

**MARKET STUDY  
FUNERAL SERVICES  
CITY OF CALGARY**

**Prepared in June 2009 by**



**FÉDÉRATION  
DES COOPÉRATIVES  
FUNÉRAIRES  
DU QUÉBEC**

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## Mandate and Context

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Under the Government of Canada's Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI), the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) mandated the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives of Québec to prepare various market studies on the major urban agglomerations with the eventual goal of extending the Quebec funeral cooperative model to other regions of Canada.

This market study of the city of Calgary is part of that process.

We will therefore evaluate demography, deaths, characteristics of the competition, and preferred approaches for setting up a first funeral cooperative in Calgary.

## The Territory

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The city of Calgary is located in the southern part of the province of Alberta. It is the largest city in the province. Located 80 km from the Rocky Mountains, the city of Calgary is crossed by two major rivers. The territory is divided into four parts according to the cardinal points: northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast. Total surface area of the city is 721 km<sup>2</sup>. The city of Calgary is the third largest in Canada in terms of population.

## Demography

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The city of Calgary is divided into 14 wards, each of which contains many districts. There are 223 districts in all. Another way of dividing up the territory is by electoral district. Calgary has 23 electoral districts. We therefore decided to study the large wards.

### **a) Evolution of the population**

The following table shows the evolution of the population of the city of Calgary between 2002 and 2008. Over that period the total population increased by 15.2%, compared with 16% for the entire province of Alberta.

The wards with the strongest growth between 2007 and 2008 are wards 3 (8.77%), 6 (4.2%), 12 (7.23 %) and 13 (3.37 %). These same wards saw the strongest growth between 2002 and 2008 as well. A map of the wards is appended.

### Ward population comparisons

Ward	2008	2007	2002	% change 2007-2008	% change 2002-2008
1	92,186	89,576	69,373	2.91	32.9
2	77,831	77,687	70,238	0.19	10.8
3	99,077	91,092	55,559	8.77	78.3
4	72,351	73,207	74,742	-1.17	-3.2
5	60,293	60,462	62,138	-0.28	-3.0
6	84,112	80,723	62,865	4.2	33.8
7	61,418	61,265	66,043	0.25	-7.0
8	66,916	67,032	68,113	-0.17	-1.8
9	62,568	62,364	80,464	0.33	-22.2
10	64,484	65,212	69,890	-1.12	-7.7
11	65,902	65,627	67,894	0.42	-2.9
12	92,933	86,669	67,876	7.23	36.9
13	82,838	80,136	64,198	3.37	29.0
14	59,983	58,890	56,857	1.86	5.5
Totals	1,042,892	1,019,942	904,987	2.25	15.2

Source: 2008 Civic Census Results - The City of Calgary

#### b) The 65+ age group

The concentration of this age group is of the greatest importance for the funeral industry. Below we give the weight of this age group as a percentage of the total population.

The median age in Calgary is 35.7 years, compared with 36 and 39.5 for Alberta and Canada respectively. In other words, the population of Calgary is younger compared with that of the province and of Canada. In 2006 the population aged 65 and over represented 9.46% of the total population, compared with 11% in Alberta and 13.7% in Canada. This percentage will be rising in the near future, as the ageing of the population is felt all across Canada.

#### Proportion of population aged 65 and over (%)

	2004	2006	2008	Forecast	
				2010	2012
Calgary	9.28	9.46	9.90	10.2	10.8

Source: 2008 Civic Census Results - The City of Calgary  
Executive Summary of Calgary and Region Socio-Economic Outlook 2008-2013,  
p. 25

In 2006, the largest concentrations of persons aged 65 and over were found in wards 6 (11.0%), 7 (14.7%) and 11 (15.3%). Wards 4 and 9 also have concentrations above the municipal average.

If we compare the populations aged 65+ with the general population, we see that the wards with an above-average concentration of persons 65 and over are also the wards that are experiencing population decreases. These are no doubt wards abandoned by young families. Ward 6 is an exception here, for in addition to having increased 33% between 2002 and 2008, in this ward 11% of the population is aged 65 or over. It would be appropriate to validate the relevance of this sector for setting up a funeral cooperative.

**Age 65 and over, by ward**

Ward	2006		Total	%
	65-74	75+		
1	4,675	3,551	8,226	9.2
2	3,920	2,416	6,336	8.4
3	2,351	1,318	3,669	4.4
4	4,091	3,036	7,127	9.8
5	2,866	1,737	4,603	7.6
6	4,722	3,751	8,473	11.0
7	4,484	5,455	9,939	14.7
8	3,503	3,038	6,541	9.3
9	4,131	3,910	8,041	10.3
10	4,071	2,036	6,107	9
11	5,018	5,513	10,531	15.3
12	4,041	2,773	6,814	8.4
13	3,580	2,086	5,666	7.4
14	2,893	1,950	4,843	8.3
Calgary	52,670	41,189	93,859	9.5

Source: City of Calgary, Civic Census 2006

### c) Other demographic indicators

#### Mother tongue

It was impossible for us to find data on the population's mother tongue by ward. However, data on the population that speaks neither English nor French was found for each ward. To summarize, in Calgary, over 15,000 persons spoke neither English nor French in 2001. This represents 1.8% of the city's total population. Wards 3, 4, 5 and 10 are the ones most densely populated by allophones.

**Person who speak neither English  
nor French**

Ward	2001	
	Number	%
1	495	0.8
2	1,290	1.9
3	1,600	3.2
4	2,610	3.5
5	3,045	5.1
6	615	1.0
7	1,325	2.1
8	490	0.7
9	1,225	1.6
10	2,130	3.1
11	330	0.5
12	365	0.6
13	445	0.7
14	345	0.6
Calgary	15,890	1.8

Source: City of Calgary, Civic  
Census, update January 2008

In summary, since 1996 the city of Calgary has seen a decrease in the proportion of persons with English as their mother tongue, to the benefit of persons whose mother tongue is a non-official language. This is to be explained by the amount of immigration to Calgary.

Mother tongue	2006	2001	1996
English	73.2%	77.1%	78.4%
A non-official language	23.9%	19.9%	18.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006

## Diversification of the population

The city of Calgary continues to become more diverse in terms of cultural communities. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of individuals from visible minorities increased by 43%, of immigrants by 28% and of Aboriginal people by 24%.

### Population diversification

	2001		2006		% change 2001-06
	N	%	N	%	
Visible minority	162,905	18.7	232,465	23.7	42.7
Immigrant	190,140	21.8	242,750	24.8	27.7
Aboriginal identity	19,760	2.3	24,425	2.5	23.6
Calgary	871,140	100	979,480	100	12.4

Source: Executive Summary of Calgary and Region Socio-Economic Outlook 2008-2013, p. 19

With regard to the origin of the immigrant population, the 2001 census data indicate the United Kingdom as being the most frequent source of immigration, with 12.2%.

### Immigrant population by country of birth, 2001

	N	%
Total immigrant population	190,140	100
United Kingdom	23,155	12.2
China	14,695	7.7
India	12,805	6.7
Philippines	12,120	6.4
Vietnam	11,665	6.1
Hong Kong	10,685	5.6
United States	9,235	4.9
Germany	6,595	3.5
Poland	6,490	3.4
Italy	4,625	2.4

Source: City of Calgary, Civic Census, updated in January 2008

## d) Income and other economic indicators

Calgary has been experiencing an economic boom for many years. The oil and gas industry holds a predominant place in its economy. Tourism too is seeing substantial expansion. Three economic indicators are presented below. We were unable to find recent figures for these indicators by ward.

### Median household income (\$)

	2006	2001	1996
Calgary	67,238	64,880	55,924
Alberta	63,988	58,911	52,166
Canada	53,634	52,438	49,142

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006

As can be seen from the table above, median household income is much higher in Calgary than in Canada. It rose 20% between 1996 and 2006, compared with 9% for Canada during the same period. The growth in Alberta was stronger, with 22% for the reference period.

### Percentage of low income earners

	2006	2001	1996
Calgary	14.2	15.0	20.8
Alberta	12.2	13.9	18.5
Canada	15.3	16.3	19.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006

The percentage of low income earners diminished in Canada between 1996 and 2006. Calgary's percentage was higher than Canada's in 1996, but in 2006 it was lower.

### Unemployment rates (%)

	2006	2001	1996
Calgary	4.1	5.0	6.7
Alberta	4.3	5.2	7.2
Canada	6.6	7.4	10.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006

Calgary makes a better showing on unemployment rates than Alberta and Canada for the years 1996, 2001 and 2006. The 4.1% rate in 2006 corresponds to full employment, meaning that city is doing very well and probably has been able to diversify its economic sectors away from single-industry dependence on oil.

## Deaths

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We were unable to obtain the number of deaths per ward. In the table below we present deaths per year for the city of Calgary, compared with the province.

### Number of deaths, Calgary

	Calgary		Alberta	
	N	Rate/1000	N	Rate/1000
<b>2004</b>	4,664	5.00	18,800	
<b>2005</b>	4,680	4.89	19,421	
<b>2006</b>	4,957	5.00	19,868	6.00
<b>2007</b>	5,123	5.02	20,355	6.00
<b>2008</b>	5,258	5.04	20,512	
Growth between 2004 and 2008	12.74		9.11	

Source: Executive Summary of Calgary and Region Socio-Economic Outlook 2008-2013, p. 24  
 Alberta population 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004

You will note that in 2008 there were 5,258 deaths within the city of Calgary. Given that the number of deaths for 2004 was 4,664, this represents an increase of 12%. The death rates per 1,000 inhabitants of 5.02 for 2007 and 5.04 for 2008 reflect a population that is not old, as is confirmed by the fact that the city's median age is 35.7 years.

## The Competition

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Below you will find a description of each competitor we identified in Calgary. This is followed by a fact sheet on each service point, identified by an alphabetic letter. We counted 16 service points in all. In the appendix you will find a map of Calgary with the 16 service points identified by their letter.

### Service Corporation international (SCI)

SCI is the largest provider of funeral services in North America. It has its head office in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. As of December 31, 2008, this corporation operated 1302 funeral homes and 369 cemeteries. It is listed on the New York stock exchange.

Operating under the Dignity banner, the corporation has a presence in 43 U.S. states, eight Canadian provinces, and Puerto Rico.

In 2008, SCI was assigned **272,693** funerals, compared with 280,290 in 2007. The average revenue per funeral rose from \$4,928 in 2007 to \$5,097 in 2008.

SCI has seen strong growth in recent years due to a strategy of taking over funeral companies. By proudly displaying the Canadian flag and retaining the family name of the previous owner, the corporation is able to conceal its American roots.

On SCI's website, a search engine allows us to identify the two companies that exist in Calgary. We attempted many times to access the personalized website of each company, but the links to these sites did not work, and so we were unable to gain access to the Internet sites. Also, the same addresses appear on the various corporate brochures and staff business cards. Through Google, however, we finally located the correct address, which is [www.fostersgardenchapel.ca](http://www.fostersgardenchapel.ca).

As mentioned above, there are two funeral companies in Calgary owned by SCI: Foster's Garden Chapel Funeral Home and Crematorium and the South Calgary Funeral Centre and Crematorium. Below you will find a description of the service points.

Foster's Garden Chapel Funeral Home and Crematorium  
3220 4th Street N.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 297-0888  
[www.fostersgardenchapel.ca](http://www.fostersgardenchapel.ca)

J



In operation since 1956, this SCI service point is located opposite Calgary's Queen's Park Cemetery in a residential neighbourhood. This service point has the benefit of good visibility, since 4th Street is a major artery. The very imposing Tudor-style building has a garage that can accommodate the entire fleet of vehicles, including at least three hearses, five limousines and two Cadillac lead cars: these vehicles were on the premises at the time of our visit.

There is a large outdoor parking lot that can accommodate at least 150 vehicles. The company boasts the largest parking lot in the city. The grounds contain many mature trees and landscaping of good taste.

Indoors, four small meeting rooms have been outfitted as dining room to facilitate consultations with families, which can be served with coffee, juice, water and cookies.

In addition to visitation rooms, a reception lounge and a crematorium, this service point includes a large hall outfitted as a living room. A stone fireplace and sofa chairs embellish this room for the comfort of visitors.

The chapel, with a basic seating capacity of 250, can also accommodate 25 more persons in a little section adjacent to the main chapel. It is equipped with the latest technology, so that ceremonies can incorporate PowerPoint projections, videos and music. Therefore, if the chapel is filled to capacity, the ceremony can be broadcast to the hall with the fireplace.

We were warmly welcomed at the time of our unannounced visit. We were able to meet with an advisor and discuss the different options available, together with their prices.

South Calgary Funeral Centre and  
Crematorium  
12700 Macleod Trail S.  
Calgary  
(403) 297-0711  
[www.fostersgardenchapel.ca](http://www.fostersgardenchapel.ca)

K



This SCI service point has been in operation since 1930. Better known as *The Little Chapel on the Corner*, it was relocated to Macleod Trail in 1998.

Macleod Trail is a very busy, six-lane street. The funeral home is not very visible or accessible from the street. To access it, we have to take the street behind the Funeral Centre, Lake Fraser Dr. The district is mainly commercial: right next door is a Ford dealership.

From the outside, the Funeral Centre has a superior aspect. The large building has a canopy, a garage and a parking lot of about 30 spaces. However parking is available on Lake Fraser Drive. Landscaping complements the whole.

Inside are a chapel, a reception lounge, a crematorium and visitation rooms. Decoration and modern furnishings lend a great deal of prestige to the premises. The centre's design allows for flexibility in meeting the many client requests.

## Arbor Memorial Services

Arbor Memorial Services, a leader in the Canadian funeral industry, holds a market share of 9.2%. In 2008, this represented **21,822** funerals handled, compared with 21,625 in 2007. In 2008, total corporate revenue was \$236.6 million, up 3.2 % from 2007.

Present in every province of Canada except for Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, Arbor has 41 cemeteries, 26 crematoriums, four reception centres and 87 funeral homes.

Its head office is in Toronto. The corporation is also listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Arbor's funeral homes were developed to meet the specific needs of the different cultural communities and religious groups in Canada.

Arbor owns two funeral companies in Calgary, one of them located in a cemetery, as well as one other cemetery. Eden Brook Memorial Gardens is a cemetery and crematorium. As this site does not have a funeral home, we did not visit it during our tour of funeral companies. Appended, however, you will find the information available on the Arbor website.

Arbor has a website whose search engine allows us to identify the funeral companies for a given location. Once the companies are identified, we have access to their personalized page. We placed an e-mail request to four funeral companies that did not post their prices on the Internet. The purpose of this request was to obtain information and prices. Leyden's is the only company that responded to us. Although they did not provide us with a detailed price list, they answered our e-mail within 24 hours and gave us the price ranges for each type of funeral service.

One of the services offered by Arbor is the *AfterCare Program*. This program allows the bereaved family to receive post-funeral visits from professionals. These visits allow the bereaved to receive literature to guide them in their mourning process, but also referrals to other community organizations if more significant needs should arise.

Leyden's Funeral Home  
304 - 18th Avenue S.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 228-4422  
[www.leydens.com](http://www.leydens.com)

M



In operation since 1930, this funeral company is located at the edge of downtown Calgary in a residential ward. The facilities are modern and newly renovated. This site offers parking for close to 40 vehicles, with parking also available in the adjacent streets. The brick building houses a garage and a crematorium. The grounds are landscaped.

The company has a chapel, a reception hall, visitation rooms and a lounge for intimate, private family meetings. There is total seating for 200 persons. The interior is luxurious, tranquil and carefully decorated. Gentle background music creates a soothing ambiance.

On our unannounced visit we were received by two young female employees -- a contrast to the other sites visited, given that the average age of funeral industry employees is among the highest in the working world. They took the time to receive us and to provide us with information and prices. However, when we asked for more information on the various funeral options, the literature was not available on site, so they asked us to come back later in the day to pick up some brochures.

Mountain View Memorial Gardens &  
Funeral Home  
1515 - 100th Street S.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 272-9824  
[www.mountainviewmemorial.ca](http://www.mountainviewmemorial.ca)

L



In operation since 1952, this cemetery is located at the eastern limits of the city of Calgary, in a rural zone. It has different sections for different faiths: Orthodox, Buddhist and Catholic. In 1985 the funeral home was incorporated on the site to add value to it and ensure that the cemetery was still meeting families' needs.

The external environment is tranquil and peaceful. Trees, flowers and ponds make for a preferred location. The advantage of a site like this is that it can offer everything under one roof, from funeral services to burial or placement in a niche.

The brick building is of superior quality with a canopy, a crematorium and a patio for outdoor gatherings in fine weather. Parking is plentiful close to the building, and unlimited if one considers that the entire cemetery is available.

