ISSB, these aspects should then be included in the firm's performance initiatives and reports.

To date, most companies committed to performance and reporting improvement have tried to show that they were meeting the requirements of multiple standards. Hopefully, the ISSB standards will streamline the process and make it easier for companies.

Making connections

Now let's discuss other key variables using the illustration on the next page, which depicts the symbiotic relationships between stakeholders, policy, and performance.

The dynamics of a sustainability performance and reporting system



We adapted this illustration from the work of Thomas Zenisek, who conceptualized this framework of corporate social responsibility in 1979, while a professor of organizational behaviour at the University of Calgary.[1] Zenisek emphasized the necessity for strong reciprocal linkages between an organization's policy statements, actual performance, and stakeholders to ensure corporate social responsibility.

We updated the illustration to more clearly define the linkages and incorporate what we've learned from subsequent research about the variables that will support performance improvement through credible sustainability reporting. Put simply, the message is that there must be strong connections between what an organization promises, what it delivers, and what society expects. But let's look a bit deeper at each section of the illustration.

Policy

Improving sustainability should not be a disorganized or pick-and-choose set of activities. Organizations need a good plan, and it should start with a sustainability policy. This policy should include a definition of sustainability along with a detailed strategy and related objectives comprising economic, environmental, and social factors.[2] In addition, the policy should map out how these related objectives will be interconnected to produce sustainable outputs and outcomes.

Most reporting standards indicate that these policies should be informed through engagement with stakeholders—both internal, such as employees and managers, and external, such as community members, investors, creditors, suppliers, and others affected by the organization's operations. The organization should identify aspects that are of high importance to each set of stakeholders and have a high impact on the organization itself.

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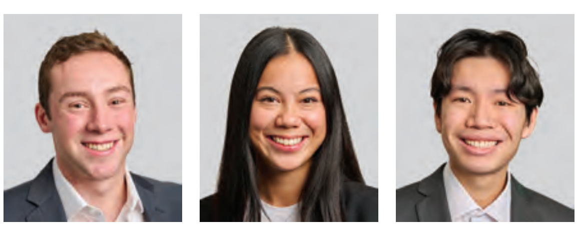
1 Thomas J. Zenisek, "Corporate Social Responsibility: A Conceptualization Based on Organizational Literature," *Academy of Management Review*, 4(3), 1979 (359-368).

2 Though sometimes used interchangeably, the terms sustainability and ESG (environmental, social, and governance) are not the same. Sustainability refers to an organization's economic, environmental, and social impacts, while ESG focuses on how the organization manages the risks and opportunities associated with sustainability. Governance is not an outcome of sustainability—rather it is a means to increase the probability of reaching the desired outcomes of sustainability's economic, environmental, and social dimensions.

Success is written on our faces

We’re very proud of our 32 successful writers of the **2024 Common Final Examination** for Chartered Professional Accountants in BC. We can’t wait to see what they’ll achieve next.



John An, Davianna Chien, Brian Chung, Alisha Dhawan, Carman Gao, Matheson Go, Amanda Hong, Jason Huang, Kyle Jacob, Julia Jamorabon, Patrick Keon, Matthew Kettleson, Edward Kim, Raghav Kinger, Calvin Lam, Camrynn Lee, Scott MacDonald, Deepishwar Mangat, Cole McKinnon, Alona Muraviova, Brandon Nagai, Haja Razafindrakoto, Harry Sandrelli, Quinten Schmidt, Kara Tan, Yvette Valles, Esteban Velasquez, Noyal Sebastian Vembenickal, Ben Walls, Mia Watkins, Christopher Wong.

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The aspects that are determined as high on both descriptors will set the stage for both performance and reporting and should be confirmed through an internal review by the board of directors and the top management team. In addition, the report itself should provide information on the stakeholder engagement process. At least two standard setters—the aforementioned GRI and AccountAbility, a consultancy firm well known for setting standards for sustainability reporting and assurance, particularly in Europe—provide good guidance on how to undertake stakeholder engagement and on the steps that should be taken and reported to ensure the process is relevant and credible.

Some sustainability practitioners may argue that stakeholder engagement is unnecessary given that certain reporting standards, such as those issued by the ISSB and its related standard-setter, the SASB, have already identified specific disclosure topics by industry. However, it's important to remember that organizations—even those in the same industry—operate in different contexts and have stakeholders with diverse and unique needs.

Additionally, the SASB Standards focus on the financially oriented disclosures needed by investors, analysts, and other market participants, and do not necessarily recommend that individual organizations engage with broader sets of stakeholders. Adhering to this narrower scope might make the process of engagement more efficient, but when one organization operates in several different industries or communities, with different customers and supply chains, broader engagement helps to customize performance and reporting to unique stakeholder needs, potentially making it more effective.

An example of a multi-stakeholder engagement model can be found on Unilever's website at unilever.com. Now considered a leader in overall sustainability, Unilever is one of several companies that uses its reporting to target areas needing improvement. As evidence of the positive impact of this approach, Unilever received a sustainable supply chain award at the World Sustainability Congress 2024 in Amsterdam.

It's important to note, however, that the sustainability reporting process is less about achieving a static goal (although this is also important) and more about continuous improvement, accountability, and engagement. It is a process that is just as much about identifying weaknesses in performance and stating how they will be shored up as it is about communicating achievements and successes.

Imagine each of the following stakeholder engagement disclosures in a sustainability report:

- "We engage with our community stakeholders."
- "Our sustainability reporting is based on the actions identified as important by our suppliers, customers, regulators, and community stakeholders during individual consultation sessions. These actions were also reviewed by our upper management team. In our reporting, we explain our progress in addressing the materiality of these actions, and we identify the challenges we face along the way."

Which do you think would instil more confidence in the reader? The second set of statements indicates that the organization has identified the aspects of sustainability that are important to its various stakeholders and/or those that might create risk to the organization if ignored. Our message here is that sustainability reporting must be sincere, detailed, and in line with both internal and external stakeholder needs if the report is to be useful in determining an organization's performance and reporting direction.

Performance

The next stage of the illustration shows that these policy statements must link to actual performance through a strong management system. Furthermore, actual performance must continue to inform the policy statements so that these statements can be continuously updated to accurately represent the changing context in which the organization operates. Performance does not just "happen"; good processes, procedures, and control mechanisms are needed to ensure that the organization's performance targets are achieved.

It is essential that employees know what is important to the organization, share the same values through education and training, are committed to the organization's goals, and have the capacity to carry out their work.

The appropriate people must be tasked with fulfilling objectives and reaching targets, and their achievements should receive proper recognition. Personnel should be adequately trained and have appropriate resources (e.g., sufficient budgets) to better ensure that organizational objectives are accomplished. In summary, it is essential that employees know what is important to the organization, share the same values through education and training, are committed to the organization's goals, and have the capacity to carry out their work.

Performance should be reported to the leadership team periodically, with preference given to the CFO for all environmental, social, and financial metrics. The CFO would then report performance to the board of directors, which should have a committee responsible for ensuring that policy is turned into action. Some organizations also have chief sustainability officers (CSOs) who may report to the CFO or CEO. In these organizations, the CSO frequently plays a key role in integrating sustainability into corporate strategy and leads stakeholder engagement and discussions about potential trade-offs between the needs of different stakeholder groups.

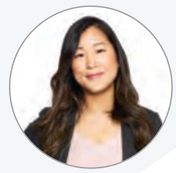
Additionally, the governing board members should have expertise in sustainability and be diversified in terms of gender, age, and independence—and if the organization's operations are international, there should also be international representation. This board should be responsible for reviewing the performance report and providing thoughtful feedback to management regarding progress.

