



What You Should Know About Arranging a Funeral in British Columbia

When a death occurs the process of making the funeral arrangements can be daunting, especially for the recently bereaved. If the death was sudden and/or unexpected, it can make the whole process even more stressful.

If it is your first time arranging a funeral you can be overwhelmed by where to start and all the things that need consideration. And add to this the fact that the 'death industry' is big business, and many funeral professionals are also slick sales professionals, this can all lead to what is known as a "distressed purchase". There are around 140 Funeral Homes in British Columbia. This can make it a difficult task to choose which funeral home best meets your needs.

To try and guide you through this difficult process, we have outlined a few important aspects of arranging a funeral in British Columbia that may help you.

What Regulations Govern Disposition arrangements in BC?

A funeral director should receive written authorization to perform disposition services. Telephone consent can initiate a funeral home to begin their professional service, but formal written consent must be given before a cremation or burial can be conducted.

What Can I Expect in Funeral Costs in BC?

A funeral can be a significant expense, depending on what kind of service you opt for. **You can spend anything between \$1,000 to \$12,000.** The funeral director will charge a 'professional service fee' that usually covers his/her basic services to transport the deceased, obtain the medical certificate of death, register the death and complete all necessary government forms.

Depending on whether you opt for a burial or cremation, you may have additional costs for such things as embalming, a casket and/or an urn and cemetery burial plot. Other indirect costs can be things like the services of an officiant, clergy and organist, obituary notices and flowers. A funeral home **MUST** provide you with a 'General Price List' that specifically itemizes their charges. A funeral home cannot refuse to accept funeral merchandise (such as a casket) that you have purchased from another source.

Being a "distressed purchase" many people just turn to the first funeral home they know of, or one that family and friends recommend. In many cases this can be a sound decision, but it **IS** important to shop around to ensure you are getting equitable 'value for money'. It is common to find that the different funeral homes in an area of BC will all charge differing rates for the same service – therefore you should compare funeral costs. Corporate-owned funeral businesses such as Dignity and Arbor Memorial typically charge more.

Canadian Funerals Online provides a FREE directory of all 120+ funeral homes in British Columbia, and we work with DFS Memorials of Canada, which is a national network of family-owned funeral homes that guarantee a low-cost funeral serving their local communities. The DFS Memorials Provider for British Columbia offers a simple, direct cremation for \$845.

Direct cremation service \$845 Call (778) 608-2808

Arranging a Cremation in BC

Cremation is popular across Canada compared to the whole of North America, and British Columbia rates as the province with the highest cremation rate in Canada at around 80%. At least 48 hours must elapse after time of death before a cremation in BC can be carried out, unless specifically ordered by a medical health officer under the Public Health Act. To find out more, visit our [Cremation Services Explained](#) article.

Does the Deceased Have to be Embalmed?

No, embalming is not required by BC law. It is often suggested by funeral directors if there is a delay between the time of death and the disposition, and/or a viewing is requested.

How Do I Obtain a Death Certificate in BC?

Once you have appointed a funeral director they will ordinarily coordinate the necessary documentation such as the medical certificate of death and the death certificate. The attending medical physician is responsible for completing the medical certificate of death within 48 hours, this needs to be submitted to apply for a 'Death Certificate'. The BC Vital Statistics Agency issue death certificates and currently charge \$27.00 per certificate. Additional copies may be required if you need to send them to various institutions and organizations.

What are my options for preplanning a funeral in BC?

To ensure wishes are met, and relieve family of the emotional and financial burden of a funeral, you can preplan a funeral in BC. Pre-financing a funeral can be done in installments or in a lump sum payment. Funeral homes who offer a preplanning service must have licensed, pre-need qualified staff, and all funds are usually held in trust.

Although preplanning can be a great way to have peace of mind about end-of-life decisions, it is vital that your funeral plan is discussed with family, and safely lodged with your personal papers. Too often family have already coordinated the funeral of a deceased parent to later find out that they had a funeral plan and fund held in trust.

What help is available with funeral expenses in BC?

The Ministry of Housing and Social Development offer a funeral supplement to contribute towards the cost of a person who dies in BC if the family has no immediate funds to meet

these costs. This supplement is available under the Employment and Assistance Regulation. The Crime Assistance Program may award up to \$5,000 towards the funeral expenses of a victim of crime. Canadian Forces member and veterans are entitled to benefits related to funeral expenses. For serving members this can be anything up to \$12,700.

What to do if a loved one dies outside of British Columbia?

It can be especially distressing if your loved one dies away from home, but be assured there are funeral professionals that specialize in transporting human remains, and can bring your loved one home to you. Transporting a human body can be costly, and this will depend upon the funeral home's professional service charge for managing the shipping, plus the shipping costs. It can typically amount to around \$3,500 - \$5,000. This tends to be why many people consider a cremation at the place of death and then ship the cremated remains back to BC.

Air Canada do offer a specialized funeral shipping service 'AC Compassion'. For more information visit our page on [Air Transportation of Human Remains](#).

Can you donate a body to science in BC?

Yes, the University of British Columbia does have a Body Donation to Science Program (for those wishing make an anatomical gift. Donating your body to science can be a wonderful way to leave a lasting legacy to future generations.

A consent form needs to be lodged with the University, this can be done prior to death or at the time of death. They will then collect the deceased from the place of death, arrange the anatomical donation, cremation of the remains and a basic urn. Next of kin will be contacted to collect the remains once the body donation process has been completed. This can be anything from a few weeks up to three years. All costs are covered by the University, but additional costs for transportation to the University may be incurred for those outside of the Greater Vancouver area.

There is no upper-age limit for body donations and some medical conditions may prevent the acceptance of a body for the program.

For more information contact the UBC Department of Cellular and Physiological Sciences - call (604) 822-2578 or email: anatomy@interchg.ubc.ca

Where to go if you have a complaint about a funeral home in BC

Hopefully it won't happen, but if for any reason you should have a complaint about services from a funeral director, you should try and resolve it directly with the funeral firm in the first instance. If you still have a grievance you could take it up with the Funeral Service Association of British Columbia – the association upholds the ethics and standards of funeral professionals in BC.

Suite 211, 2187 Oak Bay Ave, Victoria, BC. V8R 1G1

Consumer Protection BC is also a not-for-profit organization that protects consumers in BC. They can be mailed at: PO Box 9244 Victoria BC V8W 9J2