

April 16, 2020

**To: All Religious Representatives**

**Re: Legal Marriages in British Columbia**

It has come to our attention that there is some confusion as to whether a legal marriage ceremony can be performed virtually or remotely.

The *Marriage Act* of British Columbia (the Act) stipulates the requirements as to witnesses and public ceremony as follows:

**Requirements as to witnesses and public ceremony**

- 9** (1) All marriages solemnized under this Act by a religious representative must be in the presence of 2 or more witnesses besides the religious representative.
- (3) Both parties to the marriage must be **present in person** at the ceremony.

In accordance with the *Marriage Act*, religious representatives must ensure that all marriages solemnized under the Act are done in the presence of 2 or more witnesses, in addition to the religious representative. Both parties to the marriage **MUST** be present **IN PERSON** at the ceremony.

Under no circumstances can a marriage be solemnized virtually or remotely.

If you have performed a marriage ceremony virtually or remotely, please contact the Vital Statistics Agency immediately. You must also contact the couple and advise them that the ceremony was not legal and that they are required to have another ceremony in the presence of two witnesses and a religious representative. Please ensure that this information is shared with all your religious representatives.

While marriage is still deemed an essential service at this time, Dr. Bonnie Henry is stressing the importance of social distancing, even when there are only five people present.

If you have questions regarding this notice, please contact:

Janet McInnis, Religious Registry Representative  
BC Vital Statistics Agency  
305-478 Bernard Ave  
Kelowna BC V1Y 6N7  
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