

# Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board

Annual Report for year ending  
March 31, 2018

## 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 2018 Annual Report. This Report covers information regarding the operation of the AFSRB from April 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018.

The focus of the past year has continued to be education - both continuing education for licensed members and education requirements for new students. The Funeral Education Review Committee ("FERC") has worked on fine-tuning the core competencies, communicating with the approved schools, revising the student log books and pursuing other issues, as directed by the AFSRB.

The Summer Forums 2017 took place from mid-July until early September in nine locations across the Province. General topics included the AHS inspections, Code of Conduct, order of priority, proposed changes to the Cemeteries Act, liability for the work of employees and restricted insurance licenses. The recommendations from FERC relating to the revised requirements for students and their sponsors were discussed in detail and the input of the members of the funeral services industry was encouraged. The results of the survey conducted on the FERC recommendations were contained in the Fall 2017 Newsletter. Generally, there was a high rate of agreement by the membership with the FERC recommendations. FERC and the AFSRB will now proceed with implementation of many of these recommendations.

Two new public members, Barbara McKinley and Wendy Lickacz, were appointed to the AFSRB in October 2017. A focus of the AFSRB for the next year will be ensuring that the public is receiving sufficient information relating to funeral services in Alberta. The AFSRB Funeral Planning Brochure has been well-received, but changes are required to other sources of information, such as the AFSRB website. It is important to address the needs of both the public and the funeral service industry in completing this project.

My time with the AFSRB ends on March 31, 2018. It has been a privilege to meet and work with many funeral service professionals during the past five years to improve the delivery of funeral services within Alberta. I appreciate the support and hard work of the other Board members and of Karen Carruthers, Executive Director. These dedicated individuals will continue this important work in the years to come.

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.

## 2017 – 2018 AFSRB Members

Christine Rapp – Chair (Public member)

Jeff Hagel – Vice Chair and education committee (Industry member)

Scott Barbour - Treasurer (Industry member)

Dorothea Schaab – Education committee (industry member)

Barbara McKinley – Public member (appointed October 30, 2017)

Wendy Lickacz - Public member (appointed October 30, 2017)

## Board Staff

Executive Director  
Board Inspectors &  
Complaints Investigators  
Administrative Assistant

Karen Carruthers  
Wayne Konner and Del August

Lori Elanik

Auditors      Hahn & Houle Chartered Accountants

## 2017 – 2018 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 2017 - 2018 the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board licensed

- 166 funeral home locations,
- 51 crematories,
- 380 funeral director/embalmers,
- 50 funeral directors,
- 20 embalmers,
- 118 pre-need funeral salespeople.

### Public Board Member

The two vacant public member positions were filled as of October 30, 2017. Our new public members are Barbara McKinley and Wendy Lickacz. As of April 1, 2018, there was another vacant public board member position.

### 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 commenced on April 1, 2017.

### Change in staff at the AFSRB office

A new inspector for the Board, Del August, was hired on October 16, 2017. Mr. Konner's contract ended March 31, 2018.

### Public Awareness of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board

The Board provides funeral service information to consumers through our updated brochure, *Funeral Planning in Alberta*. This brochure is provided to the funeral services businesses and the businesses in turn provide the brochures to consumers. Members of the public can request free copies of the brochure from the AFSRB office. The information in the *Funeral Planning in Alberta* brochure is on our AFSRB website at [afsrb.ab.ca](http://afsrb.ab.ca).

### Website

The Board's website [afsrb.ab.ca](http://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.

The AFSRB will be endeavoring in the next one to two years, revising the website and updating the platform on which it exists. Our goal is to make the website more user friendly and easier to navigate on smart phones and tablets.

### Meetings

The Board held 7 meetings and 2 conference calls and from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

## 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
- the email addresses for all licensees and funeral services businesses

## Education

### Continuing Education

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

The AFSRB requires that every funeral services licensee obtain 12 credits (generally calculated as 12 hours) of continuing education, including a three-credit mandatory course decided on by the Board. The next reporting cycle for this continuing education will be due prior to the renewal of licences in March 2019. Licensees will also be required to justify the value of the continuing education that they have taken by aligning it with the applicable core competencies developed by the AFSRB.

### Funeral Education Review Committee

The Funeral Education Review Committee (FERC) has continued to work on projects as required by the AFSRB. The work of FERC continues to center around the core competencies that have been developed. The four core competencies established for the 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 major project that FERC worked towards in 2017 – 2018 was reviewing the funeral arrangement and embalming log books that students from both schools (Mount Royal University and Canadian College of Funeral Service) use to track their progress while obtaining the hours required to become licensed. The two log books from the schools were reviewed, then FERC integrated the information from both samples and added information to meet the core competency requirements. These samples were provided back to the AFSRB who then provided the samples to both schools to obtain their feedback on the new content and format. The end goal is to have one log book for funeral arrangements and one for embalming that all students in the funeral directing and embalming education will use.

