

Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board

Annual Report for year ending
March 31, 2017

Mission Statement

To set and maintain the highest level of professional, ethical, and educational standards for funeral service

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board, I am pleased to present the 2017 Annual Report. This Report covers information regarding the operation of the AFSRB from April 1, 2016 - March 31, 2017.

The past year was an unusual one in the regulation of funeral services and members. Cam Davis and I shared the Chair duties during this reporting period. Our new Executive Director, Karen Carruthers, completed her first year with the AFSRB during which she provided a much-needed update in some of the AFSRB processes. As well, we undertook to move forward on a number of the initiatives for which the funeral services industry provided feedback during the Fall Forums in 2015. The suggestions and contributions made by all members of the funeral services profession are greatly appreciated.

Part of the mandate of the AFSRB is to ensure that families receiving funeral services in Alberta receive an acceptable standard of service from the regulated members of the funeral profession. In order to maintain and improve this standard, the focus of the AFSRB during this year has been education - both continuing education for licensed members and education requirements for the new students. The AFSRB created the Funeral Education Review Committee (FERC) to consider and make recommendations to the AFSRB on a number of education-related matters. One of those matters was the establishment of the four core competencies required of funeral service professionals (referred to later in this Annual Report).

In the next year, the AFSRB will consider how these core competencies will be emphasized in upcoming continuing education offerings and in the curricula of the two approved schools. The ongoing support of the staff at the AFSRB ensures that this important work will proceed and that the protection of the public is maintained while the needs of the funeral services profession are also addressed.

Christine G. Rapp, Q.C., Chair
April 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018

Background

The Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board was established December 1, 1992 under the following *legislation*:

Licensing of Trades and Businesses Act
Funeral Services Business Licensing Regulation (AR 360/92)
Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board Regulation (AR 225/98).

In 2002 – 2003 the Board was delegated responsibility for enforcing and administering the following *legislation*:

Funeral Services Act
Funeral Services Exemption Regulation
Funeral Services General Regulation, and
Crematory Regulation under the Cemeteries Act.

The Board has six members. Three of the six members are elected by funeral services businesses to represent the interests of the funeral services industry and three members are appointed by the Minister of Service Alberta to represent the interests of the public. The Board held 6 meetings, 3 conference calls and 1 oral hearing from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

2016 – 2017 AFSRB Members

J Cameron Davis – Board Chair (June 8 – March 31, 2017) and media contact

Christine Rapp – Vice Chair (Chair from April 1 to June 8) (Public member)

William Kostiw – Treasurer (Public member)

Jeff Hagel – Education committee

Dorothea Schaab – Education committee

Public member - Vacant

Board Staff

Executive Director
Board Inspector &
Complaints Investigator
Administrative Assistants

Karen Carruthers
Wayne Konner

Rosanna Dame
Lori Elanik

Auditors Hahn & Houle Chartered Accountants

2016 – 17 Report on Operations

The Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board administers legislation that promotes and enforces fair business practices designed to encourage consumer confidence in Alberta.

Licensing

In 2016 the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board licensed

- 163 funeral home locations,
- 51 crematories,
- 363 funeral director/embalmers,
- 139 funeral directors,
- 17 embalmers,
- 106 pre-need funeral salespeople.

Public Board Member

William Kostiw's term as a public member ended March 31, 2017 and to date has not been replaced. The Board had one vacant public member position for the entire fiscal year as the position held by Gemma Beierback was not filled at the end of her term in March 2015.

Election of Funeral Business Member Scott Barbour

Scott Barbour was elected by Alberta funeral businesses to serve a three-year term of office as a funeral business representative on the Board. This term commences on April 1, 2017.

Change in staff at the AFSRB office

The office administrative support, Rosanna Dame left the Board to pursue other interests and was replaced by Lori Elanik on October 3, 2016.

Change in Accounting Firm

After the year ending March 31, 2016, the Board made the decision to hire a new firm, Hahn & Houle Chartered Accountants. In reviewing the financial records, the new firm noted certain changes required in the attribution of licensing and per call revenue. The previous accounting firm deferred all licensing and per call revenue to the next fiscal year. This was not correct. The licensing fees should be deferred to the next fiscal year (as that is the year to which the fees relate). However, the per call fee (the legislated fee a funeral home pays to the Board for each funeral it provides) is paid for the funerals that have been provided in the year just completed and therefore should not be deferred. Hahn & Houle have restated the previous financial statement to properly reflect the deferred income.

