

## BACKGROUNDER: CREMATION IN BC

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### OVERVIEW

Consumers making end-of-life choices for their family members can be assured that there are laws in BC regulating funeral services, cemeteries and crematoria. Cremation is an increasingly popular option for people making end-of-life arrangements. According to the Vital Statistics Agency, more than 82% of British Columbians chose cremation in 2011. In British Columbia, all cremation services and operators are governed under the [Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act](#), the [Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act](#) and the [Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Regulation](#).

### THE CREMATORIA LAW IN BC

Consumer Protection BC inspects and enforces the laws and regulations specific to funeral services. The law protects consumers by:

- Requiring detailed contracts of funeral services to be provided
- Requiring proper authorizations are in place prior to funeral services being delivered
- Requiring the respectful handling of human remains
- Requiring businesses to meet prescribed facility requirements

### 2018 - 2020: CREMATION, INTERMENT & FUNERAL SERVICES IN BC BY THE NUMBERS

*\*Please note that all statistics below are all-encompassing for BC's cremation, interment and funeral services sectors.*

#### ***Licensed places, activities and occupations:***

BC-licensed crematorium, cemetery and funeral service providers	2018	2019	2020
	1,066	1,071	1,122

#### ***Consumer inquiries:***

- 2018: There were 279 inquiries about the funeral sector, representing 3% of all calls and emails (11,177). Topics of interest included:
  1. General inquiry (16% of funeral sector-related inquiries)
  2. CIFSA related general inquiry (11%)
  3. Contract cancellation (9%)
- 2019: There were 292 inquiries about the funeral sector, representing 3% of all calls and emails (11,221). Topics of interest included:
  1. General inquiry (16% of funeral sector-related inquiries)
  2. General complaints (16%)
  3. Contract cancellation (12%)
  4. Quality of service (9%)
- 2020: There were 240 inquiries about the funeral sector, representing 2% of all calls and emails (15,423). Topics of interest included:
  1. General inquiry (25% of funeral sector-related inquiries)

2. General complaints (10%)
3. Inquiries related to funeral services laws (13%)
4. Licence status (8%)

**Investigations:**

- 2018: There were a total of 15 funeral-related investigation files. Of those, 11 files concluded with an outcome and 4 files were incomplete, unfounded or referred elsewhere. Of those 11 files with an outcome, 6 enforcement actions were taken, and voluntary compliance was achieved in 5 cases.
- 2019: There were a total of 24 funeral-related investigation files. Of those, 19 files concluded with an outcome and 5 files were incomplete, unfounded or referred elsewhere. Of those 19 files with an outcome, 15 enforcement actions were taken, and voluntary compliance was achieved in 4 cases.
- 2020: There were a total of 11 funeral-related investigation files. Of those, 8 files concluded with an outcome and 3 files were incomplete, unfounded or referred elsewhere. Of those 8 files with an outcome, 7 enforcement actions were taken, and voluntary compliance was achieved in 1 case.

Contraventions when enforcement action was taken	2018	2019	2020	Total
	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>
Providing false or misleading info, failure to provide info or comply	1	1	0	2
Failing to meet requirements of price list of all goods and services	1	0	1	2
Failing to provide accurate information when receiving an inquiry about the nature or price of cemetery or funeral services or memorials	0	1	0	1
Failing to include required contents in funeral contracts	0	2	1	3
Failing to include required contents in preneed cemetery or funeral services contracts	0	3	1	4
Failing to deposit money into preneed trust account within 5 days of receipt	0	1	0	1
Failing to include required contents in interment right contracts	0	1	0	1
Committing or engaging in a deceptive act or practice	0	1	0	1
Acting as an operator, funeral provider, embalmer or funeral director without a licence	1	0	0	1
Providing funeral services without written authorization	0	0	2	2
Failing to state business address or affiliation to a corporation in marketing materials	0	0	1	1
Failing to handle human remains in a respectful manner	0	0	1	1
Crematorium operators failing to get approval before adding, modifying or replacing an appliance	0	1	0	1
Failing to meet facility requirements (rooms for disinfecting, preserving and restoring human remains)	1	0	0	1
Funeral providers failing to meet their obligations	0	1	0	1
Failing to meet requirements of displaying containers for sale	0	2	0	2

Failing to meet licensing requirements for apprentice funeral directors and embalmers	1	0	0	1
Failing to report a list of property, money and other items with significant value found on the human remains	1	0	0	1
Failing to meet the report submission due dates	0	1	0	1

## BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS AND CONSUMER RIGHTS

By law, funeral service providers:

- Must not provide funeral services unless they have received authorization from the person who, under the law, has [the right to control the disposition of the human remains](#).
- Are not allowed to phone consumers or come to a consumers' home to sell funeral arrangements unless invited to do so (and if the consumer decides to do so, the request must be made at least 24 hours in advance).
- Must include specific information in funeral services contracts, including an itemized listing of all goods and services purchased and any other costs involved. With a prepaid funeral contract, consumers have cancellation rights.
- Must display, and provide a clear schedule of rates, if requested.
- Must follow specific provisions for preneed funeral services contracts, including the requirement that prepaid money be held in trust.

## CONSUMER TIPS

- 1. Check licensing status.** By law, anyone offering funeral services in BC must be licensed. Visit Consumer Protection BC's website to [check a licence](#).
- 2. Ask what services are included in the price.** To be an informed consumer, read your contract carefully (keep a signed copy, too) and find out what is included and what is extra. For example, the cost for funeral services often does not include the sale of a cemetery lot, a grave or a memorial marker (such as a headstone, tombstone, monument or plaque).
- 3. Share the details of your wishes.** Let your loved ones know your wishes. If you purchased a preneed cemetery or funeral services contract, share the details with your family and ensure the information is in your will. Remember that under BC's consumer protection laws that you have preneed contract cancellation rights, too.

## ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

To maintain the integrity of our investigative processes, we do not share detailed information about open files. Visit the [Enforcement Actions section of our website](#) to explore our recent licensing and enforcement actions.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Explore [www.consumerprotectionbc.ca](http://www.consumerprotectionbc.ca) for more information for both consumers and regulated businesses. Additional statistical information is also available in our [annual reports](#). We also share information and consumer tips on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and in [our corporate blog](#).