

Frequently Asked Questions: Scope for Company Secretaries (CS) Members in Canada

1) What is the role of a Company Secretary in Canada?

In Canada, the role of a "Company Secretary" ("CS") as defined in corporate laws in India does not exist in the same statutory form. Having said that, most organizations in Canada do have similar positions to support the Meeting Management and Corporate Governance. The Companies in Canada may be incorporated and regulated either by a Federal or a Provincial regulation, accordingly, the roles and responsibilities of a Company Secretary may vary based on the constitution of the Company with distinct requirements for corporate law compliances.

Corporate law compliances and Corporate Governance responsibilities are typically handled by in-house legal counsel, compliance officers, legal team or board administrator, administration team. However, the skills of a Company Secretary such as regulatory compliances, corporate laws, drafting legal documents, interpreting general accounting data and managing stakeholders' relationships such as Board of Directors, Senior Management, managerial committees and Shareholders are highly transferable. These competencies are valued in job roles like:

- Assistant Corporate Secretary
- Corporate Governance Analyst
- Board Governance Administrator
- Legal Administrator
- Compliance Officer
- Legal Assistant or Law Clerk
- Legal Counsel
- Contract Manager
- Bookkeeper and General Accountant

To continue their professional career in same field aligning with Canadian standards, CS professionals may consider certifications such as:

- Chartered Governance Professional (CGP) from the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), which has a mutual recognition agreement with the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (“ICSI”).
- Master’s in law (LL.M.) from a recognized University in Canada or accrediting exams from the National Committee on Accreditation (“NCA”), if you have completed Law (LL.B.) in India.

2) Is the Company Secretary qualification from India recognized in Canada?

The ICSI qualification is not formally recognized as a regulated profession in Canada. However, it is respected as a strong academic and professional foundation. Many ICSI members have successfully transitioned into Canadian careers by complementing their CS background with local certifications. For example:

- CPA Canada (Chartered Professional Accountant) for general accounting, accounting analyst and financial planning.
- CSC (Canadian Securities Course) from the Canadian Securities Institute (CSI) for investment, financial advisory, compliance, anti-money laundering etc.
- LLQP (Life License Qualification Program) for insurance professionals.
- Paralegal Licensing through the Law Society in the respective province, for legal support roles.

These certifications help bridge the gap between Indian and Canadian regulatory environments and improve employability in white-collar professions.

3) What are the most common career transitions for CS members from India to settle down in Canada?

ICSI members in Canada often transition into:

- Corporate Governance/Secretarial roles, similar to a CS in India. The roles may include Board/Committee Meeting Management and Supporting Senior Executives, including compliance management. It may be challenging to enter into these roles initially, however, if one is able to

demonstrate the prior skills and experience are transferable, it may be easier to get into these roles.

- Bookkeeping and General Accounting (via CPA Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) preparatory courses or college diplomas)
- Paralegal or Law Clerk (via accredited programs and licensing by the Law Society)
- Lawyers: Barrister and Solicitors
- Compliance Analyst or AML Officer (especially in banks and fintech firms)
- Financial Advisor or Investment Consultant (after completing CSC and licensing with IIROC or MFDA)
- Data Scientist and Data Analyst
- Human Resource professional (may require additional certifications like CHRP, etc.)
- Payroll Manager
- Generic Assistant Manager / Manager Position (by taking MBA course from well-known Institution)
- Licensed Real Estate Agent or Broker
- Become an entrepreneur

These transitions are often supported by bridging programs, internships, and networking through professional associations.

4) What certifications or licenses should I pursue to switch careers in Canada?

It is difficult to precisely answer this question. The exact response depends on individual skills, comfortability, family situation as well as long term goals set for themselves. However, considering the historical data and past trends, the areas suggested in the above response are few options to choose a career field.

Each of these certifications has specific eligibility criteria, costs, and timelines. Many ICSI members begin with short-term diplomas or bridging programs offered by colleges and Universities like Humber College, Seneca College, University of Toronto, University of British Columbia, York University etc.

It is suggested to evaluate educational qualifications from India by furnishing transcripts and other requisite documents to the respective Institution in Canada to have an equivalency determined for educational credentials from India before pursuing further education in Canada.

5) What professional development opportunities are available for CS professionals in Canada?

Canada offers a wide range of professional development opportunities for CS professionals. These include workshops, seminars, online courses, and certifications in areas such as corporate governance, compliance, risk management, and financial analysis. Institutions like CPA Canada, the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), Governance Professionals of Canada (GPC) and the Canadian Securities Institute (CSI) offer specialized programs that can help CS professionals enhance their skills and knowledge. Additionally, networking events and conferences organized by professional associations provide valuable opportunities for learning and furthering career advancement decisions.

6) How can I stay updated with the latest developments in corporate governance and compliance in Canada?

To stay updated with the latest developments in corporate laws, corporate governance and regulatory compliance in Canada, CS professionals can subscribe to industry newsletters, join professional associations, set up email alert on respective subjects and participate in webinars and conferences. Organizations like the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), Governance Professionals of Canada (GPC), and Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA) regularly publish updates and host events that cover the latest trends and best practices in corporate governance and compliance.

7) Are there any mentorship programs available for CS professionals in Canada?

Yes, the ICSI Canada Committee has developed a Buddy system that offers mentorship help to the CS members / CS Students who are newcomers in Canada which can help them connecting with experienced professionals in Canada. In turn this mentorship provides them with needed guidance, support, and valuable insights for developing road map for their career development in Canada.

Additionally, many Canadian governmental and (local) non-governmental organizations have their mentorship programs that can help CS professionals grow and advance in their careers.

8) What certifications are recognized for CS professionals in Canada?

In Canada, several certifications are recognized for CS professionals. These include the Chartered Governance Professional (CGP) certification from the Chartered Governance Institute of Canada (CGIC), Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation from CPA Canada. Additionally, certifications in compliance, risk management, and financial analysis from institutions like the Canadian Securities Institute (CSI) and the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS) are highly valued.

9) What are the best job portals or networks for CS professionals seeking employment in Canada?

Some popular portals include:

- **LinkedIn** (with location filters and networking opportunities)
- **Indeed.ca**
- **Glassdoor**
- **Eluta.ca** (Canadian job search engine)
- **Charity Village** (for governance and nonprofit)


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Chairman

ICSI – Canada Committee

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