

INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

Hilde Deprez



The Notary in an International Role

The international aspect of a BC Notary's role, often less known or recognized, is an important one.

After all, Notaries are widely recognized by their clients as *the* professionals to visit regarding documents that require "notarization." With a strong sense for community involvement, Notaries render service to clients from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

It is essential for Notaries to have a global world-view and to understand the roots, culture, and origin of clients. This allows us to approach our clients and their issues with the required sensitivity and respect.

Some of our clients grew up in a society where a Will was not required because the law governs most of the citizens' estate. Those clients may find it hard to discuss issues involved in the drafting of a Will and may find it difficult to deal with the reality that organizing their estate is part of life—and part of their responsibility to their loved ones.

Understanding the personal challenges our clients face will allow us to provide better professional guidance and assistance. Ultimately, it is this ability to listen to our clients with consideration and understanding that will result in superb service with a personal touch, which will be appreciated and remembered.

BC Notaries not only deal with the many customs and traditions of our clients' cultural and ethnic diversity, we also manage a variety of forms and documents that are forwarded from all parts of the world to our clients for their review, approval, and execution.

The language barrier is one of the many challenges we face—the biggest, in my opinion—to knowing what the other jurisdiction requires from the BC Notary when we are asked to act in our official authority. A general misconception seems to be that all legal professionals somehow know what is required for every single document from each country in the world.

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On a daily basis, I explain to clients that a "notarization" can mean any number of things and that it is the other jurisdiction that determines what is required in each case. As in many situations, experience, referrals, and common sense usually produce the correct answer and approach.

The excellent guide provided by The Society of Notaries Public of BC lists the countries and their requirements regarding the authentication of documents in Canada.

Because most BC Notaries speak other languages, the language barrier faced by some of our clients can usually be solved by the help of a neighbouring Notary.

What most people may not know is that as many as 75 countries are represented in the Consular Corps of British Columbia. Whenever it is unclear as to what formalities are required with

respect to a particular document brought in by a client, we can consult the respective Consulate to make the necessary inquiries.

Often the Consulate can provide direct and personal assistance to the client, provided the client is one of their citizens. The authentication procedure rendered by the BC Notary and the legalization by the Consulate serve to ensure that the foreign document executed in Canada has the force and formality required by the home country and that the document provides full legality and effect.

Therefore, it is probably not so surprising that many of the honorary consuls within the Consular Corps in BC are Notaries or lawyers. They provide very different yet quite complementary services to their clients.

I find dealing with international clients one of the most interesting aspects of my role as a BC Notary. Every day at the office, we meet people from different parts of the world and learn more about their culture, language, and the challenges they face as newcomers to this country.

Even though we deal with documents, forms, and papers, ultimately this profession is all about people. Understanding our clients allows us to render professional service and to make a difference, step-by-step, client-by-client, in this wonderful multi-cultural society. ▲

Hilde Deprez is a BC Notary with an office in Vancouver's West Side. She holds a Master of Laws degree, Belgium, and is Honourary Consul of Belgium for BC and Yukon.

hdeprez@notaries.bc.ca