Continued on page 34


Ashpreet Barn


Madison Carefoot


Zach Colley


Naomi Craig


Reign Dalmacio


Tarny Dhindsa


Linh Dinh


Tiffany Fan


Jennifer Ferriere


Jacky Jiang


Alice Nguyen


Mia Nozaki


Jenna Nunn


Ticianne Pacheco


Audrey Pao


Cathy Peng


Danny Pham


Carson Todd


Jessie Wang


Jenny Xu


Yishu Ye


Sean Yoo


Chongyang Zheng

Ranjit Rai

Min Zhang

BDO congratulates our successful CFE writers

We are pleased to recognize our British Columbia employees who passed the Common Final Examination (CFE). This is a significant step towards becoming a Chartered Professional Accountant in Canada. We congratulate you all for your hard work and determination, and look forward to your further achievements as valuable members of our team.

BDO is one of the largest national accounting and advisory partnerships in Canada with offices nationwide. Our professionals have the expertise to serve owner-managed businesses, large enterprises, mid-market public companies, communities and not-for-profit organizations in a broad range of industries.

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After this review process, the organization will be ready to provide a report to stakeholders communicating its progress on the sustainability aspects earlier defined as material. This report will then serve not only as a reliable and transparent source of information for its external stakeholders, but also as a tool for internal improvement.

Prior to publication, there are several steps the organization can take to ensure the reliability and relevancy of its reporting. One is ensuring that the report provides a balanced discussion of both successes and challenges—without this balance, the report will not provide good direction for performance improvement. When personnel are so close to their own reporting, they may not realize that a report lacks this balance. For this reason, it's important to have others who are independent from the report provide guidance for improvement before the report's publication and distribution.

First in line should be the internal auditor team, which can review metrics and ask critical questions about how the organization's activities improved a metric. This process will ensure the metric's accuracy and reliability. An advisory board whose membership is representative of the organization's internal and external stakeholders can also help strengthen the integrity of the report and ensure that it accurately reflects performance. Advisory board members would read the report before publication to provide feedback for improvement. Additionally, if the organization can afford third-party verification, it could enlist an assurance provider to advise on how the organization's systems could be improved or disclosure could be made more relevant to help with performance improvement.

Stakeholder needs and desires

The final stage of the illustration is about the report being made available to the organization's stakeholders. However, the process doesn't stop here—as the two-way arrows suggest, the organization should invite feedback to understand how stakeholders perceive its performance and identify where improvement may be necessary. To this end, the organization should designate a point person to serve as the contact for stakeholder feedback and name this person in its report. Even better—and in keeping with responsibility accounting—if a manager's name can be added to each aspect or section of the report as the contact for feedback, this will emphasize the seriousness with which the organization is taking performance improvement. The organization may also want to create a stakeholder advisory panel, as these can be valuable assets for reporting and performance improvement.

All feedback should be considered as to how it might affect a change in the organization's direction for the coming years. Does the policy need updating? Are the objectives still focused on the most material aspects of operations? Are targets sufficiently rigorous? By staying engaged with its stakeholders and continually revisiting its system to ensure that procedures and processes are working properly, an organization will increase the probability of its sustainability report serving as a strong, internally driving document that helps improve performance.

A process of continual improvement

Ultimately, there is no such thing as an ideal sustainability report. The goal with reporting on material sustainability issues should not be to produce a document with full marks on these issues and then call it a day. In fact, if an organization were to achieve all of its sustainability objectives in a given year, it might suggest that these objectives were not sufficiently rigorous. Instead, the goal should be to continue making improvements on the aspects of greatest importance to the organization and its various stakeholders and use the sustainability report as a critical and living document in this process. ■

Irene M. Herremans is a professor at the University of Calgary, both in the Haskayne School of Business and in the Sustainable Energy Development Master of Science program. She is also an award-winning researcher, a CPA, CMA, in Alberta, and a CPA (Wisconsin).

Douglas Stuart is an assistant teaching professor at the University of Victoria's Gustavson School of Business, a CPABC faculty ambassador, and the author and co-author of several sustainability-themed articles for CPABC in Focus. *He also holds the Fundamentals of Sustainability Accounting (FSA) credential.*

CPABC podcast: ESG initiatives driving positive change in tech

CPABC President and CEO Lori Mathison, FCPA, FCGA, LLB, recently sat down with Zahra Kolia, CPA, CA (SA), vice-president of finance at Copperleaf Technologies, to discuss how ESG-related initiatives are driving positive change in the tech sector. This interview was part of the Coffee Chats with CPABC podcast series, and you'll find a companion article in the CPABC Newsroom at **bccpa.ca/newsroom**.

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Budgeting Apps: A Sampling

From tracking expenses and paying bills to monitoring investments and savings, budgeting apps offer a one-stop financial management solution for users at all levels. These apps range from basic budgeting tools to advanced platforms focused on investments and financial goal tracking. Financial literacy expert Nelson Soh, CPA, CA, recently reviewed some of the top-rated budgeting apps available in Canada, and here's what he had to say.

Fudget

Fudget is a straightforward, no-frills app that helps users track their income and expenses. The app doesn't have to be synced with bank accounts, making it ideal for people who don't want to share their banking information, and its minimalist design is perfect for those who prefer to manually enter their transactions and maintain a simple record of their spending. Users can create lists of expected expenses and check off each item as it is paid. Fudget also allows for quick calculations, making it easy to track one-off expenses and make on-the-go adjustments.

KOHO

This budgeting tool is a prepaid, reloadable Mastercard combined with an app that tracks spending in real time, categorizes expenses, and provides insights to help you stay on top of your budget. One of KOHO's standout features is its cashback rewards program, which gives users cash back on certain purchases. Additionally, users can set savings goals within the app and use the "RoundUp" feature to automatically save small amounts. KOHO's budgeting features are fully integrated with its spending, making it an all-in-one financial management tool.

Monarch

Monarch goes beyond traditional budgeting by providing a holistic overview of your financial health. Users can sync the app with their bank, credit card, and investment accounts and even add assets like real estate and collectibles. It updates account balances multiple times a day, offering timely snapshots of net worth and spending. The app reduces the need for manual entries, making it ideal for users who prefer a hands-off approach but still want a detailed view of their overall financial health.

PocketGuard

PocketGuard simplifies spend tracking with its "In My Pocket" feature, which shows users how much money they have left over after paying their bills and achieving their savings goals. The app automatically syncs with your bank and credit cards, making it easy to categorize expenses and manage recurring bills. PocketGuard also has features that enable you to track debt repayments, remind you of upcoming bills, and even manage subscriptions.

Disclaimer: CPABC does not endorse any of the services or products mentioned in this article. It is the reader's responsibility to research and review the services and products independently.

Images by Marta Sher/iStock/Getty Images

YNAB

With its zero-based budgeting approach, YNAB (You Need a Budget) allocates each dollar earned to specific expense categories like savings, expenses, or goals. This method helps users reallocate funds between categories as needed to manage spending and prepare for unexpected costs. The ability to sync with bank accounts and credit cards allows for some automation, but users still have to manually assign charges to categories. YNAB also offers educational resources, including articles, podcasts, and a DIY Money Planner workbook.

Nelson Soh is a managing partner and the CFO of FSQ Consulting, a TEDx speaker, and a best-selling author. This information is based on an article published in the CPABC Newsroom on November 5, 2024.

The classic spreadsheet

Dubious about apps? As a budgeting tool, Excel gives you complete control over how you organize your finances while also safeguarding your privacy. Whether you prefer to create your own budgeting template or download free templates online, Excel enables you to manually input income and expenses, categorize transactions, generate charts or graphs to visualize spending patterns, and set up formulas to automatically calculate savings, track debt payments, and project future financial goals based on your current spending habits. While this does require more manual entry, the level of customization is limitless.

Success adds up

MNP proudly congratulates our B.C. candidates on passing the 2024 Common Final Exam (CFE), marking a major step toward their CPA designation. As one of Canada's leading accounting and consulting firms, these 70 team members exemplify our commitment to supporting our client's success.

