

You are dead; now what?

Loosing someone you love is hard enough, but suddenly you are faced with many decisions. Often families and friends have no idea what the deceased would want. It will seem that you are bombarded on all sides with questions and suggestions. It is best that you have discussed all of this beforehand. What follows is a brief explanation of the post-mortem legalities and decisions you will face.

A good source for information about death care decisions is the Bereavement Authority of Ontario www.thebao.ca and their BOA Consumer Guide (<https://thebao.ca/for-consumers/consumer-information-guide/>). Community Death Care Canada can also advise on home or family led burials www.communitydeathcare.ca

Legalites

Only certain people have the legal authority to decide what will happen to the body of the deceased person. In order of priority, they are:

- The executor named in the deceased person's will (or the person appointed by the court to administer the estate)
- a spouse
- adult children
- parents of the deceased

A Medical Certificate of Death, signed by the attending doctor or coroner, and a Statement of Death (available at the Municipal Clerk's office) signed by the Executor, next of kin or funeral director are required. Both these documents need to be given to the Municipal Clerk to have the death registered with Vital Statistics. After the death has been registered a Burial Permit will be issued. This must remain with the body during transfer to a cemetery or crematorium.

Funeral directors require a "pick up permit" to demonstrate to a coroner's office or other health care facility that they have been given the right to claim the body, by the next of kin. The next of kin, having primary rights to the body, does not require such a form. The next of kin need only present the medical certificate of death, after it has been provided to them by a physician or coroner.

Ten to twelve weeks after registering the death, you can go online to Service Canada & order a Death Certificate (or several). You will need these to close the estate, apply for the Death Benefit, close out insurance, etc. If a family requires Death Certificates faster than 10-12 wks, go in person, with the MCD & Statement of Death to the Service Ontario location at 55 Sheppard Ave E. Toronto (only this location) and if staff there agree that expedited Death Certificates are required, next of kin can register there, get the Burial Permit, apply for expedited Death Certificates & pay requisite fees. The paperwork is then flown to Thunder Bay and Death Certificates are delivered within 5 business days.

Family members can legally provide funeral services without a licence except for embalming. Informing the hospital or care facility of your desire to do this ahead of time, can prevent misunderstanding. Funeral Homes also provide full or part services including gathering the documentation.

Preparing for The Funeral

Canadian Integrative Network for Death Education and Alternatives <http://www.cindea.ca/home-funerals.html> is a rich resource for understanding the various options available to you.

Embalming, the process of replacing blood with a chemical solution to temporarily preserve the body, is not required by law but may be recommended if the time between death and burial or cremation is long.

When death occurs at home, use of a preservation method such as dry ice, refrigerated ramp, or embalming is used to avoid transferring the mortal remains to a private funeral parlour or having to keep the remains in a refrigerated locker. This procedure may be recommended, but not imposed, when closing the coffin is deferred several days.

Consult with the cemetery by-laws to determine if a shroud and no coffin is permitted. In most cases, the casket must be sealed and firm enough to be lowered into the grave. Crematoriums have different requirements as well and should be consulted ahead of time. Be prepared that a service provider might resist your choice of coffin or shroud if it wasn't purchased from them. You can diplomatically mention that you will consult with the BAO. The BAO licenses funeral service providers in Ontario.

Each of the municipalities in Haliburton County manage cemeteries and have similar cemetery bylaws. When purchasing a plot or a columbarium niche, discuss with the Administrator what is permitted and not. For example, in Dysart et al, planting of shrubs and flowers is not permitted. None of the cemeteries at this point allow winter burials. In Minden Hills, the body (embalmed or in a hermetically sealed casket) can be stored in the Township's Mortuary Vault. Additional fees will be charged. Extra charges also apply in each municipality should the burial happen on a Saturday.

Burial options include green burial, traditional burial and cremation. For green and traditional burials, a plot has to be purchased. A vault for the grave, or an outer liner is not required. There is no crematorium in Haliburton County, so bodies are taken to Lakefield. Bodies and cremated ashes can only be buried in a licensed cemetery or in a columbarium. Ashes can be scattered within the cemetery or on private land or water.

Funerals can be pre-arranged and prepaid. This is something to discuss with a Funeral Home. There are two funeral homes in Haliburton County: Haliburton Community Funeral Homes www.communityfuneralhome.ca (Dysart et al and Coboconk) and Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home www.gordonmonkfuneralhome.com in Minden.

Service Options

As noted above, there are several options you can have in planning the service. It could be at home, at a funeral parlour and chapel, a local event space or at a place of worship. There could be a private service with a more public memorial at a later date. In each case, there are costs to be considered. The least expensive would be doing it all yourself and the most is using a funeral parlour for everything. Costs will increase, depending on how elaborate you wish to make the funeral. As most families are in a vulnerable state after the death of a loved one, it is best if it is discussed before your death.

Caskets, for example, can be anything from a cardboard box to an extensively lined elaborate coffin. The assistance that a funeral home will provide in organizing videos, sound systems, food and servers etc. come at a cost. If there is a time set aside for visitation, there will be a charge. Transportation of the body will also have a cost. Funeral directors and their staff can provide much comfort and support and are highly trained in their profession. A full service funeral might be what the family wants so that the difficult decisions and the process of organizing the funeral can be limited. It is important to discuss all options with a funeral director as some will provide only the services you need them to.

Many of the resorts and other community event spaces in Haliburton County are willing to host funerals and memorial services. In most cases, they are comfortable with green green burial practices. It is best to contact them directly to discuss costs and options.

Grieving

There is a growing Community of Practice made up of people who support and practice community-centred deathcare in various ways, across Canada. They are known as deathcare practitioners (professional and lay), death doulas, thanadoulas, spiritual/soul caregivers, end of life coaches, psychopomps, home funeral guides.

A community care group are a group of volunteers who are willing to assist a family or single in caring for the dead, creating vigils, arranging transport and helping with other aspects of end of life. These care groups can form within a particular faith community or secular individuals who are simply called to care for the dead in their community. Knowing that you will depart this world in a manner that respects your spirit gives peace of mind and relief to so many single people without close family or friends. It also allows people to discuss their wishes with like-minded people without feeling that they are imposing. It can be a reciprocal circle of care.

Resources:

<https://www.communitydeathcare.ca/handling-transfer-deceased-ontario/>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/arrange-funeral-burial-cremation-alkaline-hydrolysis-or-scattering>

Bereavement Authority of Ontario: Toll-free: [1-844-493-6356](tel:1-844-493-6356) E-mail: info@thebao.ca
Website: thebao.ca If you have any complaints or questions about a service provider you can contact the BAO which was set up to oversee the industry.

<https://www.afif.asso.fr/english/preservation> (embalming)

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273951379> Traditional Methods of Preserving Dead Human Bodies in Southeastern Nigeria

<https://www.communitydeathcare.ca/resources/#pathways> The forms and paperwork required. i.e death certificate, burial permit

Community Deathcare Canada <https://www.communitydeathcare.ca/>

Canadian Integrative Network for Death Education and Alternatives <http://www.cindea.ca/home-funerals.html>