

Filip de Sagher

It Takes Two to Tango . . . Why I Became a BC Notary

The dust had settled and the 2004 exams were behind us.

“Why did you become a Notary?” Val Wilson asked me.

As with many things in life, a simple question may not have a simple answer.

It might have something to do with my genes. After all, my grandfather was a Notary and my uncle still is, back in Belgium. Or it might have to do with my classical education (Latin and Greek and law) and the traditional family values I grew up with. Oh, and did I mention that my wife is a BC Notary Public?

Hilde Deprez and I studied law together in our native country Belgium; we come more or less from the same region. I was born and brought up in Flanders Fields.

In 1992 we immigrated to Canada and, in 2001, Hilde finished her BC Notary studies and started her practice. We decided to open the office together and one year later, I started the Notary course.

The way we are organized is a reflection of the way we started the office. While Hilde takes care of the people side of the practice—the meetings!—I am more the businessperson, focusing on marketing and bookkeeping, although as in all things in our marriage, we seem to handle every aspect of the practice together. It really depends on the clients’ demands and requirements. That is our prime focus and we organize accordingly.

Our clients seem to love it that we share a practice. Responses range from consternation: *You guys are able to work together?*—to surprise: *You are really married?*—to positive feedback: *Two Notaries working on my transaction? That’s just the best*—to humour: *24/7 together? What medication are you on?*

People tend to trust us quickly and tell us about the warm feeling they get entering our office. And they keep coming back . . . just to chat . . . about anything. We feel that is very positive and we enjoy every moment.



We are very approachable by the public—one of us is usually available—and we complement each other on the different communication skills needed, depending on the person who walks through the door. Our minds are open to understanding our clients and to finding answers and solutions. It helps, of course, that together we speak six languages, which is so important in this multicultural mosaic that is Canada.

And that’s perhaps where the real answer can be found on why we became Notaries Public for the Province of British Columbia. Our education, our skills, and our values are all put to work and, at the same time, we are enriched by the daily contact with clients from all walks of life. Each and every one brings a story to the table. There are so many faces to one transaction—their occupation, their language, their cultural background, their opinions. Isn’t variety the spice of life?

And we get to help them. That is very satisfying.

The Notary profession goes back to the Romans and the need for trusted professionals to take accurate notes. I find it curious that still, today, each country where the institution of Notaries Public exists stresses a particular element.

A quick look around (check the excellent Website of the International Union of Latin Notaries: www.onpi.org.ar) shows that Brazil stresses the territoriality of the Notary; Spain, the legal function; France, the public function; Belgium, the real estate function; and the Netherlands, the procedural function. Two elements are stressed everywhere: the mix of being public and independent, but not government.

Especially for these reasons—the value of trust, the international perspective, and the daily enriching contact with the public—I became a Notary in Canada. ▲

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Editor’s Note: Hilde is also the Honorary Consul of Belgium.