

# NOVA CPA

**PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
On Mental Health &  
Accountancy

**Q & A**  
Our Evolving  
Profession

**MEMBERS IN THE  
NEWS**  
Accolades &  
Announcements



## THE CONVOCATION ISSUE

Meet Nova Scotia's Two  
National Honour Roll  
Students

# A Message from CPA Nova Scotia's President & CEO



Dear Members,

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the 118 Nova Scotia candidates who passed the Common Final Examination in September 2018. We had an opportunity to celebrate these individuals and their accomplishment in late February at Convocation. We had over 800 people in attendance to help us welcome the candidates to the profession, and I hope they all enjoyed the evening as much as I did. On behalf of the board of directors, congratulations on this accomplishment! And a special mention to the two Nova Scotia candidates who made the national honour roll. You can read about these individuals in our cover story, starting on page 3.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who completed our Member Survey. Your responses are valued, and your input will help us better serve you going forward. Congratulations to Peter McCarron from Westmount, NS. He was the winner of the \$500 gift card for completing the survey.

Next up, keep an eye on your emails this spring as we release the call for applications for FCPA nominations. CPA Nova Scotia will also introduce two new awards for which you can nominate a CPA. The first is the Early Achievement Award to recognize a young CPA who is making a positive contribution to the profession. The second is a community-based award, the Unsung Hero Award, designed to recognize CPAs who stand out for their tremendous community support, not just in financial roles but by rolling up their sleeves and making a difference in their community. I encourage you to start considering a CPA you would like to nominate for these awards.

Lastly, I invite you all to join CPA Nova Scotia at our Annual General Meeting taking place on June 24 at 12pm at our office, 1871 Hollis Street, Suite 300.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patti Towler". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**PATTI TOWLER, BA, JD, LLM, CIC.C**

President & CEO, Chief Legal Officer

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# MEET NOVA SCOTIA'S TWO NATIONAL HONOUR ROLL STUDENTS

Congratulations to the two Nova Scotia candidates who made the national honour roll while successfully passing the profession's common final examination. In total, 6,163 candidates passed the exam nationally; the honour roll is made up of the students who completed the exam in the top one percent.



**Bill Kennedy**

Place of Residence: Dartmouth, NS

Company: Grant Thornton, LLP Halifax

Job Title: Senior Accountant

## **What will you remember the most about your CFE experience?**

The CFE experience is a roller coaster. Every day of the exam is tougher than the first, and when you're done, there is no way to tell how well you did. The gruelling three-day process brought many of us together, and celebrations were well earned by the end of the third day. Fast forward two-and-a-half months to marks release day when the news finally came out, I will not forget the day that I "PASSED" and was able to share the news with friends, family, and co-workers.

## **Whom would you like to thank for providing support during your studies?**

I want to thank my parents Mary and Don Kennedy for keeping me grounded throughout the CPA program; my girlfriend, for helping me relax and making me step away from studying to enjoy the summer; and my sister, for always being positive and reminding me that I could do it.

## **Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies?**

During the summer, I made sure to spend lots of time away from studying. This meant trips to Cape Breton to explore the Cabot Trail, a visit to PEI to lounge on the beautiful sandy beaches, and day trips to explore our local HRM beaches. I have studied on campground picnic tables, on sandy towels at the beach, and by warm fireplaces at cottages. When I was not studying, wherever that may have been, I spent much needed time at the cottage, golfing, doing yoga or Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and relaxing with family and friends.

## **Any advice for future CFE writers?**

Make sure you find the balance that works for you. I found it beneficial to start early and to study for shorter days. Finding this balance early on will help ensure that you are prepared and have time to step back, breathe, and enjoy the summer.



## **Ainslie Oland**

Place of Residence: Utrecht, Netherlands (I was located in Halifax, NS while in the program).

Company: EY

Job Title: Senior Accountant, Assurance Services

### **What will you remember the most about your CFE experience?**

The instant feeling of relief when the results were finally released, and then the excitement of finding out that everyone from EY had passed. I was so proud that all of our hard work had paid off!

### **Whom would you like to thank for providing support during your studies?**

I want to thank EY for providing us with study resources throughout the CPA program, and I, of course, could not have done any of this without the support of my family, especially my grandparents who were always eager to supply a home-cooked meal whenever I needed a break.

### **Any hobbies that helped you manage stress during your studies?**

We had such great weather this summer, so running outside was my favourite way to clear my head and re-focus. I continued this during the CFE by forcing my younger brother to meet me early each morning for a run—it was perfect for calming my nerves.

### **Any advice for future CFE writers?**

Time management while writing the exam is key! There are going to be unexpected topics and surprise questions on the exam, but making a plan for each case will help focus your time and prevent you from dwelling too long on one issue at the expense of another.