FERC will continue to work on projects assigned by the AFSRB in order to keep the progress of the education of funeral professionals moving forward.

### 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 to the members of AFSA at their conference in April.

The Executive Director 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 conference held in June each year. Regulators from across Canada attend this meeting, either in person or by conference call. In 2017, seven jurisdictions were in attendance. Another meeting is with the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB), which includes regulators from the US and Canada. This conference includes guest speakers to educate and inform the attendees, opportunities to liaise with other jurisdictions by region, and group activities to work on projects moved forward by the ICFSEB, which for the 2017 year was the provision of details to determine best practices for trainees in the funeral industry. This organization will also send out email blasts to obtain answers to inquiries submitted by members on industry related topics.

This year, the AFSRB also worked in conjunction with Service Alberta on two joint investigations that involved both cemetery and funeral service contracts. This created a more streamlined and efficient investigation process, as well as consistency between AFSRB and Service Alberta in the manner the issues were handled. This collaborative process worked well and the AFSRB will continue to participate if additional opportunities arise where collaboration would be a possibility.

### 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 2017 - 2018:

A challenge to exam results based on distractions present during an exam (65% on a funeral director exam) was presented to the Board. A motion was made that the challenge was denied and the student would need to retake the exam. (April 28, 2017)

The Board wanted to determine if a formal RFP process was required to get quotes on a new licensing system. If no formal RFP is required, the Board determined that a formal proposal should be sent out to a number of companies to determine what they can offer in regard to a licensing system. (September 20, 2017)

The Board moved that the Executive Director get 3 quotes on the work to be done to build out the new lease premises. These quotes are to be brought back to the Board for a final decision. (September 20, 2017)

The Board moved that a link to the AFSRB website should be included on every funeral services business website. The Board office will inform all funeral services businesses of this request through the Newsletter. The AFSRB will prepare the logo with a link embedded in it. (September 20, 2017)

The Board moved to include a specific list of requirements in the employment contract for Del August. (September 20, 2017)

The Board moved to request copies of the AHS inspections related to the funeral services business that AHS is inspecting. (September 20, 2017)

The Board agreed to have the Executive Director approach Mr. Frank Lee to ask for a proposal to be a consultant for the AFSRB for the electronic licensing system. (October 17, 2017)

The Board agreed to have the Executive Director approach Mr. Rob Phillips to ask for a proposal to provide a cost for revising the AFSRB Business Plan. (October 17, 2017)

The Board approved the new versions of the Funeral Arrangement and Embalming Logbooks created by FERC. (December 6, 2017)

The Board gave authority to Christine Rapp (Chair) and the Executive Director to negotiate the lease on behalf of the Board. (December 6, 2017)

The Board made a motion to give the authority to two Board members to redirect funds into GIC investments based on guidance from the Board. (January 17, 2018)

The Board gave direction to place \$500,000 in GIC's with ATB. Of which \$250,000 would be placed in a short term GIC and the other \$250,000 would be placed in a higher rate, longer term GIC. (January 17, 2018)

The Board authorized the Executive Director to set up e-transfers for bill payments and payroll through ATB online. This process will require an additional approval by a signing authority through the system before the payment is released. (January 17, 2018)

The Board moved to accept the proposal from Rob Phillips in regard to revising the AFSRB Business Plan. (January 17, 2018)

The Board moved to create an advisory committee to be part of the AFSRB made up of two former Board members (one industry, one public) for the purpose of being able to give guidance to the Board. (January 17, 2018)

The Board accepted a roles and responsibilities document for the Continuity Committee (as described above). This information will be included in the Policy Manual. (March 6, 2018)

The Board moved to include under the industry election section of the Policy Manual, a process if there is a tie, the Election committee will organize a second ballot containing only the names of those individuals who were tied. A second ballot will be requested from the funeral services businesses. (March 6, 2018)

The Board accepted the Statement of Work proposal from Frank Lee, in regard to finding a vendor for the electronic licensing system. (March 6, 2018)

The Board decided that the Register shall contain the information from section 15(2) of the General Regulation related to pre-need trust and insurance contracts for contracts made after April 1, 2018, contracts prior to this date, the Board will accept a register which contains all information except address of beneficiary, date of birth and purchaser name if unavailable. (March 6, 2018)

### 2017 – 2018 Summary of Inspections

Our new inspector, Del August, started his training with Wayne Konner in October of 2017. The two inspectors worked together to complete the inspections for the 2017 -2018 year and to ensure that Mr. August was comfortable in completing these inspections on his own, once Mr.

