

Christopher Besant

Partner

Get in touch

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Executive summary

Chris is a partner in the firm's Financial Services Group and co-leads the Insolvency & Restructuring Practice. He is recognized nationally and internationally for his work in corporate restructuring, lending and corporate finance, private M&A, and distressed corporate governance. Chris brings deep experience advising on complex, high-value matters for institutional clients and businesses navigating critical transitions. He has a prominent profile in his field, and has served as Co-Chair of the International Bar Association (IBA) Global Insolvency Section and Chair of the Canadian's Bar Association's Bankruptcy and Insolvency Section, and is a member of the IBA's permanent delegation to the United Nation's UNCITRAL Working Group V on global insolvency reform.

Before joining Gardiner Roberts, Chris practised in both Toronto and New York as a partner at a leading global law firm, where he led the Canadian Financial Services and Restructuring practice and served on the global steering committee for the firm's financial restructuring and automotive groups. Earlier in his career, he co-founded the Financial Restructuring Group at a national Canadian firm and practised in an Australian office of an international firm, giving him a broad perspective on financial and restructuring markets across jurisdictions.

EDUCATION

Cambridge University, LLM
University of Toronto, LLB (JD)
McMaster University, BA (Hons)

BAR ADMISSION

New York, 1992
Ontario, 1985

Expertise

Financial Services

Insolvency & Restructuring

Representative work

- Act for leading Schedule 1 banks/other financial institutions in loan workouts, enforcements, restructurings, DIP Loans and distressed financings, as well as corporate and commercial lending, acquisition financings, asset-based financings, syndicated loans, and structured financings

Gardiner Roberts

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- Acted for a Spanish based construction and engineering conglomerate with global operations in the restructuring of its Canadian operations
- Acted for financiers in the cross-border restructuring (CCAA/Chapter 15) of a technology company which provides a platform for regulatory licensing by governmental entities
- Acted in a cross-border restructuring (BIA Proposal/Chapter 15) of a technology company which specialized in the health services sector
- Acted for a major international real estate brokerage in connection with its role in the monetization of a large real estate portfolio in the US Steel CCAA proceedings.
- Acted for a high-profile Canadian arts organization in its restructuring and refinancing.
- Acted for a Boston based private real estate group in the cross-border restructuring of a glass manufacturer and related chapter 15 proceedings.
- Acted for Canada's largest national flooring and tile group in its CCAA restructuring and sale.
- Acted for the North American division of a large Chinese parent company in the restructuring of a Canadian public alternative energy company and its international patent portfolio.
- Acted for a Quebec public company in the successful resolution of a material tobacco tax reassessment arising from its Ontario operations, and on the subsequent sale of those operations.
- Acted for private equity group and major mall landlord in the Sears Canada CCAA restructuring.
- Acted for an international mining and metals company in its 9-figure acquisition financing of the Latin American mining operations of a publicly-listed Canadian company.
- Acted for the financial arm of a Japanese multi-national corporation in connection with its 9-figure acquisition financing of certain energy reserves in Alberta.
- Acted for a California-based health care fund and the venture funds of a global pharmacy chain in their 8-figure acquisition financing of a Canadian pharmaceutical technology business.
- Acted for an arm of a global US bank in a 9-figure refinancing of an NHL team and arena, and for financiers and acquirers in various other financings, restructurings and acquisitions of major professional sports teams and facilities, including the acquisition of the NHL's Ottawa Senators out of CCAA.
- Acted for a US defense giant, Lockheed Martin Corporation, in its 8-figure acquisition financing of the engine, maintenance, repair and overhaul business of a global aviation MRO.
- Acted for a global fashion retailer in its 100+ location exit from the North American marketplace.
- Acted for a global tier-one automotive supplier in its restructuring and refinancing of its pension exposures.
- Acted for the proposed purchaser on its \$650 million acquisition financing bid for one of the five key divisions of Nortel Networks during its restructuring proceedings.
- Advised a global brewing conglomerate on the restructuring of long-term North American distribution arrangements with other global brewers.
- Acted for a consortium of financiers in a bid to refinance Stelco out of CCAA
- Acted for the City of Toronto in the restructuring of SkyDome (now the Rogers Centre).
- Represented the largest group of international aviation financiers in the restructuring of Air Canada.
- Acted for the company in the CCAA filing of one of the world's largest nickel mines.
- Acted for the co-owner in the restructuring and refinancing of a multi-billion-dollar oil sands project.
- Acted for pension funds in the restructuring of a Canadian retail icon.
- Advised a global European energy company on the restructure and refinancing of a multi-billion cross border energy pipeline in North America.