# Congratulations

CPA Nova Scotia celebrates the 118 successful Common Final Examination writers!

Adesegun Adebola-Odifa	Jonathan Cormier	Bill Kennedy	Alice Mudhluli	Jessica Stone
Jordan Amero	Steven Cromlish	Megan Larsen	Joseph Murphy	Judith Sullivan
Sinduja Appidi	Schuyler Crosby	Jemeremy LeBlanc	Cochrane Noseworthy-Smith	Sarah Thompson
Danielle Aucoin	Jillian Day	Julie LeBlanc	Ainslie Oland	Rebecca Trueman
Emily Avelar	Naomi Dean	Allison Lemenchick	Heather Parker	Brandon Tupper
Genevieve Belgrave	Jennifer Demers	Qingchuan Liu	Shauna Peeples	Katherine Wade
Adam Bird	Mark Doubleday	Stephen Long	Amy Pike	Xuan Wang
Shawna Bowser	Ashley Duggan	Brendon Lynds	Jocelyn Poirier	Alex Warner
Christine Boyle	Michael Durkee	Maggie Ma	Jessica Prall	Stephen Webber
Sean Bray	Chantelle Forster	Wenbo Ma	Julia Pyke	Gordon Weld
Poleen Budhiraja	Jiayi Fu	Kevin MacDonald	Lea Raiche-Marsden	Beverly Whittaker-Taggart
Jessica Bulmer	Tyrell Giffin	Sara MacDonald	Anthony Ramos	Allison Williams
Corey Cadeau	Thierry Grimon	Claire MacDougall	Emily Ripley	Morgan Wiper
Jillian Canova	Jake Handrahan	Kara MacKinnon	Caitlyn Schell	Kent Wolstenholme
Felicia Casey	Kaitlyn Henderson	Cory MacLean	James Schwartz	Michelle Wood
Qianying Chen	Danielle Hinds	Peter MacLeod	Lindsay Shea	Emma Woodworth
Byung-Joo Cho	Corey Hines	Rebecca MacLeod	Matthew Smith	Minxuan Xiong
Shane Churchill	Sarah Hoyt	Colleen MacNeil	Alexandre Smith-Bilodeau	Wenjing Zhang-Farrell
Katrina Collins	Alexandra Johnson	Timothy Mannette	Melissa Smith-Rolle	Yingchu Zhong
Jake Corcoran	Andrew Johnston	Miranda Mavhunga	Brett Sonnichsen	
	Anthony Jones-Valliancourt	Jeremy Mock		
		David Morse		

*We respect the privacy of the candidates; therefore we have only published the names of those who have expressed consent.*



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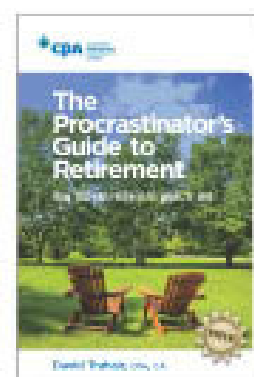
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# On Mental Health & Accountancy

By Michael Kennedy, CPA, CA

Jorge Mora's pulse was pounding as he stepped to the microphone in front of close to 1,100 peers from across the country. It was Monday morning at The ONE Conference 2018 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and keynote speaker Kai Kight had just challenged attendees to share a dream or major goal they had for the year ahead. Mora, a CPA, CGA, was worried about whether to speak up. With a gulp, he shared his dream: "my dream is to see a profession in which all members feel comfortable speaking up about struggles with mental health without fear of judgement or repercussion."

As someone who has battled anxiety and depression all my life, I was inspired by Mora's courage to state his dream publicly. I reached out and in late 2018, caught up with him at a Halifax-based coffee shop to learn more about his story.

Originally from Aguascalientes, Mexico, Jorge Mora is an Associate Manager at SS&C Technologies and has close to twenty years of experience in the accounting profession. He feels a deep responsibility to speak up about mental health. His life has been shaped by a history of mental illness in his family: one sister committed suicide, and another struggled with mental health issues most of her life before passing away. Seeking to turn the darkness of their loss into light, Mora has made it his mission to stomp out stigma surrounding open dialogue about mental health by encouraging colleagues and fellow CPAs to speak openly about anxiety, depression, and other common forms of mental illness.

"The best way to honour my sisters is to open up the conversation about mental health in the profession. My sister was a brilliant accountant but could not handle her inner demons; this has got to stop. People should not suffer in silence," says Mora. "We have the opportunity to make a difference in society as a respected professional body."