Left Page: Andrew Aiello, Tej Atwal, Erik Babbitt, Brett Bass, Alex Beaudry, Steven Bickford, Bryan Borelli, Sam Brar, David Chan-Kent, Luke Charlesworth, Erick Chau, Ian Connor, Courtenay Currie, Erin Dale, Maria de Leeuw, Sophia Deng, Rebekah Dittrick, Alexis Doserro, Natasha Eberle, Erin Foster, Renee Fowler, Tina Fu, Jessy Gale, Caleb Geerlof, Nilesh Ghatge, Evan Gibson, Bryn Giesbrecht, Jeevan Gill, Kamisha Gill, Saurabh Goyal, Ravneet Hans, Dylan Howlin, Jas Hunsra, Bennett Hunter, Samuel Jones

Right Page: Harsimram Kaur, Humza Khan, Manraj Kooner, Mitch Krahn, Kristen Kristiansen, Eugene Kwan, Kyle Lam, Clarke Larsen, Jena Lenning, Jason Liang, David Lu, Melody Lu, Brett Mackey, Sean McGinn, Blake Mackinnon, Simran Minhas, Jacqueline Mrakuzic, Jaspreet Nijjar, Colburn Pearce, Peter Pham, Tyler Postma, Bhavna Rajguru, Nina Rauber, Darsh Sanghera, Hunar Sharma, Gurvinder Sidhu, Hardayal Singh, Kyle Smith, Matthew So, Manuela Spatar, Alysha Stimpson, Jason Terrillon, Sequoia Teschke, Charlene Zheng

MNP

Not included above: Sunil Ralh

Success Stories

Meet the BC CFE writers who excelled in May and September 2024

SvetaZi/iStock/Getty Images

CPABC congratulates the 846 BC and Yukon candidates who successfully wrote the Common Final Exam (CFE) in May and September 2024 and commends the following BC writers for making the National Honour Roll: Daniella Diamond Abramowich, Alyssa Andres, Christopher Armstrong, Ivan Chau, Jo-Elle Craig, Emily Margaret Peters, Sophie Temirov, David Tran, and Mitchell Turko. We also congratulate Emily Margaret Peters for earning a CPA Canada Gold Medal after achieving the highest standing in Western Canada on the May 2024 writing. Here's what the candidates had to say about the CFE experience.

Emily Margaret Peters

REGIONAL GOLD MEDALLIST (MAY)

Employer: Oak Bay Marine Group (Victoria)

Job title: Intermediate Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? During Capstone 2, I had to go see a physiotherapist because I'd been sitting at my desk so much that I had pulled a muscle—a studying injury! It's funny looking back on the situation, but at the time, I needed to heal quickly so I could sit for the three days of the CFE. Telling my friends and my physiotherapist how I sustained the injury was very memorable.

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. Once I accepted that the study process would be a roller-coaster of emotions, successes, and setbacks, I was able to view the setbacks as learning opportunities. This mindset was helpful when trying not to spiral during the study process!

Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies? Running with my amazing run club and taking cold ocean dips with my friends kept me going during my studies. Both the exercise and the community were so necessary and appreciated.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? I feel very fortunate to have such a wonderful support system. My partner Andrew supported me in many ways, even if it just meant giving me space when I had a five-hour case to write. My close friends and my running community kept me grounded and were so understanding when I had to say no to things. My parents hosted me for a week during my final study push. My co-workers were also very supportive, especially my mentor, Lucas Gilmour, CPA, who listened to my concerns and questions and gave me valuable advice.

Daniella Diamond Abramowich

Employer: KPMG LLP (Vancouver)

Job title: Senior Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? The most unforgettable part was walking out of the convention centre on day three with my study group and seeing our KPMG cheering squad, as well as hundreds of other accounting professionals. It was really memorable to see everyone celebrating this important milestone.

Tell us about a source of inspiration during your studies. I drew inspiration from the previous two cohorts at KPMG who had written the CFE before me. Celebrating their success and experiencing the excitement of results day (and the anticipation on the night before results) left an impression on me at the very beginning of my CPA journey, and it motivated me to stay focused throughout the summer.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? I would first like to thank my parents and family for supporting me throughout my education and career journey, including my studies over the summer. I am so grateful to have such a wonderful family who inspires me to always try my best.

To my CFE mentor, Neave Badanai, CPA: Thank you for your encouragement and guidance throughout the summer, as well as your willingness to share your CFE knowledge and experience. The moral support you provided made a huge difference to me. I would also like to thank my study group, Lucy and Tori. Studying with you made the CFE experience so much more fun and motivating.

Lastly, thank you to KPMG—I really appreciated the resources that were available to us and the meaningful encouragement from partners and managers.

"I am honoured to celebrate the outstanding achievements of the 846 dedicated candidates from BC and the Yukon who have expertly navigated the complexities of the 2024 May and September CFE writings. Their remarkable results underscore not only their robust technical expertise but also the cultivation of essential professional competencies for their future endeavours.

Alyssa Andres

Employer: Loewen Kruse Chartered Professional Accountants (Langley)

Job title: Associate Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? I'll remember the memories made while living with my family in Quesnel during my study leave, the experience of persevering through a wrist injury, and the two and a half months of apprehension spent wondering if I'd passed the CFE. There was also the extreme surprise of receiving a phone call from my employer saying that I had not only passed but made the honour roll!

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. Partway through the summer, I realized that learning all the information that could potentially come up on the CFE was impossible, and that using critical thinking, sticking to the time limit, and attempting every assessment opportunity (AO) would give me a higher chance of success. Going forward, I spent most of my time on case writing rather than technical review—this included planning my time for each AO and physically writing down the start and end times.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? First, I'd like to thank my family—especially my mom and dad—for providing constant encouragement, always believing in me, and reminding me that there is so much more to life than exams.

I'm also grateful to the partners and my colleagues at Loewen Kruse CPAs, who provided case-writing tips and CFE support and cheered me on.

Finally, I want to thank God, who was with me each step of the way and has given me strength, hope, and peace that I could never find anywhere else.

Christopher Armstrong

Employer: British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (Victoria)

Job title: Analyst, Investment Accounting Branch

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? Ironically, I will remember the sense of defeat I felt after writing day two. If someone had told me then that I would make the honour roll, I would have said there was no way. This experience has taught me that if you put in the work, nothing is impossible.

What's one thing you wish you'd known when you started CPA PEP? That everybody's CPA PEP experience is different. You can get advice from people that have been through it, but ultimately, the experience will be uniquely your own. Whether it's your learning style, the demands of your job, how much time you take off work, or how you balance studying with your personal life, everybody's path will be different. There is no one right way to get through the program, but all paths will require hard work.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? First and foremost, I'd like to thank my parents, Brad (a CPA, CMA) and Christine Armstrong, for all their support and encouragement—not only during my CFE studies but over the last 30 years.

I would also like to thank my friend and fellow writer, Reanna Larson, who went through CPA PEP at the same time as me. Whether it was sharing study tips or commiserating over exams, the entire experience is easier when you have someone going through it with you.

Finally, I'd like to thank my boss, Donna Mueller, CPA, CMA, as well as my work team members who helped cover for me while I was studying.

On behalf of our team at the School, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to these individuals as they advance in their professional journeys. Your perseverance and accomplishments are a testament to your unwavering dedication. We eagerly anticipate your future contributions and successes in the field."

Yuen Ip, CEO of the CPA Western School of Business and CPA, CMA, in Alberta

Ivan Chau

Employer: Deloitte LLP (Vancouver)

Job title: Senior Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? I felt an unforgettable wave of relief when I walked out of the exam hall after an intense four hours of writing on the final day. And it became even more memorable when—in a sea of people—I caught a glimpse of my coworkers waiting outside for me. I will never forget their cheers, hugs, and encouraging words.

Was there a time during your studies when you accomplished something you previously thought was impossible? My previous exam writing experience was limited to two-hour university exams. When I first learned that the CFE spanned three days, each of which was four or five hours long, I was beyond overwhelmed. However, as my studying progressed and I practised writing cases in exam-like conditions, I discovered that I was fully capable of staying focused throughout. Often, I even wished I had more time to work on my case!

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? First and foremost, I'd like to express my thanks to my family—especially my mom—for their support. From cooking meals when I was engulfed in practice cases to helping me run errands when my face was buried in my eBook, they ensured that I could focus entirely on my studies. I couldn't have done it without them.