- Acted for an overseas private equity fund in connection with its multi-million dollar bid to provide the DIP loan in the CCAA proceedings of a major Canadian mining company.
- Advised a European pension fund in connection with the restructuring of an iconic Canadian retailer.
- Acted for the principal guarantee agency of North American life and health insurers in the liquidation of Canada's largest insurance company
- Acted for the parent company of an iconic Australian conglomerate in the defence of a multi-billion-dollar multi-jurisdictional medical devices class action.
- Acted for the federal Inspector-General of Banks (now the Superintendent of Financial Institutions) in a Royal Commission into the collapse of two regional Canadian banks, and in respect of certain Canadian regional bank rescues.

Insights

Publications

IBA Daily Newspaper – Doing Business in Canada

4 November 2025

Corporate Crisis Management Revisited

11 November 2016

Corporate Crisis Management The Role of In-house Counsel

12 November 2015

Kluwer, Contributing Co-Editor, *Current Issues in Cross Border Insolvencies and Reorganizations*, a foundational text in the field.

Founding Co-Editor, *Insolvency and Restructuring International* (International Bar Association's quarterly journal).

Colliers: *Guide to International Bankruptcy & Insolvency – Canada Chapter*.

Law Business Research, *International Insolvency and Restructuring – Canada Chapter*.

Cover story twice in TMA's *Journal of Corporate Renewal*.

Co-Author, *Board Observers and Subordinated Debt Transactions*, Corporate Financing Journal.

Co-Author, *Managing Pension Priority Risks in Canada*, Corporate Financing Journal.

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Co-Editor of the IBA Committee J newsletter

Editor of the OBA Insolvency Section newsletter

Author/Co-Author of over 50 other articles/presentation materials on finance and insolvency/restructuring topics

Media

Quoted by major Canadian media in various restructurings

Involved in numerous cases covered by Canadian media as well as by Bloomberg Law

Presentations

Guest Lecturer for seven years in Bankruptcy LLM Courses at Columbia University, NYU and St John's University sponsored by the American College of Bankruptcy.

Co-Founder of the CBA's Pan-Canadian Insolvency Conference

Co-Chair of various IBA Global Insolvency Conferences

Instructor at Baker & McKenzie's North American Banking School.

Multiple presentations to large Canadian banks, including on such topics as Security Arrangements, Intercreditor Agreements, the LIBOR/SOFR transition, and the CDOR/CORRA transition.

Multiple conference presentations on insolvency and restructuring topics for the International Bar Association, Canadian Bar Association, Ontario Bar Association and various private conference organizers

Memberships and recognition

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Professional memberships

- Member International Bar Association (IBA) Permanent Delegation to UNCITRAL Working Group V (Insolvency). (UNCITRAL is the trade law arm of the United Nations).
- Executive Member and past Co-Chair, International Bar Association (IBA) Insolvency Section
- Past Co-Chair, Canadian Bar Association (CBA) Bankruptcy Insolvency and Restructuring Section
- Past Chair, OBA Insolvency Section
- Past Vice-Chair, IBA North American Forum
- Past Secretary, Insolvency Institute of Canada
- Assisted in the establishment of the International Insolvency Institute.
- Past Member, Editorial Board of the National Insolvency Review
- Full time member of the Faculty of Law of the University of Western Australia in the early 1990s specialized in corporate law and other topics
- Guest Lecturer for 6 years in the LLM Program in International Bankruptcy Law run jointly by the American College of Bankruptcy and various law faculties including NYU, Columbia and St. John's

Recognition

- Recognized for 15 + years in Euromoney/IFLR's Expert Guide for Insolvency & Restructuring and by various other ratings services