

## From the Chair

### 2015 Board

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November 2015

As anticipated in the last newsletter, the AFSRB experienced a busy summer and fall in 2015. In June, FSAC and AFSRB held separate meetings at Lake Louise. The common location allowed AFSRB to meet and exchange ideas with funeral service representatives from across Canada, including the provincial Regulators. As Chair of AFSRB, I also spoke at the AFSA Annual General Meeting in Lake Louise. The AFSRB 2015-2018 Strategic Plan and Business Plan were completed and provided to the Government of Alberta.

The *Fall Forums* took place from September 24 - October 22 in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat and 214 of you were there. I would like to thank all those who attended for their thoughtful and constructive contributions to the discussions. It was a sincere pleasure for me to be able to match names with faces as I met many of you. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find a summary of the comments and issues raised in these discussions. While there was some variation (from Forum to Forum) in the priority attached to the issues discussed, over-all I found there was a consistency in approach and analysis by the attendees.

With the input received from the Fall Forums, a number of 'next steps' are to be taken. Some issues will require further research and decisions by the AFSRB, eg. evaluation of school programs, licensing practices. Others will be discussed with the Government of Alberta and may require legislative changes, eg. broader definition of *cremation*, licensing of crematory operators. AFSRB will keep you advised as developments occur.

Thanks to Marilyn McPherson and Wayne Konner for their assistance with the Forums and for their availability to answer additional questions, sometimes brought forward by participants over lunch or after the session. Thanks also to Charles Komm for his afternoon presentations and his support of our work. In travelling with Marilyn and Wayne, I also had the opportunity to be in attendance at certain inspections conducted by Wayne - an interesting learning experience for me as a public member.

The Government of Alberta is currently conducting its review of the 'operations' of the AFSRB (which occurs regularly about every 3 years). This involves a review of office procedures and documentation as well as interviews with Board members and staff. The resulting report is expected to be received by the AFSRB by the end of 2015.

Otherwise, the business of the AFSRB continues as usual. Best Wishes to all of you for the festive season which is quickly approaching.

Christine. G. Rapp, Q.C.

## AFSRB 2015 Fall Forums

214 funeral service licensees attended the AFSRB Fall Forums held in six Alberta cities.

Christine Rapp, the 2015 AFSRB Chair, conducted all six forums. She provided an overview of the AFSRB and its role as well as specifics of the AFSRB Mission, Code of Conduct, and applicable legislation. She outlined recent work of the AFSRB including the development of:

- Guidelines for Funeral Services Contracts
- Best Practices for Cremated Remains, and an
- AFSRB Advertising Policy.

She reminded Forum participants of the revised continuing education requirements where all licensees must complete 3 hours of compulsory continuing education through the Canadian College of Funeral Service and 9 hours of self-directed continuing education by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016. A 2016 licence will not be issued to anyone who has not completed their continuing education.

Participants at all six Forums expressed concerns about funeral service education in Alberta. As a result of these concerns a review and evaluation of funeral service programs will be a priority for the AFSRB. Forum participants generally agreed that some type of training was necessary for crematory operators. The training could be in the form of an all-day workshop sponsored by the Board or it could be a CANA certification program. It was pointed out that if the funeral profession does not move to accredit itself with regard to crematories, someone else will step in to do the work.

Funeral home business managers were reminded that the quality of training hours is more important than the number of hours a trainee must complete. Funeral homes have a responsibility to provide good training and not merely use trainees as “cheap labor”.

Forum participants in northern Alberta expressed some interest in the certification of transfer services but participants in southern Alberta did not support the need for certification.

There was no consensus from Forum participants on number of hours to be worked in order to obtain a licence, nor was there consensus on the need for a “non-practicing” licence category. More research is needed on these licensing issues.

Concern was expressed about the condition and proper identification of bodies received from the Medical Examiner. In some cases medical practitioners are not properly identifying cause of death. It was also noted that there continues to be problems obtaining medical certificates of death from doctors. The AFSRB will take these concerns to the government department responsible.

The issue of confidentiality in relation to the Code of Conduct was stressed. It is important to maintain the privacy of cremated remains and obtain “consent” before using programs and other materials from actual funerals for business and marketing purposes.

In order to comply with legislation and to limit liability funeral homes were reminded to include their corporate name on business documentation, website and advertising.

# Why Be a Funeral Director?

Charles Komm  
Snodgrass Funeral Home (Okotoks) Ltd.