I'd also like to thank my CFE mentor, Natalie Yu, CPA, for setting me up for success throughout my journey. And thanks go to Jonathan Lee and Ingrid Mo, as well—their emotional support and encouragement really helped me get through the summer.

Jo-Elle Craig

Employer: Doane Grant Thornton LLP (Kelowna)

Job title: Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? The disbelief I felt when I finished writing on day three was overwhelming. The second I finished my last case was just so surreal.

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. It happened about two or three weeks prior to the CFE—I started to write that week's day three case, and I wasn't very confident about any of the topics. The entire time I was writing, I was frustrated with myself, but I followed my plan, stuck to my time allocations, and just wrote all I could. The "aha" moment came when I was debriefing and realized I'd actually done a lot better than I'd thought. That was when it clicked that I didn't need to know every technical detail to succeed.

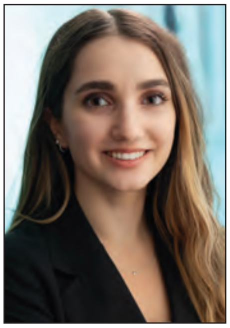
Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? Firstly, I want to thank my CFE coach Jen Crookes, CPA, for helping me stay grounded and manage my stress leading up to the CFE. I am so incredibly grateful for her unwavering support.

Secondly, I want to thank my CFE study buddy, Lauren Finkel, for everything—from writing every case as if it was the real thing to debriefing daily and talking through CFE topics. I couldn't have gotten through this process without you! I also want to thank my CPA mentor, Zach Perehudoff, CPA. He was one of my greatest supporters throughout my PEP and CFE studies, and I really appreciate all of his guidance.

Lastly, I want to thank my family and friends who made it possible for me to get to where I am today.

"Warmest congratulations to the CFE finalists who recently passed the exam! Each CPA's career journey is marked by key milestones. One of the earliest and most significant achievements is passing our profession's rigorous education and examination requirements. Now that the CFE is done, your next steps are before you. I know our profession is in good hands as you continue your career journeys."

Peter Guo, CPA, CA, Chair of the CPABC Board of Directors



Sophie Temirov

Employer: TELUS (Vancouver)

Job title: Financial Analyst II

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? I'll never forget all the support I received from my family, friends, and colleagues during my CFE experience!

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. A big breakthrough for me was developing a strong case-writing strategy by debriefing my outlines and time allocations. Planning wasn't something I focused on in the other CPA PEP modules, but seeing the benefits that a strong outline had on my case writing across all three days was a lightbulb moment.

Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies? During my studies, I took up journaling to track what I did each day and how I was feeling. If I saw a trend of being stressed over a few days, I knew it was time to take a longer break. The day before the CFE, I read over my journal entries to reassure myself that I'd put in all the work needed to be ready for the exam.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? I'd like to thank my TELUS family who supported me throughout this journey. Special thanks goes to my mentor, Matt Murray, FCPA, FCMA, as well as Tyler Friend, CPA; Colleyna Jhong, CPA; Amy Bonner, CPA, CA; Jill Miller-Barone, CPA, CA; Blake Wuhr; and all my other team members. I'm so grateful for their encouragement, belief, and advice. I'd also like to thank my family and friends, who made sure I took breaks, got me out of the house, and celebrated my successes every step of the way. I don't know what I'd do without them.

David Tran

Employer: Rockwell Automation (Toronto)

Job title: Manager of FP&A

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? One thing that I will remember from my CFE experience happened on the first day of the exam. I had assumed that, since the exam was entirely electronic, I wouldn't need any pencils. However, I soon discovered that a pencil was required to fill in my identification details on the exam sheet. Fortunately, the person sitting next to me was incredibly prepared—they had brought along 10 pencils, just in case nine of them failed!

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. A significant breakthrough in my studies occurred when I started delving into the enabling competencies book. It helped clarify various concepts I had been grappling with, and suddenly, everything seemed to fall into place.

Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies? Maintaining a consistent exercise routine played a crucial role in managing stress during my studies. Keeping up with regular physical activity not only helped me stay healthy but also provided me with the mental clarity and discipline needed to tackle the rigorous demands of the CPA program.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my manager and director, both of whom are CPAs, for their unwavering support throughout my journey. Their guidance, advice, and encouragement were invaluable as I navigated through the complexities of the CPA program.

Photo of Daniella Diamond Abramowich, Alyssa Andres, Ivan Chau, Sophie Temirov, and David Tran by Kent Kallberg Studios. Photo of Christopher Armstrong by Brit Kwasney Photo. Photo of Jo-Elle Craig by Robert Conchie, Wax Pencil Imagery. Photo of Emily Margaret Peters by Jesse Hlady Studios. Photo of Mitchell Turko by HA Photography.

Mitchell Turko

Employer: Hazelwood (Nanaimo)

Job title: Accountant

What will you remember most about your CFE experience? One moment that stands out is when my laptop froze during the exam—it felt like the longest 45 minutes of my life! But in all seriousness, the sense of relief I felt upon finishing the final day was extraordinary. I could tell that everyone who completed the CFE that day felt immense pride in their accomplishment.

Tell us about a breakthrough or "aha" moment during your studies. I wouldn't say I had a specific breakthrough moment during my studies. Instead, I developed strong habits over the weeks I spent preparing for the CFE. After I failed my first practice exam—which, to be quite honest, terrified me—I focused on improving my test-writing skills by practising under test conditions, addressing each assessment opportunity, and reviewing feedback on every case.

Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies? I struggled with studying alone all day, so I made a point of socializing with family and friends during my free time. I also stayed active by playing sports and going to the gym, which helped me recharge.

Who would you like to thank for providing support during your studies? I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for their unwavering support throughout this journey. Above all, my parents' encouragement has been instrumental in reaching this milestone, and I'm grateful for their guidance and love. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the accounting program faculty at Vancouver Island University. The exceptional professors do an outstanding job preparing students for CPA PEP, and their dedication is greatly appreciated. ■

Jonas Kwong is the manager of internal control & risk management at Arc'teryx Equipment. He partners with the management team to assess enterprise risks and design effective internal controls to improve operations.

Internal Control Considerations: A Primer for Businesses

By Jonas Kwong, CPA

ojogabonitoo/istock/Getty Images

Most of us have an intuitive understanding of what internal controls are, even if we don't label them as such, because we regularly perform a variety of actions to protect ourselves and others from adverse events. Moreover, when bad things *do* happen, we often look for the contributing factors that led up to these events so that we can prevent reoccurrences. Consider the following examples:

1. A solo hiker uses a checklist to make sure she has packed all of her essentials and notified others of her planned route.
2. The manager of an apartment building conducts an annual check of the in-suite smoke detectors to ensure that all alarms are working properly.
3. A couple returns from a two-week vacation to find that their home has been burgled. In addition to touching base with neighbours and checking all doors and windows, they contact the providers of their home security system to figure out how and when the breach occurred.

Internal controls in business are similarly preventative and detective in nature. In its *Internal Control—Integrated Framework*, the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) defines internal controls as processes implemented by management to achieve operational, compliance, and reporting objectives.[1] Recognizing that COSO's definition is quite broad, this article discusses how internal controls can be relevant to organizations of any size, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and how these controls can be implemented.

[1] COSO, *Internal Control – Integrated Framework: Executive Summary*, **coso.org**, 2013.

Minimizing fraud risk

The following fictionalized scenarios depict commonly committed occupational fraud schemes and describe how simple controls could help lower or eliminate a company's exposure.

