

A Little About Colleen

As well as running my own bookkeeping practice from October 2007 to July 2015, I ran the Bookkeeping, Office Services and Personal Tax Division of a local accounting firm. I've completed the second year of Conestoga College's Professional Accounting Practices Program, which is the equivalent to a second year Certified General Accountancy, and I mentored with a CPA, CA for seven years. I'm also a Sage Accountant's Network Premier Advisor with over 30 years experience in business administration. Together, this brings a wealth of valuable knowledge to the table for my clients to tap into.

I enjoy helping businesses, particularly start-ups, develop their financial information and learn how to use it to drive their business forward. Many entrepreneurs lack either the accounting skills and knowledge, or the desire, patience and time required to compile and interpret an Income Statement or Balance Sheet. They have the skills to produce the product or provide the service that IS their business, but crunching numbers isn't their forte. Unfortunately, that old saying "take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves" has some truth behind it; especially since pennies have become \$100 bills and dollars equate to thousands these days. And CRA doesn't care how busy you've been when your remittances are late.

That's where Kerr Accounting Services can help. I take tremendous pride in providing a good, reliable, clean set of books for my clients and I like crunching numbers. It's rewarding to pull all those pennies together into a set of financial statements and watch a client's learning curve as they recognize, or confirm a suspicion, that a cost is not only out of line, but can now be tracked and controlled. And, with proper planning, something that was believed to be unaffordable becomes attainable.

Take advertising as an example. Business owners know they need to advertise, but with reliable financial information in front of us, we can see exactly what to advertise and where the money will come from. With proper bookkeeping, you can see which product or service is or isn't selling. You can see that if this or that expense were reduced or sales of another product or service were increased, the cost to run an advertising campaign isn't so far out of reach. Without this type of information, business owners can waste resources and compromise, if not lose, profitability.

Financial statements are an extremely powerful tool and no business, no matter how small, should ignore them. Many businesses fail because they don't have reliable financial information to work with. Lenders won't even consider financing until they have financials, making something as routine as renewing an existing home mortgage complex, stressful and sometimes, impossible. I enjoy helping clients develop these tools. Perhaps the client has one store and wants to open another. Information can be extrapolated from the financial statements of the first location to plan the growth of the second.

Taxes, the CRA, are two things many people dread; for some, it's an actual phobia. I like working through client's tax returns, making sure I've captured every possible credit and deduction available to them, exercising pension splitting options and transfers. The objective is always to make sure the client pays the least amount of tax required and claims every credit they are entitled to.

I mentored with a CPA, CA who had been designated for 40+ years from March 2008 until August 2015 when I incorporated and took over that firm's Canadian Income Tax business. It's not just about knowing what the Income Tax Act says; it's about how CRA interprets and applies it. That knowledge and experience allows me to provide an extra-ordinary level of service to my clients.

I prepare Individual, Couples and Family tax returns. T1 Adjustment preparation remains an available service as does Refile of the most recent four years, and as always, I continue to respond to CRA Information Requests and provide support and representation during CRA Examinations, Reviews and Audits.

I sit with every client when they bring their information in to be sure I understand their unique circumstances and I sit with them again when the return is complete, explaining how the return was

prepared and why. I take the time to answer all questions, regardless of how busy I am. My clients know they can rely on me to provide accurate, detailed and timely answers to all of their questions.

One of the services offered to every client is Authorization for Online Representation. It allows me not only to speak directly with CRA on behalf of a client, but to access the client's income tax information on CRA's servers. I can pull up T4 slips, get the status of filed returns, view and print Notices of (Re)Assessment, determine RRSP and TFSA contribution limits, see carry-forward amounts and myriad other pertinent information - all in the matter of seconds. It saves the client time and reduces their stress level as they don't have to decipher the department's "tax speak" and try to figure out how to respond. I communicate with CRA for the client, ascertain what is required and why, explain everything to the client in terms they can understand and then respond to CRA on behalf of the client.

The Income Tax Act and the Appeals process are complex, but vast experience and a constant flow of resources available to me allows me to support my clients when other tax preparers fall short. It's very rewarding when I'm able to prove that a divorced Father really did have sole custody of the kids and is entitled to multiple years of denied Child Tax Benefits and the Eligible Dependant credit (formerly Equivalent to Spouse) or when I'm successful in having penalties and interest reversed by appealing an incorrect ruling made by the department. CRA has spent the last couple of years going after Employment Expenses like fiends. By knowing in advance that CRA was going to challenge these claims, I was able to prepare my clients to respond with fully supportive documentation and maintain the deductions that were claimed. High medicals - anything over \$1,500 - is going to be challenged so I keep copies of all the medical receipts in preparation for that mid-Summer letter from CRA. When it comes, I upload it to CRA on behalf of the client and the client maintains the credit.

When I see a client relax because I can respond to CRA on their behalf or I can adjust or Re-file to claim a newly received Disability Tax Credit and get them a bigger refund to help pay for long-term care, I know I've had a positive impact on their lives; I've taken away some of their stress and maybe eased a worry or two.

And that smile on the client's face? THAT'S what it's all about. THAT'S why I'm in business.

Whether it's routine bookkeeping, tax returns or forensic accounting, each client's situation varies. It's never boring and it keeps me thinking. I love it!"

*Colleen Kerr,
Director.*