Public Awareness of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board

The Board provides funeral service information to consumers through our updated brochures: *Funeral Planning in Alberta* and *Consumer Information about Funerals*. The Funeral Planning brochure was updated to reflect current information this year. These brochures were also sent out to all the municipal offices for distribution. Members of the public are given free copies of both brochures. The information in the *Funeral Planning in Alberta* brochure is on our AFSRB website at afsrb.ab.ca.

Website

The Board's website afsrb.ab.ca enables Albertans to find the information they need to make informed decisions when they are planning or arranging a funeral. The website is continually updated to provide current information. All of the Board's licensing applications, trust reporting forms, complaint forms and inspection report forms can be downloaded from the website.

Meetings

The Board held 8 meetings and 1 conference call between April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.

Registers

Registers are maintained at the Board office showing:

- the name of each funeral director
- the name of each embalmer
- the name of each combined funeral director / embalmer
- the name of each pre-need salesperson
- the name of each funeral services business location
- the name of the business manager for each funeral business location
- the name of the business manager for each crematorium
- the name of each crematorium
- the status of each funeral business licence
- the status of each crematory licence
- the mailing address and location of all funeral businesses and crematoriums

Education

Continuing Education

The AFSRB retains responsibility for ensuring licensees are current in their knowledge of legislation and funeral practices but the ownership for continuing education and professional development has shifted to the individual licensee.

The AFSRB requires that every funeral services licensee obtain 12 hours of continuing education, including a three-credit mandatory course decided on by the Board. The AFSRB is currently in year one of the continuing education cycle and is considering topics for the mandatory course.

Funeral Education Review Committee (FERC)

FERC provided the AFSRB with a report that outlined the core competencies that all licensees of the funeral industry should possess. With some minor adjustments, this report was approved by the Board and has become the basis for moving forward with the educational review. As a result of work done by FERC and recommendations adopted by the AFSRB, the four core competencies that have been established for funeral service professionals are as follows: Business Practice (setting priorities, time and team management, administrative duties, business responsibilities); Communication (including understanding the psychology of grief, mediation, conflicts resolution, and general communication); Professionalism (appearance and demeanor, legal and ethical demands, participation in professional organizations and activities

and self-care); and Technical Expectations (including, in addition to the usual technical skills, understanding customs and rituals, social media, digital presentations and graphic design).

The consultant (OMNIS Consulting) who was hired to review the two approved schools, Canadian College of Funeral Service and Mount Royal University, also used this core competency document in reviewing the curricula of the schools and determining where there may be gaps.

FERC has more recently been working on further recommendations for the Board that have been developed after reviewing the consultant's report and models from other jurisdictions. These recommendations include changes that the schools may need to complete and changes to the processes that the AFSRB monitors. These recommendations are still under consideration with the Board.

AFSRB Collaborative partners

The Board works with a number of entities to stay current with trends and concerns in the industry. The following are some of the examples of this work.

The AFSRB meets with the Alberta Funeral Services Association at two joint meetings, one in the spring and one in the fall, to discuss concerns, trends, and current activities. These meetings provide the Board with a different perspective when looking at issues. The Chair of the AFSRB also provides a report prior to the AFSA general meeting.

The AFSRB has been meeting with the Alberta Insurance Council on some joint issues regarding pre-need funeral contracts that are being funded by insurance. The AIC and AFSRB are working together to ensure that a consistent message is provided to the funeral services businesses and that the requirements of the Restricted Certificates of Authority are met. The Executive Director also attends regulator meetings to discuss current trends and issues that other jurisdictions are experiencing. One of these meetings is held in conjunction with the Funeral Services Association of Canada, and regulators from across the country attend. Another meeting is with the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, which includes regulators from the US and Canada. They offer training for Board members, liaising with other jurisdictions by region, and guest speakers to educate and inform the attendees at their annual conference. This organization will also allow members to ask questions which they can send out in an email blast to get feedback from across Canada and the US in a very short period of time.