Scenario #1 – No segregation of duties

A payroll administrator misappropriated more than US$1 million from her employer over a span of more than five years before getting caught. Her crime was especially egregious given that the median loss of sampled asset appropriation cases is only about US$150,000 per case, according to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners.[2]

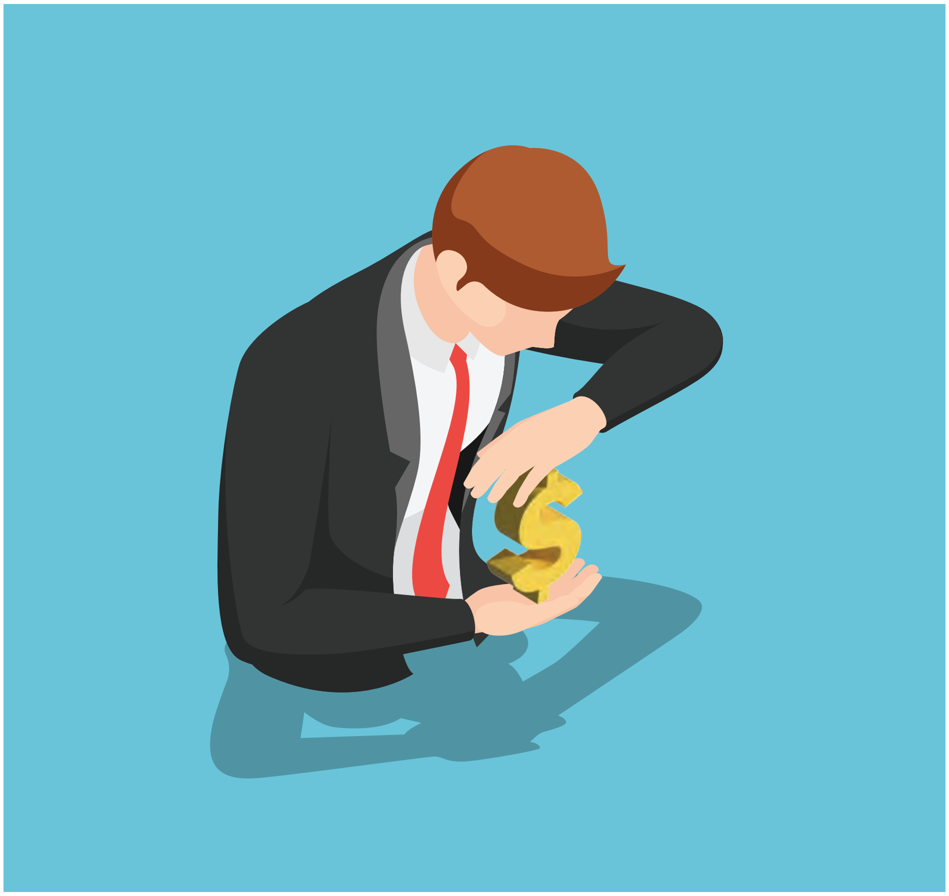
How did it happen? Given the scale of the loss, you might be surprised to learn that the perpetrator's modus operandi boiled down to a simple abuse of trust. In addition to having custody over the employee master files, which enabled her to make changes to employees' banking information, the perpetrator had access to the company's online banking portal, which enabled her to create payment proposals.

[2] ACFE, *Occupational Fraud 2024: Report to the Nations*, **acfe.com**.

In short, the company did not sufficiently segregate duties, and the perpetrator took advantage of this lack of oversight to change employee banking information and propose fraudulent payroll payments to herself. Afterwards, she updated and reverted the bank account details back to cover her tracks.

In this instance, the company's management could have prevented this fraud by:

- Restricting access to employee master files where all changes made must be reviewed and approved by another individual, such as the controller or the accounting manager. Although this would not eliminate the risk of fraudulent payroll payments, adding another individual into the process chain could deter would-be fraudsters by creating an additional barrier;
- Requiring that all changes to employee banking information be substantiated by supporting documentation, such as a pre-authorized debit form and correspondence from the employee requesting the changes; and
- If possible, segregating the payroll function into three parts, with one person overseeing the employee master files, another processing the payroll, and a third overseeing payment proposals.



ojogabonitoo/istock/Getty Images

Scenario #2 – Unchecked authority

A high-ranking executive with a long and previously untarnished professional history was caught misappropriating company funds via falsified expense claims. When confronted, he admitted to having submitted expenses that were personal in nature and not incurred in the course of conducting business.

How did it happen? Although the company had a travel and entertainment policy and required that all expense claims be reviewed and approved by the submitter's direct supervisor, the perpetrator in this case reported directly to the board of directors, which meant the specific review and approval requirement was waived. As a result, the executive was able to continue making fraudulent expense claims undetected until the accounts payable processor spotted a discrepancy between the credit card number referenced on the altered invoices and the company credit card number on file.

To prevent this from happening again, the company should consider enhancing their protocols with a few additional control measures, such as:

- Requiring that expense reports submitted by high-ranking executives be subjected to external audit and review by a competent and independent accounting firm;
- Requiring that expense reports and expenses be reviewed and approved by the organization's board of directors or audit committee on a quarterly basis; and
- Requiring that travel and entertainment expenses be booked through a company-approved travel agent and software portal, and managed by an administrator.

Scenario #3 – Greed and lack of detective control

A long-term retail store employee was caught stealing high-value stock items.

How did it happen? The perpetrator was responsible for closing up the store's computer department twice a week, and slipped high-value tech items into his backpack on several occasions when other coworkers were busy helping customers. Familiar with the store's closing procedures, the perpetrator knew he could waltz out of the store after closing without anyone searching his bag. Afterwards, he sold the stolen goods at a significant discount via third-party marketplaces online.

Many employers are reluctant to implement controls such as bag searches for fear of hurting staff morale or creating an atmosphere of distrust. However, if managed in a fair, respectful, and non-discriminatory way, detection and monitoring controls can be implemented effectively with minimal pushback and minimal damage to company culture. These controls could include:

- Random spot checks and bag searches;
- Regular cycle counts with an emphasis on higher-value stock items. Variances could then be investigated to determine root causes (by asking the right questions and of the right people, you can deter most fraudsters from putting their schemes into action); and
- Cross-training so that employees can rotate and perform each others' duties, if applicable.

What works for one organization may not work for another. Each organization must evaluate its operations, identify the most relevant risks, design processes and internal controls accordingly, and monitor these processes on an ongoing basis.

Mitigating the risk of financial material misstatements

While managing fraud risk is one of the most important applications of internal controls, it is by no means the only benefit. For example, when an accountant prepares an adjusting journal entry as part of the month-end close and submits the journal voucher and the supporting documentation to the controller for review and posting, internal controls for financial reporting are involved.

In the context of internal controls for financial reporting, a sub-class of internal controls is designed to help management mitigate the risks of financial material misstatements. By having a set of robust internal controls for financial reporting, a company can improve the accuracy, timeliness, and usefulness of its internal and/or managerial reporting and enhance collaboration with external auditors. By using internal controls, a company can also potentially reduce compliance and audit fees.

Six ways to help your organization improve its control environment

It's important to note that what works for one organization may not work for another. For instance, owners of a small company with only two employees and no plans to increase headcount may not find it necessary to invest in a best-in-class payroll system and segregate duties across the entire payroll process. At the same time, however, there *are* six general steps that organizations of any size can and should use to strengthen internal controls:

1. Scope out business and IT processes and document these processes from cradle to grave;
2. Identify where and how things could go wrong and document these risks;
3. Design and implement controls to address the risks identified;
4. Formalize control documentation and training procedures;
5. Monitor control performance and test on a regular basis to ensure controls are operating effectively; and
6. Periodically review documentation and processes to ensure that internal controls are up to date.

This last step is particularly important, as control environments aren't static—they must evolve in keeping with both operations and risks. Applying the above six steps will put you well on your way to helping your organization proactively embed effective internal controls and processes in your day-to-day operations. ■

Cameron Reid is a senior tax manager with D&H Group in Vancouver, where he assists clients with personal and corporate tax planning. Cameron has experience in a wide variety of sectors and specializes in GST/HST. Photo by Alastair Bird Photography.

