SOCIETY OF
NOTARIES
PUBLIC OF BC

10 MOMENTS
THAT SHAPED 100 YEARS OF B.C. NOTARIES

Over the past century, the notary profession in British Columbia has evolved through changes in legislation, education, public protection, technology, and professional practice.

1926
The Society is Established

The Society of Notaries Public of British Columbia was established in 1926, creating a foundation for the profession in the province.

The Society was officially registered in Victoria on November 2, 1926. By 1927, its membership register included 626 notaries practising in 118 communities across British Columbia.

1955–1957
A Stronger Regulatory Foundation

Following years of negotiation, a 1955 agreement between the Law Society and the Notaries Society established a framework that would govern the relationship between the two professions for decades.

In 1956, membership in the Society became mandatory for practising notaries, and in 1957 new disciplinary provisions strengthened the Society's self-regulatory authority. The arrangements also included a cap on the number of practising notaries and a system of notarial districts.

1967
Strengthening Protection for the Public

In 1967, the Society established a Special Fund to compensate members of the public for losses arising from a Notary's misappropriation or wrongful conversion of funds.

The Society also proposed detailed trust-account rules that were subsequently adopted in legislation and regulation.

1981
A New Notaries Act

Following a campaign for legislative reform, a new Notaries Act passed third reading on June 26, 1981 and subsequently received Royal Assent.

The legislation removed the longstanding statutory "need" requirement affecting notarial appointments, removed remaining dependencies on the Law Society and modernized the Society's regulatory framework.

1986–1987
New Public Protection and Professional Institutions

A self-insurance program was implemented in 1986, allowing notaries to continue undertaking mortgage work for financial institutions while strengthening protection for clients.

Work also advanced on the Notary Foundation of British Columbia. The Foundation held its first meeting in April 1986, began operating in 1986, and formally came into effect by Order in Council on February 2, 1987.

2004–2005
Land Title Work Moves Online

The Society's centennial records identify the first electronically filed Land Title document in 2004, marking the profession's move toward electronic filing in one of its core areas of practice.

On January 19, 2005, the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia began operations. The Society's Secretary served on the committee involved in establishing the LTSA.

2007
Notarial Districts are Eliminated

In 2007, legislation connected to the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement eliminated the longstanding system of notarial districts.

The change removed geographic restrictions on where notaries could practise and allowed greater flexibility in establishing and expanding practices across British Columbia.

2008
University-Level Education Expands

In 2008, Simon Fraser University launched the Master of Arts in Applied Legal Studies program.

The first students were admitted in 2008, with the first graduates following in 2010. The program became the academic entry-to-practice pathway for B.C. notaries.

2011
Scope of Practice Expands

On September 1, 2011, legislative changes permitted B.C. notaries to prepare powers of attorney, representation agreements, and health care directives.

The changes expanded the range of personal planning services available through B.C. notaries.

2020s
New Ways of Delivering Legal Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, B.C. notaries implemented remote witnessing and electronic document signing for areas including estate planning, mortgage transfers, and commercial agreements.

The decade also saw the incorporation of the BC Notaries Association, while regulatory responsibilities remained with the Society.

100 Years — and a New Century Begins

From the establishment of the Society in 1926 to major changes in regulation, education, technology, and legal services, the profession has continued to evolve over the past century. As the Society embarks on its next chapter, that history provides context for the profession's continued evolution.

REGULATING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST