

To: Ontario Division Registrars

From: Alexandra Schmidt  
Deputy Registrar General

Date: April 6, 2020

Re: Pandemic Planning – Issuing Burial Permits and Death Registration

Further to my memo dated March 25, 2020 regarding registering deaths and issuing burial permits, I wanted to thank you for continuing to provide these critical services during this difficult time. I also wanted to thank you for your patience as we work to address the needs of staff, stakeholders, and the public as the COVID-19 situation evolves. We've 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 the following interim process to support the issuance of burial permits during these challenging times.

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

- 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 (e.g., encrypted email) or 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 death registration documents by secure electronic method, please work with funeral homes to ensure that a consistent process is established and 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 fax numbers, where possible, are pre-programmed in the 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 work with funeral homes to determine where, when and how they are to deliver the original registration documents.
- 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 will be sending electronic versions of these documents within the next couple of weeks.
- Once the original registration documents have been received, municipalities should continue to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to registering the deaths in accordance with their requirements under the Vital Statistics Act and send the original documents to the Office of the Registrar General weekly, on a best effort basis, to complete the death registration process.

As the situation continues to escalate, please ensure that municipalities are prepared to provide death registration services 7-days per week, including holidays, if necessary. As mentioned in the previous memo sent to Ontario division registrars and marriage licence issuers on March 25, 2020, division registrars may appoint sub-registrars for the issuance of burial permits and assist with fulfilling duties required under the Vital Statistics Act. You may wish to consider appointing funeral directors as sub-registrars to assist you at this time. Please contact us if more information is required on how to appoint a sub-registrar.

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 the division registrar helpline at: (807) 343-7431 or Debbie Hyatt, Operations Manager at: [Debbie.Hyatt@ontario.ca](mailto:Debbie.Hyatt@ontario.ca)

Sincerely,

*Alexandra Schmidt*

Alexandra Schmidt

Deputy Registrar General /

(A) Assistant Deputy Minister, Central Services Division, ServiceOntario

- c. Jonathan Lebi, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Monica Turner, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
- Rick Johal, Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario
- Paul Parsons, City of Toronto
- Carey Smith, Bereavement Authority of Ontario
- Dr. Dirk Huyer, Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario

Enclosure