Konner's contract was completed in March of 2018. All of the principal funeral services business locations were inspected with no issues requiring disciplinary action to be taken.

New funeral services business Inspections were conducted at:

Arbor Memorial Inc. – Mountain View Funeral Home (additional location added to their site)

The Caring Group Corporation – Prairie Sunset Funeral Home and Crematorium (change in ownership)

Celebrate Life Funeral Services Ltd. (new business)

Closing funeral services business Inspections were conducted at:

Central Alberta Family Funeral Services Ltd. – Brennan Funeral Home and Cremation Services (Stettler)

Central Alberta Family Funeral Service Ltd – Heartland Funeral Services Ltd. (Hanna)

Prairie Sunset Funeral Home Ltd. (Westlock) (new ownership)

New Crematorium Facility Inspections were conducted at:

Bear Creek Funeral Home Ltd. (Grande Prairie)

New location for existing funeral services business were inspected at:

Bear Creek Funeral Home Ltd. (Grande Prairie)

Strome Memorial & Funeral Services Ltd. (Athabasca)

## 2017 – 2018 Summary of Complaints

The Board received 26 complaints during the 2017 – 2018 fiscal year. There were complaints from consumers and one complaint from a business. At year end, the majority of the complaints had been resolved although 6 complaints remained open due to receiving them in close proximity to our year end. There were a variety of issues involved in these complaints as outlined below:

### Consumer complaints:

-7 complaints regarding questionable professional conduct

-1 complaint concluded regarding abrasive funeral director. Apology provided by funeral services business and funeral director no longer works there.

-1 complaint concluded regarding a rosary not placed in the casket. Funeral services business reduced the cost of the funeral and offered to disinter and place the rosary at no cost (consumer did not want this). Both parties agreed on a settlement.

-1 complaint concluded regarding not following the families wishes. Complaint unfounded due to deceased infected with Schedule 1 disease.

-1 complaint concluded regarding not following the wishes of the deceased (in the consumer's opinion), funeral business did not charge the family for any funeral costs.

-1 complaint regarding a delay in a decedent being transferred to the OCME resulting in excessive decomposition. A different funeral business was used for the funeral, an apology was provided and the funeral services business will be installing a refrigeration unit.

- 1 complaint regarding the length of time for a funeral services business to pick up a decedent. Apology provided but complaint unfounded.
- 1 complaint remained outstanding at year end regarding the rough handling of a decedent by the staff transferring the body.
- 6 complaints regarding issues with pre-need contracts
  - 2 complaints concluded regarding cancellation, both received a prompt refund and apology for length of time it originally took.
  - 1 complaint concluded regarding changes to contract not honored. Refund provided for the changes.
  - 3 complaints remain outstanding at year end, one regarding cancellation, one regarding assignment to another provider, and one regarding additional charges added at time of need.
- 5 complaints regarding the cost of goods and services or payment issues on at-need contracts
  - 1 complaint concluded regarding price charged for funeral services. Funeral services business wrote off the contract and consumer paid nothing.
  - 1 complaint concluded regarding change in the amount charged for a transfer after the consumer already paid the bill. No further charges assessed, consumer satisfied.
  - 1 complaint concluded regarding a maximum amount for the funeral costs was not adhered to by the business. There was no breach to the legislation, the consumer determined what they would pay.
  - 1 complaint regarding holding cremated remains until bill was paid. Payment plan worked out and cremated remains provided in time for the memorial.
  - 1 complaint remained outstanding at year end regarding quoted price being too expensive.
- 3 complaints regarding the proper operation of a crematory (black smoke being produced)
  - all complaints concluded. Maintenance records reviewed for the crematories which were all up to date. Funeral services businesses provided explanation for the smoke from their records. No additional issues have been reported for these crematories.
- 1 complaint regarding who controls final disposition of the deceased
  - complaint was concluded, cremated remains were already scattered before the Board was made aware of the complaint. Apology provided to the family from the funeral services business.
- 1 complaint regarding advertising
  - complaint concluded, there was no breach to the legislation. Complaint procedures were revised to require personal contact from the investigator to be made with all complainants.
- 1 complaint regarding a missing urn
  - complaint concluded but urn was not recovered. Because two different owners were involved in this situation liability for the missing urn could not be established.
- 1 complaint regarding access to records
  - complaint was concluded, there was no breach to the legislation.

Business complaints:

- 1 complaint regarding code of conduct (investigation ongoing at year end)