

LEGAL UPDATES

It's been a couple of years since *Expat Living* caught up with lawyer FRANCA CIAMBELLA, but the Canadian who has called Singapore home for 23 years has been hard at work.



In three years, her own firm, Consilium Law Corporation, has grown to eight people and business is exceeding even her own expectations. "We continue to work in ASEAN countries, and have started practising in sub-Saharan Africa, a booming region which reminds me of what Southeast Asia was like over 20 years ago," she says.

On a personal note, from next month she is considered a breast cancer survivor, and is ecstatic about having lost the 30kg in weight she accrued during the gruelling treatment. A surge in energy has seen her ascend Mount Kinabalu, complete the Terry Fox 10km run and ski Whistler. "One of my biggest challenges is coming in the next 18 months, as all three of our teenage children will be leaving for university overseas. I'm preparing myself for the empty nest – another upheaval which many expats living here must deal with," she says.

Franca recently took some time out of her busy schedule to update us on legal and regulatory matters that affect expats living in Singapore.

Working legally

The Ministry of Manpower in Singapore (MOM) has continued to tighten the issuance and renewal of employment passes. New changes introduced in January include raising the minimum fixed monthly qualifying salary for new employment pass applications to \$3,300.

Employment pass renewals have also tightened, with existing pass holders now having to provide evidence to substantiate their application. "There is now a strong focus on educational qualifications, with an emphasis on the quality of the institutions that the applicant has attended," Franca says.

The MOM has also issued an updated list of strategic skills in demand, including the manufacturing, construction, healthcare, finance, information communication and digital media, and tourism and retail sectors. "We strongly advise

prospective applicants for employment passes in Singapore to do the MOM Self-Assessment Tool for Employment available on the MOM website to ascertain their likelihood of success prior to making an application."

Sudden death

When a death occurs, says Franca, the family members need to obtain a Certificate of Cause of Death (CCOD), which is issued by doctors or authorised officers from the Ministry of Health. The death must be registered with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, or at any neighbourhood police centre, within 24 hours of the death. Upon registration, a Death Certificate will be issued. "This is required in order to place an obituary in the newspapers, to engage a funeral director and to make arrangements for cremation or burial," says Franca.

"Next, a family member will need to inform the deceased's banks, credit card companies, insurance companies and solicitor of the death, obtain a copy of the will and inform the executors of the will.

"If the deceased person has children under 18 and has a surviving spouse, the spouse will retain custody, care and control of the children. If the deceased person has a will and provides for a guardian (in a situation where there is no surviving spouse or the deceased was a single parent), it would be imperative to inform the guardian and place the children under the care of the guardian. If there are minor children and there is no will and no guardian is appointed, the Court will appoint a guardian." 

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