The Road Out of the Short-Term Rental Market Is Fraught with GST/HST Traps

By Cameron Reid, CPA

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Offering short-term rental accommodation has become a popular means for property owners to earn additional income, particularly as online rental platforms have exploded in popularity. However, as housing availability and affordability have become contentious issues in Canada, governments have introduced changes to crack down on short-term rentals, including:

1. Creating restrictions and licensing requirements for short-term rentals at the provincial and municipal levels, including the *Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act* or "STRAA," which was introduced in British Columbia in May 2024; and
2. Disallowing income tax deductions for expenses related to short-term rentals that don't meet local licensing requirements.

Understanding the terminology

The term "residential complex" is one of the most important—and yet one of the most complicated and poorly understood—terms in the GST/HST legislation. Virtually any type of residential property (including a detached house, semi-detached house, rowhouse unit, condominium unit, mobile home, floating home, etc.) is considered a "residential complex" for GST/HST purposes if it is: a) occupied by an individual as a place of residence in continuous possession or use for a period of one month or more (i.e., a standard month-to-month or annual lease); or b) used as a place of residence by the owner or their family. However, that same property may not be considered a "residential complex" if it is not used as a place of residence and is instead offered for short-term rentals (such as an Airbnb or similar arrangement offered only for temporary or transient possession or use).

It's vital that property owners understand these nuances because whether a property is, or is not, considered a "residential complex" is crucial in determining whether GST/HST will apply in the event of a sale or change in use.

GST/HST on hotel (or similar) conversions

The *Excise Tax Act* (ETA) contains rules that require property owners to self-assess and pay GST/HST on the fair market value of real property that becomes a "residential complex" after being held for use as capital property in a business or commercial activity. For example, if a property owner converts their Airbnb nightly rental to a tenanted property with a monthly lease arrangement, they may find themselves facing a GST self-assessment obligation, because they are deemed to be the "builder" of the property and to have "substantially renovated" it. A similar rule requires a self-assessment of GST/HST where the property is appropriated by an individual owner for their personal use or enjoyment.

The requirement to self-assess GST/HST on a property that becomes a residential complex (including becoming the owner's principal residence) cannot be deferred even though the owner has no cash flow arising from the conversion to fund the GST/HST owing. Moreover, the GST/HST New Housing Rebate, which was intended to provide partial relief in these situations, isn't available for properties valued above $450,000 (a threshold set in 1991 that has never been adjusted for inflation).

Properties used for short-term rentals

A suite or room in a hotel, motel, inn, boarding house, or lodging house *may* be considered a residential complex if it is used by an individual as a place of residence, but there is an important exclusion in the definition that can apply to these kinds of properties (and others, if they are used like a hotel) called the "hotel exception." This exception, which excludes a property from being considered a residential complex, is essentially a two-part test:

1. The property must be a hotel, motel, inn, boarding house, lodging house, or **other *similar* premises**; and
2. ***All or substantially all*** of the leases, licences, or similar arrangements under which residential units in the building are provided are for periods of continuous possession or use of less than 60 days.

Where these two conditions are met, the property will not be considered a residential complex for GST/HST purposes, and GST/HST will be triggered if the property is sold or converted for use as a residential complex.

It's unclear how *much* personal use of a vacation property would be required to avoid the hotel exception, or where the CRA will draw the line.

CRA guidance on the meaning of "hotel" and similar premises

The difficulty in applying the hotel exception to properties used for short-term rentals often lies in whether the property meets the first condition of the hotel exception. In *GST/HST policy statement P-099*, the CRA provides the following guidelines for determining if a "residential complex" or "residential unit" will be considered a hotel or "similar" property:

- "the establishment normally provides temporary accommodation rather than a permanent place of residence;
- where required by municipal and/or provincial regulations, the establishment is licensed for business for the purpose of providing a temporary place to stay;
- the establishment is available for rental to the public on a temporary [transient] basis; […]
- where appropriate, there is a common registration area;
- the rooms or suites in the establishment are furnished by the supplier;
- depending on the nature of the establishment, housekeeping services and other facilities are available such as restaurants, meeting rooms, stores, etc."[1]

The CRA document, which was issued in 1993, further states that while all six of these conditions do not need to be present for the property to be considered similar to a hotel, where they *are* applicable, these conditions should "generally be present throughout the year."

In a technical interpretation issued in 2003,[2] the CRA provided further clarity by indicating that vacation properties used for short-term rentals on a seasonal basis will not be considered similar to hotels for the purposes of the hotel exception if they are used for long-term rentals or personal use for the remainder of the year. However, it's unclear how *much* personal use of a vacation property would be required to avoid the hotel exception, or where the CRA will draw the line.

It's important to note that the CRA generally ignores periods of vacancy when analyzing the use of a property and in determining its status as a hotel or similar premises. Where there is significant doubt, property owners should seek tax advice from an expert. It may also be prudent to seek a GST/HST ruling from the CRA.

1 CRA, GST/HST policy statement P-099: "The Meaning of 'Hotel,' 'Motel,' 'Inn,' 'Boarding House,' 'Lodging House' and 'Other Similar Premises,' as used in the definition of 'Residential Complex' and 'Residential Unit,'" **canada.ca**. Accessed November 26, 2024.

2 Taxnet Pro, "43557 – GST/HST Interpretation—Seasonal Leases," *GST Headquarters Letters*, 2003.

Case sheds light on "hotel exception" and "all or substantially all" tests

The second part of the hotel exception relates to whether "all or substantially all" of the rentals of the property are for periods of less than 60 days. A recent decision in the Tax Court of Canada addressed the GST/HST status of a residential condominium unit that had been rented on a long-term basis for nine years, then used as a short-term rental property for 14 months, and then sold.[3]

In determining whether "all or substantially all" of the leases of the property in question were for periods of less than 60 days, the judge indicated that we need to look only at the current use of the property and not the total use of the property over the entire period of ownership. The judge also noted that because the change-in-use rules result in the deemed acquisition of a property where the owner begins using it for a commercial purpose, the use of a property before such a point in time is irrelevant in applying the "all or substantially all" test.

The case, which is under appeal at the time of this writing in late November 2024, also confirms that a property need not have all the hallmarks of a hotel to be considered a hotel for GST/HST purposes. Instead, a residential property will be considered "similar" to a hotel for GST/HST purposes if it is *used like a hotel*. The residential condominium in this case was rented on a furnished basis for terms of less than 60 days (and even as short as one night), and internet access was provided. The Court ruled that a change in use and deemed acquisition occurred when the property was offered for short-term rental, and that the hotel exception applied to the property for the 14 months before its sale. This meant that the property was not a residential complex at the time of the sale and, therefore, was not exempt from GST.

Key takeaways

The conversion of short-term rental properties for use as long-term residential rentals or personal use properties will often result in a requirement for the owner to self-assess GST/HST on the property's fair market value. In addition, the sale of a residential property that has been used to offer short-term rental accommodation and does not meet the definition of a "residential complex" is a taxable sale for GST/HST purposes.

GST/HST issues should be carefully considered any time there is a sale or change in use of real property in Canada, and property owners would be wise to seek advice from a GST expert. Even partial changes in use, which are beyond the scope of this article, can have major GST/HST implications. Property owners who fail to correctly comply with the GST/HST rules can face serious consequences, including being assessed for the unpaid tax plus interest and penalties. ■

3 Tax Court of Canada, *1351231 Ontario Inc. v. The King*, 2024 TCC 37, **decision.tcc-cci.gc.ca**. Accessed November 26, 2024.


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Top Tips for CPAs When Choosing Accounting Software and Apps

By Chad Chang, CPA, CMA

Chad Chang is a co-founder and advisor at Purpose CPA in Vancouver. He has 25 years of experience in sales, marketing, HR, accounting, and tech, and is a recurring instructor for CPABC's PD Program. For more of his insights on choosing the right technology, visit Purpose CPA's blog at **purposecpa.ca/blog**. Photo by Joshua Louie.

The original version of this article was published to the CPABC Newsroom in November 2024 as a companion piece to the author's podcast episode for the Coffee Chats with CPABC series, which you'll find at **cpabc.libsyn.com**. Please note that CPABC does not endorse any of the services or products mentioned in this article. It is the reader's responsibility to research and review the services and products independently.