I would like to start off with a big thank you to Marilyn, Christine, Wayne and the all of the staff at AFSRB for setting up the forums and allowing me to do my presentation. A big thank you to owners and staff of Snodgrass Funeral Homes Ltd. for allowing me time away from the office to present at the forums, your support is greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all who completed the survey, the information you provided has helped me with research as to how we can serve you better. We had a total of 214 Funeral professionals come out to the six forums. The survey research shows the following top 3 answers for each question:

## **Why did you choose funeral service?**

1. looking for a new career
2. help families in difficult times
3. other family member in profession

## **Recent challenges?**

1. demands of families and decision making
2. planning a day/sudden changes in the day
3. recruiting the right people

## **Most difficult part about being a funeral professional?**

1. services for young children, suicides, family, friends
2. maintaining work and life balance
3. long hours on call

## **Favourite part about working as a funeral professional?**

1. recognition from a family
2. helping families in a time of need
3. making connections with people

## **What can we do to keep our staff engaged and keep us engaged?**

1. continuing education
2. regular staff meetings/communication
3. acknowledgement of appreciation

## **What does your spouse, significant other, family, think about what you do?**

1. supportive spouse/family
2. lack of understanding of job
3. don't like long hours

## **What do you do to relax after a difficult day?**

1. spend time with family
2. exercise
3. time alone/meditation

## **Suggestions for future seminars**

1. stress management
2. how to deal with difficult people
3. embalming cosmetic techniques/seminars
4. estate and will planning
5. customs and traditions
6. hold area forums on regular basis
7. technical training computers and other devices

Watch for future seminars  
by Charles Komm.

## AFSRB ADVERTISING POLICY

Further to the AFSRB Fall Forums (and in order to comply with legislation and to limit legal liability), remember to include your legal corporate identity on your business documentation, website and advertising as defined in with the Advertising Policy set out below.

### **Funeral Services Act General Regulation**

#### **Section 7 Name of Business**

*If a funeral services business carries on business under a name or style other than its corporate name, the business's corporate name must be clearly disclosed to the public*

- (a) on the business's letterhead,*
- (b) in the business's contracts*
- (c) in advertising, and*
- (d) on the business's price list*

Concern has been raised as to a definition of advertising. The following should provide some guidelines for funeral services businesses in determining where they are required to display their corporate name.

Recognizing that some forms of advertising make disclaimers and additional wording prohibitive, the following policy applies with respect to section 7 (c) of the *Funeral Services Act/General Regulations*:

The business corporate name **does not need to appear** in the following types of advertising/communications:

1. **Any business or promotional material** where it is physically impossible or impractical to include the corporate name such as pens, golf balls, key chains, candy, napkins, logo on apparel, etc.
2. **Radio and Television advertising:** Does not need to include the funeral services business corporate name in cases where a website is referenced that contains that information. In cases where no web reference is provided then the corporate name must appear in the radio and television advertisement.
3. **Obituary announcement:** Considered public service information, an obituary notice does not need to include the funeral services business corporate name.
4. **Signage:** Building signage, and billboard signage on the property of the funeral services business. However, offsite signage should carry either the website address or corporate name of the funeral services business.

The business corporate name **needs to appear** in the following types of advertising / communications including by way of example:

5. **Print advertising (excluding obituary announcement):** Must include the corporate name of the funeral services business, this includes business cards, post cards, flyers, direct mail and print news media advertising.
6. **Website:** Whenever a funeral services business owns a website or controls its content every viewable page must include (or link to) full disclosure of the business's corporate name.
7. **Email, discussion groups** etc: The funeral services business corporate name must be included in every message.
8. **Social Media: Twitter, Face book and other social media mediums** (including instant messaging): The funeral services business must include in the description attributed to the profile the corporate name of the funeral services business.
9. **Web Banner Advertising:** Should include a link to the website that provides full disclosure of the corporate name of the funeral services business, where a web link is not provided the corporate name must appear.

## SHIPPING CREMATED REMAINS

Human and animal cremated remains are permitted to be mailed provided:

- They must be shipped using a trackable parcel service.
- Destination and return address information is correct and complete.
- They must be packed in a sealed container (urn or otherwise) and placed inside a durable sift-proof outer container. Breakable inner receptacles must be protected with adequate packing material.
- Human cremated remains must be accompanied by a certificate of cremation issued by the appropriate authority which must be enclosed in a plastic envelope and attached securely to the top of the parcel.

**NOTE:** Prohibitions or restrictions may apply when shipping internationally. Customers are responsible for ensuring their mail item is acceptable in the destination country.

*Updated by Canada Post, April 9, 2015*

Marilyn McPherson will be retiring from the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board on March 31, 2016. Anyone wishing to apply for the position of AFSRB Executive Director should visit the AFSRB website at [www.afsrb.ab.ca](http://www.afsrb.ab.ca) for details on how to apply.

## **IMPORTANT**

### **Mandatory Continuing Education Course**

The March 2016 renewal period is quickly approaching and there is still a large number of individuals that have not completed their mandatory continuing education course. This course **MUST** be completed in order to renew your licence. In total each individual must have 12 hours of continuing education. The mandatory course makes up 3 of these hours.

The fee for the course is \$75.00 per person. Licensees may register for the course by contacting the Canadian College of Funeral Service at [info@ccfs.ca](mailto:info@ccfs.ca) or 1 888 797 9941.

#### **Would you like to be added to the AFSRB Newsletter Mailing List?**

If you do not currently receive the AFSRB Newsletter and you would like to be added to the mailing list, please email your mailing information to the Board office at [rosanna@afsrb.ab.ca](mailto:rosanna@afsrb.ab.ca).

The AFSRB Newsletter can also be found on our website at [www.afsrb.ab.ca](http://www.afsrb.ab.ca).