## Suffering in silence

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), in any given year, one in five people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. By age forty, about fifty per cent of the population will have or have had a mental illness. Unlike a broken arm or the flu, mental illness often lurks beneath the surface, with no visible symptoms. Winston Churchill described his frequent, debilitating bouts with depression as his “black dog.” TSN Radio Host Michael Landsberg likened it to wearing a mask: on the outside, observers deemed him to be happy and outgoing, but on the inside, he struggled with constant doubt and a sense of insecurity.

Mental illness is complex. Everyone experiences it differently. The evidence jury is out on the exact causes of mental illness—most literature points to a cocktail of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors. Depression could be brought on by a perfect storm of family history with mental illness, changes in daily routine, stress brought on by work, a failed entrepreneurial venture, or trying to balance too many priorities across volunteering, work, and personal life. The quote “be kind; everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle,” attributed to Scottish author and theologian Ian MacLaren, is appropriate here. Everyone’s battle is unique.

## What does this mean for the profession?

Working under what at times can feel like significant and crippling pressure is nothing new for CPAs. While more current challenges such as angst about analytics, bewilderment because of blockchain, and confusion concerning cryptocurrency might seem overwhelming, our profession has been shaped over many years by the pressures of working long hours, meeting tight deadlines, speaking truth to power when power doesn’t wish to hear it, and carrying a sense of responsibility to perform ethically at all times.



Photo credit: The People Speak, [www.thepeople.org.uk](http://www.thepeople.org.uk)

Operating amid such uncertainty can take a toll. However, an optimistic Mora views it as an opportunity for the profession. “CPAs’ main responsibility is towards society at large; what better way to show our leadership than to talk openly about this problem that affects everyone around the country,” he says. “We could shape the next generation of CPA leadership so that the stigma of mental health is no longer a threat, thus making CPAs more productive at work and better contributors to our society and country.”

At a basic level, this can take the form of being more aware of the environment we create within our organizations, doing what we can to ensure that our colleagues feel supported to live healthy lifestyles, and feeling comfortable opening up about mental health.

At a professional level, I feel we have a duty of care to understand better the financial and human externalities our organizations create (and absorb). The mental health of employees represents a growing operational risk and massive financial drain. The economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year. This includes health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that this estimate does not capture the loss in productivity due to factors such as presenteeism (i.e. working below one's potential due to illness). A growing body of evidence shows that modest investments in the upstream mental health interventions for employees have significant returns.

## Helpful resources

Just as mental health is a complex matter, so is treatment, with options ranging from medication to lifestyle changes to Eastern medicine. The right combination looks different for everyone. For me, the path back to some stability has been a blend of a tighter routine with a premium placed on exercise and sleep hygiene, dietary changes, and regimental medication to keep anxiety in check. While I'm not able to completely avoid sinking into depression, I am better able to predict when a bout is coming on, and work within the constraints it imposes on me. My top three recommended resources are:

- Mind Over Mood by Dr. Dennis Greenberger and Dr. Christine Padesky. A no-nonsense overview of practical techniques, tips, and tools for managing one's mental health. ([www.mindovermood.com](http://www.mindovermood.com))
- Mental Health First Aid. A must-have course offered by the Mental Health Commission of Canada that teaches students how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, provide initial help, and guide a person toward appropriate professional help. ([www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca))
- Meditation. Regular mindfulness meditation, even for a few minutes a day, has been a crucial tool for me to manage anxious or depressive periods. There are plenty of resources available. I'd recommend Oak ([www.oakmeditation.com](http://www.oakmeditation.com) - Free), Buddhify ([www.buddhify.com](http://www.buddhify.com) - Free), Headspace ([www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)), Calm ([www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)), and Waking Up ([www.wakingup.com](http://www.wakingup.com)).

Don't underestimate the power of simply sharing with a trusted colleague, friend, family member, or health professional the phrase "I am feeling depressed." It has been my experience that vulnerability and openness surrounding mental health are a powerful tool for healing.

Mora agrees that conversation can constitute action. "One of the best decisions I've ever made," he says, "was to open up about my mental health struggles. It showed me that I am not alone and that many people are willing to help. How many CPAs are struggling right now in silence with a mental health issue? If we pride ourselves on being an inclusive and forward-looking organization that positively contributes to Canada's future, we must help end the stigma associated with mental health. The human and financial costs are too high to ignore it."

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Michael Kennedy, CPA, CA is an imperfect lecturer in accounting at Acadia University and serves on CPA Nova Scotia's Fitness to Practise Committee.