There's no question that choosing the right accounting technology for your business will help you optimize overall performance. But with so many options available, choosing a suite of software that meets your needs and has staying power can be a challenge. With this in mind, here are some best practices and tips that you can use to effectively select, integrate, and use accounting tech.

Start with an overall process in mind

When choosing software, I recommend taking the following steps:

1. Review and map out your different business lines, such as tax services and any management or technology advisory services that you offer, as well as their respective workflows.
2. Evaluate the software you're considering to determine how well it can be adapted to your workflow or how much you will have to adapt to make the software work for you. While most practice management software programs offer some customizability in their fields and templates, they're typically set in their own specific workflows.
3. Go through a demo with your software vendor and ask them questions.
4. Set up a trial account and allocate time to sit down with your team to evaluate the software you're considering.

Since the technology ecosystem is always changing, it's also helpful to talk to other CPAs and join business and accounting groups online to stay informed about the tools and apps your peers are using.

Minimize risk by prioritizing simplicity

The software tools you choose should work well together now and in the future. My guiding philosophy is based on simplicity—I want to minimize the number of software tools in our workflow. Adding applications just because they can be integrated with existing ones can be risky, as they might not mesh in the future. For example, if you have different companies handling different functions—say, one for accounting and another for payroll—these companies have different goals, and if one decides to go a different way or shutters their business, you'll be scrambling to find new software that fits your system.

Build your foundation with the major players

One way to mitigate the above risk is to build the foundation of your business with the largest players in the software community—for example, Google Workspace and Office 365. These major ecosystems assist with the common and core services needed to run a business.

After that, look at potential systems that can play well with these major systems. Large players will have good relationships with certain add-ons and applications. They will have developed solid and long-standing integrations and will have fixed various bugs. If you choose an add-on application within their ecosystem, you can trust that these systems will continue to function well together in the future.

Enlist help with software integration

When it comes to integration, look for systems that have built-in or native integration, because they'll have been designed to work together and will have a direct means of integrating with one another. Enlisting a developer to create a custom integrator is also an option, but it can be expensive—costing you $5,000 to $10,000.

Zapier is another option. It's a paid app service that enables different apps to communicate and interact. Note, however, that while Zapier is affordable and useful, it has limitations. Your apps may have many features, but Zapier might only support a few actions between the different applications.

Focus on security

With major data breaches appearing regularly in the news, security is a core consideration when you're evaluating software. Look for apps that are compliant with SOC 2, a security framework with globally recognized standards, and that have two-factor or multi-factor authentication.

A password policy for your business is also important. For example, you could set a policy that requires passwords to be at least 14 characters long with a mix of upper- and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols, and set a requirement that passwords must be changed every 90 days. You can also consider using password managers like Bitwarden or Bitdefender.

Finally, it's essential to train employees on best practices not just during onboarding but also on an ongoing basis.

Look for apps tailored to the size of your practice

As with any businesses, small and mid-sized accounting firms need to stay organized and productive to remain competitive. Thankfully, there are several apps that can help.

For keeping track of staff work—including tasks assigned and progress made—my practice finds Asana helpful. In addition to managing accounting work, this customizable project management tool can manage marketing, insurance renewals, and more.

Sandipkumar Patel/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images

Looking specifically at management apps for accounting practices, practitioners might want to check out Karbon, which manages everything from client communications to billing, including progress tracking. It also contains a file management system.

Another app I'm considering using is TPS Software, which centralizes client data and streamlines communications. It has numerous features, contains 300-plus reporting options, provides integrations for some payment applications, and offers Docusign or Adobe Acrobat Sign. Other similar options include Financial Cents and Zoho Practice.

Closing thoughts

Given all of the options out there, it can be daunting trying to figure out which accounting software and apps are right for your business. Hopefully these tips and recommendations will help make this process a bit easier. ■

MORE FROM THIS AUTHOR

Chad recently presented two seminars for CPABC's PD Program: "Elevate Your Practice: Exploring the Latest Practice Management Apps" (part of the Thriving in Public Practice Series) and "Building a Strong Accounting Tech Stack" (part of PD Nexus: Business and Innovation Insights). Both seminars were recorded and are available on demand. Visit **pd.bccpa.ca** for details.

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Winter Programs and Courses

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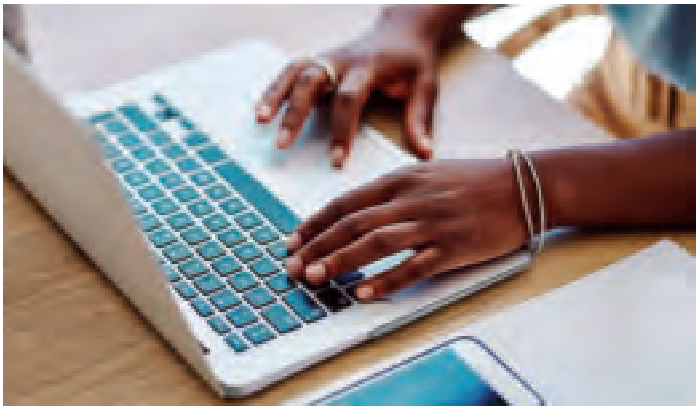
This four-part program takes an in-depth look at generative AI and its transformative impact—including on CPAs. It delves into the revolutionary simplicity of generative AI and explores its potential not just as a tool for practical tasks but also as a strategic asset that can enhance high-level professional performance. *Note:* This program's modules may not be taken as stand-alone courses. When you register for this program, you are registering for all four modules.

Visit **pd.bccpa.ca** for certificate program details, including the upcoming delivery dates for each module.



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January 27 & 28

Corporate Tax – SBD and Private Corporate Groups

This seminar will cover the unique taxation issues that apply to groups of privately held companies and their access to the small business deduction. It will provide a detailed review of the association rules, the small business deduction limit's reductions, specified partnership income, specified corporate income rules for income streams, basic considerations for intercorporate dividends, and the impact of trusts in the corporate group.

February 4

Income Tax – Income Splitting

This seminar will cover the tax benefits of income splitting and provide a detailed review of relevant income tax legislation, including the expanded TOSI rules. It will also review the remaining opportunities to accomplish income splitting. Participants will have an opportunity to simulate real-life situations by applying the tax legislation to examples and case studies.

February 18

Corporate Tax – Compliance and Planning in T2 Preparation

This course will help you enhance your ability to prepare and/or review accurate and complete Canadian corporate income tax returns by providing a comprehensive review of relevant income tax compliance and planning issues, including the technical and practical questions that can arise.

February 25

CPABC

Executive Programs

Executive programs are multi-day, interactive, in-depth, and in-residence programs designed to increase the scope of your learning. As experienced facilitators guide you through the curriculum, you'll have the opportunity to reflect on learning outcomes, develop actionable plans for yourself and your organization, share insights with peers, and build your professional network.

Controller's Operational Skills Program

May 12-15 | Online virtual

Price: $2,350 (early-bird pricing for registrations received no later than March 21) **| $2,450** (regular)

More than 200 participants have taken this program over the past three years. Sample feedback:

- "The program enhanced my knowledge on my role as a controller and filled gaps. It was an excellent learning experience to reflect [on] discussions with other controllers."
- "Wonderful—course instructor was amazing and made a real connection with members through experiences."

CFO's Leadership Program

May 7, 8, 14, and 15 | Online virtual

Price: $2,350 (early-bird pricing for registrations received no later than March 21) **| $2,450** (regular)

One hundred participants have taken this program over the past three years. Sample feedback:

- "Turned the skeptical 'been there, done that' attitude into 'Wow, would love to do more'..."
- "This was very valuable time spent. Magic formula of great facilitators, great content, [and] engagements from the attendees."

Controller's Management Program

June 4-7 | In person

Price: $3,350 (early-bird pricing for registrations received no later than April 4) **| $3,650** (regular)

More than 125 participants have taken this program over the past three years. Sample feedback:

- "It was a fun and interesting program, very practical. I especially love the one-hour one-on-one coaching with the professional coach."
- "I feel rejuvenated, empowered, and love that I will be able to pass along my takeaways to others in my organization—up, down, and across the line."

