

To: Funeral Directors via Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO)

From: Alexandra Schmidt  
Deputy Registrar General

Date: April 6, 2020

Re: Pandemic Planning – Completing Death Registration documents and Issuing Burial Permits

I am writing to you regarding the death registration process and issuance of burial permits. Thank you for continuing to provide critical services in this difficult time and for your continued cooperation as we work to address the needs of staff, stakeholders, and the public as the COVID-19 situation evolves. We have listened to the concerns raised regarding the timely issuance of burial permits as some municipalities have changed their hours or limited access to their offices to stop the spread of COVID-19. In response, we have developed a temporary process that will allow for death registration operations to continue through the electronic transmission of death registration documents.

### **Electronic Transmission or Faxing of Death Registration Documents**

As a temporary measure, outlined below is an interim process to facilitate the issuance of a burial permit during these challenging times.

Effective immediately, funeral homes and municipalities may transmit death registration documents electronically (e.g., encrypted email) or by fax for the purpose of obtaining a burial permit. Please ensure funeral homes continue to work with their municipal partners as operational changes may be required to implement the temporary process described below:

- An amendment has been made to Regulation 1094 of the Vital Statistics Act to allow a copy to be made of the medical certificate of death. Effective immediately, a copy of a medical certificate of death may now be sent between coroners, funeral directors and division registrars (including deputy division registrars and sub-registrars) for the issuance of a burial permit.
- A funeral home may send a copy of the statement of death and medical certificate of death and/or coroner's warrant to bury through a secure electronic method or by fax to the municipality; and the municipality may send the burial permit and acknowledgement of death through a secure electronic method or by fax to a funeral home. Original registration documents will need to be sent to the municipality weekly, on a best effort basis, for processing.

- If sending the documents by secure electronic method, funeral homes should work with their municipal partners to ensure that it is done in accordance with the municipality's IT and encryption policies; and follow requirements under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to maintain the security and integrity of the transmitted information. Enclosed are some examples of programs and applications to transmit documents electronically through secure methods and to password protect PDFs.
- If sending the documents by fax, we suggest that funeral homes program the fax number provided by their municipality in their fax machine to help prevent sending the documents to the wrong location.
- Whether sending by an electronic method or by fax, it is important that appropriate security measures are taken to mitigate privacy breaches and even identity theft.
- Please note that an electronic process is currently being developed that will enable a coroner to electronically input, certify and submit an electronic PDF (ePDF) of the medical certificate of death or coroner's warrant to bury directly to the funeral home. As such, funeral homes should expect to see electronic versions of these documents from coroners within the next couple of weeks.
- Lastly, we are asking funeral homes to work with their municipality to determine where, when and how to deliver the original registration documents weekly, on a best effort basis.

As the situation continues to escalate, we have asked municipalities to be prepared to provide death registration services 7-days per week, including holidays, if necessary. If funeral homes think that this will be necessary, they should contact their municipality.

Thank you in advance for your continued cooperation. If you have any questions or require clarification regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact Melissa Power, Team lead at: (807) 343-7612.

Sincerely,

*Alexandra Schmidt*

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Deputy Registrar General /  
(A) Assistant Deputy Minister, Central Services Division  
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- c. Carey Smith, Bereavement Authority of Ontario  
Dr. Dirk Huyer, Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario  
Monica Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Rick Johal, Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario  
Paul Parsons, City of Toronto

Enclosure