AFSRB Policy Motions

The following section reflects only those items that required a policy motion and does not reflect the majority of the work completed by the Board.

The Board passed the following policy motions in 2016 - 2017:

- The Executive Director to look at options for implementing a computerized licensing/complaint system. (June 8, 2016)
- The Education Committee to contact the members of FERC to arrange a meeting, review the report and prepare recommendations to the Board, including project timelines, with a budget of up to \$10,000. (August 4, 2016)
- The Executive Director to investigate obtaining a new accounting firm/auditor for the AFSRB. Get 4 proposals from firms in the Edmonton area. ED to bring recommendation to the Board. (August 4, 2016)
- The AFSRB moved to purchase cyber liability insurance with a coverage amount of \$250,000. (February 8, 2017)
- The AFSRB moved that if a student from another jurisdiction who attended a school not approved by the AFSRB and who is not eligible to be licensed in the other jurisdiction comes to Alberta, the education that student received may be subject to further review as determined appropriate by the Board. (February 8, 2017)

- The AFSRB moved that Christine Rapp and Karen Carruthers look into a new location for the Board office. (March 9-10, 2017)

2016 – 2017 Summary of Inspections

The AFSRB Inspector travelled to all of the principal Funeral Business locations with the province and met with business managers and occasionally funeral directors and embalmers. Discussions ensued regarding the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board requirements for Pre-need Funeral Service Contracts funded by insurance.

New funeral services business Inspections were conducted at:

Town and Country Funeral Services Ltd, Edson

Pine Box Funerals Inc, Edmonton

Central Alberta Family Funeral Services Ltd., Parkland Funeral Home, Eckville

Country Hills Crematorium, Calgary

The Caring Group Corporation, Martin Bros. Funeral Chapels Ltd., Lethbridge

The Caring Group Corporation, Coaldale

Bear Creek Funeral Home Ltd., Fairview

Salmon and Sons Funeral Home Ltd., Lethbridge

Meaningful Memorials Funeral Services, Red Deer

The Caring Group Corporation, Foothills Memorial Chapels, Edson

The Caring Group Corporation, Foothills Memorial Chapels, Hinton

The Caring Group Corporation, Athabasca Community Chapel, Athabasca

RL Roy Ltd., Edmonton

Closing funeral services business Inspections were conducted at:

Martin Bros Funeral Chapels Ltd., Lethbridge

Martin Bros Funeral Chapels Ltd., Coaldale Funeral Home, Coaldale

Mountain Rose Funeral Homes Ltd., Hinton

Mountain Rose Funeral Homes Ltd., Edson

Kneehill Funeral Services Ltd., Meaningful Memorials, Red Deer

Edson Funeral Home Ltd., Edson

Edson Funeral Home Ltd., Hinton

Athabasca Community Chapel Ltd.

Pierson's Funeral Services Ltd., Rockyview Garden of Peace Funeral Home and Crematorium, Calgary

New Crematorium Facility Inspections were conducted at:

2016 – 2017 Summary of Complaints

The Board received 22 complaints during the 2016 – 2017 fiscal year. There were complaints from consumers and complaints from businesses. At year end, most of the complaints had been resolved although 6 complaints remained open. There were a variety of issues involved in these complaints as outlined below:

Consumer complaints:

- 7 complaints regarding questionable professional conduct
- 3 complaints regarding issues with pre-need contracts
- 3 complaints regarding the cost of goods and services
- 3 complaints regarding the proper operation of a crematory (black smoke being produced)
- 1 complaint regarding who controls final disposition of the deceased
- 1 complaint regarding cold calling

Business complaints:

- 3 complaints regarding advertising of another business
- 1 complaint regarding perceived direct contact with consumers to enter into contracts

2016 – 2017 Appeals

On June 23, 2016, an appeal was heard arising from a decision of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board not to issue a funeral director licence to Harvey Giesbrecht. The decision of the Appeal Board (appointed by Service Alberta) was to quash the decision of the AFSRB and direct the AFSRB to issue the funeral director licence to Mr. Giesbrecht immediately with 4 conditions attached to it.