**If you are thinking about suicide, there are many crisis centres available 24 hours a day to talk to you. In Nova Scotia, you can call 1-888-429-8167 (toll free). You are not alone.**

1 Centre for Addition and Mental Health, Facts and Statistics. <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a clear crystal ball. The crystal ball reflects a serene seascape with a small boat on the water and a distant shoreline under a soft, hazy sky. The hand is positioned palm-up, and the crystal ball is held gently between the fingers. The background is a blurred view of the actual seascape, creating a sense of depth and reflection.

# Q & A: OUR EVOLVING PROFESSION

CPA Nova Scotia recently introduced a new course for candidates entering membership titled Gateway to Membership. This mandatory course was created to provide new Chartered Professional Accountants with a general overview of our professional responsibilities in terms of what it means to be a member of a self-regulatory body, what are the requirements of our code of professional conduct, and what member services are offered by our association.

The highlight of the course is the panel discussion, where CPA Nova Scotia asks a panel of our members to share their insights on professional ethics, career pathways, and the value of continued professional development. We took the opportunity after the last session to ask two of our panellists: “what changes do you foresee for the profession in the future and what do CPAs need to do now to be able to navigate those changes successfully?”



## *What changes do you foresee for the profession in the future and what should CPAs do now to be able to navigate those changes successfully?*

1

### **Amanda Avery, CPA, CA**

I have been a licensed CPA, CA for four short years (although I have almost ten years of total professional experience), but I have already witnessed a lot of changes in the profession. When starting in the public practice field in 2012 as a junior accountant for a large regional firm, I was focused on doing quality accounting work for my clients. While moving into a managerial role, I learned that what we did for our clients went well beyond number crunching. We were trusted business advisors, and our clients wanted our expertise in a number of complex matters.

I believe that one of the changes to our profession will be an increased reliance on CPAs to be experts in all aspects of a business, not just the numbers. CPAs will be expected to assist businesses with accounting, tax, and management matters. They will also need to be experienced in risk management, internal control, and cyber security, to navigate the ever-evolving business landscape. Furthermore, with the technological advances in the profession, CPAs will have to be skilled in data security, especially the prevention of data theft and data manipulation. Businesses want to trust their CPAs to understand risk management and to put controls in place to protect their sensitive information.

New CPAs must embrace change. Be curious, be proactive. Seek new challenges. If there is a client or project that excites you, ask to be involved and get to know the business as much as possible. I think it's also vital for CPAs to keep up their professional education and specializations to ensure they have a hefty "book" of experiences that businesses can draw from.

2

### **Heidi Hornmoen, CPA, CGA**

Self-made opportunities and a diversification of interests and skill sets could make it difficult for employers in the future to attract and retain talented CPAs. Cultural differences between generations, designation merge, and new technologies may have created a unique vortex of change for both employers and CPAs.

It appears that recent graduates struggle with the "tell me about your dream job" discussion that has replaced questions about where they see themselves in five years. Being a chartered accountant may have been sufficient in the past, but today, many people have multiple occupations. Careers may now focus solely on fit and timing rather than on company reputation, benefits, and salary. Whether a better "fit" presents itself or not, many workers create their own opportunities. Entrepreneurism will continue to rise.

The real question is whether or not employers are ready to welcome CPAs at the senior leadership table not as chief financial officers, but as vice presidents of sales and marketing, operations, or information technology. To combat retention issues, employers need to offer appealing challenges outside of finance. Employers should consider offering CPAs non-accounting roles to help expand leadership skill sets and financial knowledge. Helping CPAs find their unique path can be extremely rewarding.

CPAs should continue to push the envelope on personal and professional accomplishments. If you're not sure what you can do, try everything until you find your niche.

# MEMBERS

## IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to James Trussler on his appointment to the Health Association Nova Scotia Board of Directors.

Congratulations to Kirk Rowe, CPA, CGA who will become CEO of the IMP Group International Inc. on April 1. His father Ken Rowe founded the business in 1967. Kirk has been the vice president and chief operating officer for the last year and has been with the family business for more than thirty years.

After sixty-eight years of hard work and over fifty years in the accounting profession, George Jorgensen, CPA, CA is retiring. George is a founding partner with the Jorgensen & Bickerton team.

In January, Collins Barrow adopted a new international brand, Baker Tilly, aligning itself with a global accounting network while maintaining local ownership and independence.

If you have a retirement, change of position, or other news story you would like us to share, please email [jgillis@cpans.ca](mailto:jgillis@cpans.ca).

### CPD Highlights - March 2019

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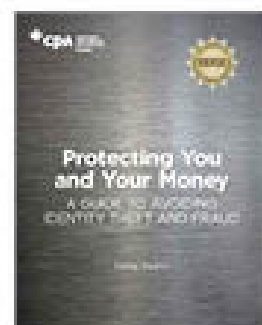
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