CFO's Operational Skills Program

June 16-19 | In person

Price: $3,350 (early-bird pricing for registrations received no later than April 16) **| $3,650** (regular)

More than 160 participants have taken this program over the past three years. Sample feedback:

- "Unconventional with the right mix of technical and practical application."
- "This program was very comprehensive, adding new perspective plus amending known requirements of my role. It will add value to what I bring to the table within my organization."

Save the date: CPABC Infinite Conference

Limitless opportunities, endless growth

November 27-28, 2025 | Hybrid*

CPABC will be hosting a member conference in 2025 that celebrates You to the Power of CPA! The new CPABC Infinite conference will feature inspiring speakers and give you the opportunity to enrich your knowledge while connecting with peers. More details coming soon—stay tuned!

**The in-person event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Vancouver.*

AzmanL/E+/Getty Images

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ACCOLADES

Kudos!

Frances Yip, CPA, CA, has taken on a new role as chief financial officer at Vancity Savings Credit Union. Frances has over 18 years of experience in the financial sector, most recently serving as VP of financial planning and analysis at Coast Capital Savings Federal Credit Union. In her new role, she will be responsible for overseeing Vancity's finances, treasury, forecasting, and regulatory compliance.

Have some news to share?

We'd love to hear from you. Email us at **infocusmag@bccpa.ca**.

smartboy10/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images

In Memoriam

We wish to extend our condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of **Daniel Cheetham, FCPA, FCGA**. Dan passed away on September 28, 2024, at the age of 75.

Dan earned his legacy accounting designation in BC in 1976 and worked for MacMillan Bloedel and several accounting firms before becoming a partner with Barclay Tarr Walters & Co. CGAs. In 1984, he left public accounting to serve as the director of professional services for CGA-BC. In this role, Dan became instrumental in developing mandatory continuing professional development requirements and in expanding the PD program to areas outside of the Lower Mainland. He was appointed as the organization's director of administration and human resources in 1995 and subsequently led the implementation of many new initiatives.

Prior to his retirement, Dan served as VP of human resources and administration for CPABC, responsible for managing a myriad of programs and services, including staff recruitment and business continuity planning.

For his exemplary service in the accounting profession, which spanned more than 30 years, Dan was elected to Fellowship in 2013.

We wish to extend our condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of **Douglas Ramsay, CPA, CA**. Doug passed away on September 15, 2024, at the age of 66.

Doug earned his legacy accounting designation in BC in 1982 while working at Price Waterhouse. He left public practice in 1987 to become director of finance for Konings Wholesale in Burnaby and was instrumental in the 1988 sale of the company to Sysco Corporation. While working with Sysco over the next 22 years, Doug played a pivotal role in expanding the company's Canadian operations and held numerous leadership positions, including president of Sysco Vancouver and regional president for Western Canada. In 2011, Doug joined Premium Brands Holdings Corporation in Richmond, where he would go on to serve as managing director for 13 years.

Throughout his career, Doug was also involved with numerous charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

Photo provided by the Ramsay family.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Pacific Northwest Chapter Hosts Economic Update Series Across Region

Members at the Prince Rupert Economic Update event in September 2024.

After a five-year hiatus, the CPABC Pacific Northwest Chapter returned to hosting in-person events with the May 2024 launch of its new Local Economic Development Series. From May to September, events were held in Terrace, Kitimat, Smithers, and Prince Rupert, giving local-area chapter members and non-members alike the chance to connect over lunch and hear guest speakers discuss local economic development activities.

The series kicked off in Terrace, where Mike Pucci, lands and economic development manager for the City of Terrace, talked about the city's challenges and goals as a service centre in BC's northwest region. The next event was held in Kitimat, where Walsham Tenshak, director of economic development and communications for the District of Kitimat, presented the community's new strategic plan and its vision for growth over the next five years. The third session was held in Smithers, where Jill Barrowman, economic development officer for the Town of Smithers, spoke about current initiatives and discussed the town's upcoming strategic plan. And in Prince Rupert, where the final session was held, Paul Vendittelli, director of economic development and transportation for the City of Prince Rupert, shared updates on the area's economic developments.

The CPABC Pacific Northwest Chapter is happy to be back in action and would like to thank everyone who came out to attend these four sessions. Chapter leaders would also like to thank all of the volunteers who helped make the Local Economic Development Series possible.

Visit **bccpa.ca/chapter-events** to find out about upcoming chapter events in your area.

High Stakes and High Spirits: Monte Carlo Night Delivers an Unforgettable Evening

More than 200 accountants, lawyers, and investment professionals gathered at the Vancouver Club on October 10, 2024, to enjoy this year's sold-out Monte Carlo Night. Hosted by CPABC, CFA Society Vancouver, and the Canadian Bar Association BC Branch (Young Lawyers – Lower Mainland section), this annual event gives professionals a chance to mingle and play various table games while also supporting local charities.

Attendees were given play money to try their luck at casino classics—including baccarat, poker, blackjack, and roulette—all for the chance to win some fabulous prizes in a raffle later in the evening. The excitement peaked when one lucky player won the top prize: a $2,000 credit for custom clothing from Surmesur. Guests also gave back, donating work-appropriate clothing to Working Gear and Dress for Success—two valuable community initiatives.

The night also featured the return of two crowd favourites from last year's event: award-winning mixologist Matthew Benevoli, who hosted a Beam Suntory tasting table featuring Suntory Roku Gin and Suntory Toki Whisky, and Juno- and Grammy-nominated musician Jonny Tobin, who kept the energy flowing with his live performance.

This special event continues to be a highlight of the professional calendar, combining fun, philanthropy, and the opportunity to strengthen connections across different professions. CPABC would like to thank its co-hosts and everyone who attended for making the event a success, and we look forward to welcoming members back for another fantastic evening in 2025!

A special thanks

CPABC would like to give a special thank-you to the following sponsors for helping to make this event a huge success:

- **Gold sponsors:** Capital Direct and TD Bank
- **Platinum sponsors:** Interactive Brokers Canada, Manning Elliott, Richards Buell Sutton, Skyharbour Resources, and Surmesur

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Visit: **AccountingPracticeAcademy.com**.

CPABC's Job Search Resources

We offer a number of resources to help CPAs find work and help employers find CPAs:

- **Career development events**
  Topics covered include resumé and cover letter writing, networking techniques, and interview preparation. Visit **bccpa.ca/events** for details.
- **Careers Site**
  Join our official job board for designated CPAs and access exclusive and free online career and volunteer resources. Visit **careers.bccpa.ca**.
- **Employer Network**
  Sign up to receive a 25% discount on all Careers Site job postings. Email **careers@bccpa.ca**.

CPA CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS BRITISH COLUMBIA

SNAPSHOT:

Donna Branston, CPA, CGA

The job: Partner with DMCL in Victoria.

Her specialty: Providing accounting, taxation, and business management services to clients in the entertainment sector, with a focus on the music industry.

Most satisfying part of the job: Helping artists resolve complex tax issues. “Honestly, it’s the best feeling to be able to take the worry from their minds.”

Biggest challenge: The ever-changing environment. “The traditional model of touring and recording doesn't really exist anymore. I have to be able to pivot and deal with whatever's happening at any time.”

Biggest perk: The backstage passes. “Every time, it’s an amazing experience. I love it.”

Advice for CPAs who want to break into this field: “You have to have a passion for music. You have to be willing to learn from the ground up, because the learning curve is very steep. You have to be okay with not being able to plan your days in advance. Your sense of accomplishment has to be related to your clients and how they feel about your relationship—it can’t be tied to the work that you complete, because that's never going to happen.”

Learn more about Donna at **bccpa.ca/newsroom**.

Brit Kwasney Photo

Congratulations

Join us in celebrating the remarkable achievements of our successful CFE writers of 2024.

We are excited to witness their ongoing growth and success as they embark on the next chapter of their careers!

IMIx
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