

Local lawyer receives specialist certification

By KATE LITVA
The Perth Courier

Each year, the Law Society of Upper Canada certifies a small, prestigious group of Ontario lawyers as legal specialists. This year, one of them was Perth's own Greg Anderson.

Mr. Anderson received certification in the area of estates and trusts law, which, briefly, concerns wills, powers of attorney and asset succession.

The law society currently offers specialist certification in the areas of citizenship and immigration law, civil litigation, corporate and commercial law, family law, intellectual property law and, of course, estates and trusts law.

"It's a new specialty," Mr. Anderson said. "They (the law society) add specialty areas as time goes on. So, they recently added estates and trusts."

The designation came about simply as a response to public demand. Officials from the law society maintain that as legal issues become more and more complex, there is a greater need for this sort of resource.

Only lawyers who meet specific standards of experience and knowledge and have applied to the law society's Certified Specialist Board qualify. In addition, only lawyers who obtain the designation from the law society can call themselves certified specialists.

This year, 11 Ontario



GREG ANDERSON

lawyers were certified as specialists, with Mr. Anderson being the only one in the area of estates and trusts law.

In this particular area of law, there are only 18 certified specialists in Ontario, only three in the Ottawa area, and Mr. Anderson is the only one in Perth.

The law society added this specialty "maybe two or three years ago," Mr. Anderson said. "That may be why there are only 18, it's a new area."

However, it's an area he's been practising in for almost 30 years. Born in Neepawa, Man., Mr. Anderson lived in Perth from 1958 to 1963, when his father was the minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

The family moved to Montreal, where Mr. Anderson completed high school and, later, a Bachelor of Arts in honours linguistics at McGill Uni-

versity. He continued his post-secondary studies with a fellowship at the University of Stuttgart in Germany.

"That provided for two years of study in Stuttgart, which was the leading school in linguistics in Germany," he said. "That was towards a masters, but I never went on. I ended up coming back to law school."

Whimsy seemed to have had a little to do with Mr. Anderson becoming a lawyer.

"We had a very good friend who was an American in the city where we lived in Germany, who taught at the same school as my wife did," he said. "We were sitting in a café and he said he always wanted to go to law school and he was writing the LSATs (the law school admission test) that weekend and why didn't I come and write them?"

As fate would have it, he did end up joining his friend that weekend, passing the test and eventually applying for law school. He graduated from the University of Toronto Law School in 1976, and was called to the bar in 1978.

"I started 25, 30 years ago, working with Gerry Dulmage, and I took over his practice, which was an estates practice," he said.

"So very often with a new lawyer in a firm, they start doing other areas like family and criminal and litigation, but I've been doing this since

Gerry Dulmage retired. So, I've been at it 20, 25 years in this area."

While whimsy might have had something to do with Mr. Anderson becoming an estates and trusts lawyer, it certainly had nothing to do with him becoming a certified specialist in the area. Even after almost 30 years in the business, the designation was and continues to be hard won.

"It's a lot of work to get the certification and to keep it up," he said. "It's a big application. It took me about a year to get the thing together and in, and to keep it up you have to qualify every year. Another requirement is that you're taking legal education courses and continually upgrading."

Meanwhile, decades of experience haven't dampened his enthusiasm for his work.

"I want to develop this area more and more, to concentrate more and more on estate planning and estate administration," he said.

He's motivated by the percentage of the population that doesn't have a proper estate plan or will.

"You're better to set this up now, have it well-planned and thought out and that will be cheaper than not doing it," he said. "It'll save you or your family money to have a proper plan. That often changes people's minds about getting it set up, because if they leave a problem, problems are expensive."