

**Rick Evans**



## Joining The Tradition of Trust

How does one become a Notary Public in British Columbia? After being approved by The Society of Notaries Public of BC to proceed through the education program, an applicant commences a 16-month course called the Notary Preparatory Course. The course, designed by The Society and endorsed by the University of British Columbia, is delivered via CD-ROM to the student as a distance education course. Over the course of a student's studies, 43 assignments are completed and sent to the University for marking and grading. Students are also required to spend four weekends attending Study Sessions in Vancouver, where the material they have studied over the few months preceding the Study Session is reviewed and, if necessary, clarified. While the minimum passing grade for the assignments is 75 percent, most students well exceed the minimum standard.

Throughout the course, students are matched with mentors—experienced BC Notaries who guide the students through the practical complexities of how the theory they are studying relates to the “real world” of Notarial procedures.

On successful completion of the assignments and assignation of a Notarial

Seal, the student is required to write six statutory examinations over a three-day period, and complete a three-day post-exam practical training session presented by experienced Notaries.

---

*Notaries Public truly want to learn and promote goodwill and the high standards historically enjoyed by the profession.*

---

Once new Notaries have graduated and have set up their practices, they are continually encouraged to look to The Society, the Education Coordinator, and other Notaries for assistance and guidance, all of which is freely given. In addition, The Society has created a Practice Advisory Committee comprised of experienced Notaries dedicated to assisting other Notaries. The mandate of the Committee is to ensure that all Notaries Public are visited, and that they are maintaining their practices competently.

In fact, the Committee adopted a definition of competence that is applied

to the practices of all members visited. This definition follows.

Notarial competence is measured by the extent to which a Notary:

1. is specifically knowledgeable about the areas of practice in which he or she engages;
2. performs the techniques of such practice with skill;
3. manages such practice efficiently;
4. identifies issues beyond his or her competence relevant to the matter undertaken, bringing these to the client's attention, and not undertaking to act if not qualified;
5. properly prepares and carries through the matter undertaken; and
6. is intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable.

Notarial incompetence is measured by the extent to which a Notary fails to maintain these qualities.

The thrust of the visits is educational in nature, with the result that members who are visited receive

assistance from the Advisors in the form of suggestions and precedents. It is not intended that the visits be construed as “Big Brother Is Watching You.” This consensus is rigorously maintained by the Practice Advisors and supported by the Directors of The Society.

### **Continuing Education**

Continuing education also forms a major part of the education program delivered through The Society. Twice a year, in Spring and Fall, The Society arranges for topical education programs, which are generally attended by up to 75 percent of The Society’s membership—a turnout the envy of any professional organization. Notaries Public truly want to learn and promote goodwill and the high standards historically enjoyed by the profession.

Many now ask where our education is heading and—in terms of the increasing pressure for professionals to be better and better educated—how the BC Notaries’ education program will look in the future. At this stage, it is hard to answer the question. The Society continues to enhance its education programs and investigate new ways of educating its members. That the course could some day be developed as diploma-granting or degree-granting is not outside the realm of reason. ▲

**Rick Evans**, Notary Public, is a former Governor with the Real Estate Institute of British Columbia and a past president of The Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia. He currently serves as Education Coordinator for The Society.

Voice: 250 753-5599  
Fax: 250 754-2723  
revans@notaries.bc.ca

