



**Half of Parents Don't Have a Will
Some People More Likely to Make a Will Due to COVID-19**

Make a Will Week is October 4 – 10, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2020

Vancouver, BC – A new online Ipsos survey of 801 B.C. residents found that approximately half (51%) of parents of children 18 or younger do not have a Will, which could leave the family vulnerable to outside decision-makers, delays and conflict if something were to happen to one or both parents. Additionally, 27% of respondents who don't have a Will said the COVID-19 pandemic has made them more likely to prepare a Will in the next year. That figure jumps up to 37% for parents of children 18 or younger and to 38% for people aged 55 or older.

The September 2020 survey was conducted by Ipsos for BC Notaries Association in preparation for "Make A Will Week," October 4 to 10, declared by the Province of B.C. "Make a Will Week" encourages the many British Columbians who don't have a current Will to prepare one, and families to discuss the topic and future planning.

The survey also identified a promising increase in having a Will among both parents of young and school-age children and homeowners. September's Ipsos survey shows that while overall only 50% of B.C. adults have a current Will in place, 64% of homeowners have a Will, which is up from 57% in 2018, and 49% of parents of children 18 or younger have a Will, up from 34% in 2018.

"We believe that initiatives like the provincial government's ongoing "Make a Will Week" have helped raise awareness of this important legal document," said Daniel Boisvert, a Notary in Delta and President of BC Notaries Association. "Also, many BC Notaries regularly and responsibly inform homebuyers about the benefits of having a Will while they are doing the conveyancing for a home purchase."

Since the beginning of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Notaries across the province have adopted practices to allow for physical distancing while assisting clients. Additionally, the B.C. Government took steps to introduce legislation to legalize electronic Wills and to allow remote witnessing of Wills, to improve ease and convenience while accommodating physical distancing. Bill 21-2020, which called for amendments to the Wills, Estates and Succession Act, received royal assent on August 14, 2020.

"We are pleased to see these amendments made to provide increased access to legal professionals, like Notaries, for those living in remote rural communities, who may have an illness, or who need to self-isolate but want to create a legal Will," said Kristy Martin, a Notary in Langford (Greater Victoria). "Many Notaries have received calls about Will preparation since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and now we can go beyond physical distancing and barriers to accommodate our clients' needs."

It's important for parents to know that if there is no Will in place or the Will is not properly prepared, custody of any children under 18, as well as property distribution, may not occur as they intend.

Furthermore, if the Public Guardian and Trustee is brought in to administer the estate, the Province may then decide on the future of dependent children and assets.

“Not having a Will can create a lot of confusion, stress and conflict amongst family members after a person’s death. This can lead to increased costs and unexpected outcomes for children and beneficiaries,” said Tarja McLean, a Notary in Kelowna. “A legal Will gives clear direction about the guardianship of the children and the division of assets including the home. Don’t leave this important decision to the courts or government.”

“A good way to start the process of creating a Will is to think about who you would want to care for your children, inherit your home and any other assets.” said Susan Tong, a Notary in Vancouver. “Then visit a local Notary, who can use this information to assist you in preparing a Will.”

Now, with electronic Wills and remote witnessing legal in B.C., it is more convenient than ever to create a legal Will, which creates peace-of-mind that dependent children will be looked after according to the parent’s instructions and assets will be distributed to family, friends and charitable organizations according to the Will-maker’s wishes.

About BC Notaries:

BC Notaries are a select group of legal professionals commissioned by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Since 1926, these highly educated legal advisors have provided non-contentious legal services, including land law, real estate transactions and all the important personal planning tools available to the people of our province: Wills, Powers of Attorney, Representation Agreements and Advance Directives. Throughout history, Notaries have been recognized as individuals of impeccable integrity practicing in a Tradition of Trust. A Notary's word, signature, and red Notary Seal are time-honoured testaments to the character and skill of these caring professionals.

The BC Notaries Association promotes and supports British Columbia Notaries Public in all communities of the Province and advances the standing of its members and awareness of their services to the public. For more information, or to find a notary by location, name or language please visit bcnotaryassociation.ca.

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Editors: Local Notaries are available in many areas of BC to discuss Will planning.

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