



## Dealing With Accountants by Doug Paterson, Q.C.

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The accounting profession seems to be getting more important and prominent as time goes by. Perhaps this is because the modern world is more complex – tax rules are daunting, business must be accountable to consumers and shareholders and individuals today can have varied activities all over the world. Even the average person can own fairly sizeable assets in the \$400,000 - \$500,000 range.

There are different types of accountants who are governed by their own separate provincial statute. There, of course, are specialties within the accounting world too: audit, forensic audit, taxation, farm, estate planning and so on.

Whether you need a Certified Management Accountant, or a Certified General Accountant, a Chartered Accountant or an experienced bookkeeper or tax-preparer depends on your specific situation. All accountants are pleased to answer questions from people regarding fees and services offered. As with any service or profession, today's consumer is

well-advised to get a specific quote as to services to be done, when and for what fees and expenses. Only then should one proceed.

Depending on the job, accountants must follow certain specific practices and meet certain standards. Today, they not only offer accounting help but also deal with business advice, estate planning, tax negotiations and other specialized services.

Many people call lawyers to assist with business start-ups, financing issues, estate planning, farm issues, and wills. The wise lawyer very often, as a first step, ensures the client has consulted an appropriate accountant before beginning the legal work. This is especially so relating to business and taxation issues. Timely and complete advice going in is very important to have from a team of bankers, insurers, accountants, and lawyers, sometimes financial consultants and pension advisers.

In the world of civil litigation, accountants who qualify as

expert witnesses are essential to prove a claim (or defeat one) and provide the court with necessary guidance on accounting issues. After all, most matters boil down to a question of money in the end.

Finally, it should be said that contrary to old stereotypes, nearly all accountants I know have super personalities and are warm, caring people. That should be good for a lunch some-time!