The facilities are modern and include a chapel, visitation rooms, a lounge for intimate private family meetings, and a reception hall. The centre has a seating capacity of 500.

## McInnis & Holloway

This funeral company, owned by local interests, has been serving the residents of Calgary since 1903. It has seven service points in all, five of which are located in Calgary and two in suburbs of Calgary: Cochrane and Airdrie. This makes it the largest funeral company in Calgary in terms of service points.

The Calgary facilities are of recent construction and very high quality. McInnis & Holloway stands out from its competitors in its offer of services, which extends beyond funeral services as such.

The **Memorial Tree Program** involves planting a tree in memory of each deceased person entrusted to the company. This program began in 1996 with the cooperation of the City of Calgary, which permits the planting of trees in public parks. From 1996 to 2006, McInnis & Holloway planted 22,200 trees in what they call memorial forests. On average, the company plants 2,200 trees per year.

**Olive Branch Support Services** consist in various services to assist with post-bereavement follow-up. Each family served by the company can have access to post-funeral **family follow-up** and literature. For cases that require more intensive intervention, a **referral and support service** is also offered. An education service for groups such as community, church, school and hospital groups is offered. The services include literature and lectures on various bereavement-related topics. A **library** containing many works on death and mourning is also available for families and community groups.

The company claims to specialize in serving cultural communities. It can integrate funeral customs and rites in the religious celebrations of the various communities present in Calgary (Indian, Chinese, Jewish).

On the McInnis & Holloway website, we count 113 employees distributed as follows: 18 funeral directors, 38 funeral employees, 25 administrative employees, three graphic designers, four florists, four funeral prearrangement retailers, three Olive Branch Program employees, four Family Care Program employees, 13 maintenance employees, and one music coordinator.

The company has a high-quality website that contains a lot of information. However a request made by Internet for information and a price list went unanswered. This leads us to question the company's capacity for Web response to its clientele.

Below you will find a description of each of the five service points in Calgary.

Chapel of the Bells  
2720 Centre Street North  
Calgary  
(403) 276-2296  
www.mcinninsandholloway.com

A



This funeral home is the group's most recent in Calgary. A prestigious brick building with a garage, a canopy and landscaping. A parking lot with about 30 spaces is available on the actual grounds, and another parking lot adjoining this building is landscaped and has a capacity of about 40. This service point is located on a major artery in a residential ward. Visibility is very good. The two-storey building contains a chapel, a reception hall with fireplace, and a crematorium. This building also houses the Olive Branch library.

Crowfoot Chapel  
82 Crowfoot Circle N.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 241-0044  
www.mcinninsandholloway.com

B



This service point is located in the city's northwest in a major commercial area. Close to the highway and a bus and train stop, it is easy to access. The building itself is made of brick and very recent. It is complemented by landscaping, a garage and two canopies. A large parking lot of about 50 spaces is also available. Neighbours include the following businesses: service station, collision centre, automobile dealership, etc.

There is a chapel with a capacity of about 60 persons which is also used for visitations for large families. A small visitation room reserved for viewings by the immediate family, a reception hall and a selection room are also available.

Eastside Memorial Chapel  
5388 Memorial Drive N.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 248-8585  
www.mcinninsandholloway.com



C

This service point is located in the northeast of the city. A recent brick building that is as prestigious as the two previous ones. Parking for about 60 is available. The grounds are fenced off.

This site is the group's first "community concept" funeral home. This service point was developed giving consideration to the needs of the various neighbouring cultural communities with specific customs and traditions. Hence it can accommodate the ceremonies of all faiths and cultures. There is a fireplace and a games room for children, and it is possible to keep overnight vigil over the deceased. There is a crematorium on the premises.

Fish Creek Chapel  
14441 Bannister Road S.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 256-9575  
www.mcinninsandholloway.com



D

This service point is located in the city's southeast. Despite proximity to a major artery, it has poor visibility. The brick building includes a garage and canopy. The huge parking lot divided into two sections must have about 135 spaces.

The service point is within walking distance of Fish Creek Provincial Park, where the company has created a Memorial Forest.

This service point contains a chapel and a reception hall.

Park Memorial Chapel  
5008 Elbow Drive S.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 243-8200  
www.mcinninsandholloway.com

E



This service point, in the southwest of the city, is probably the group's oldest. Located close to a major artery and a bus stop, it is easy to access. It also has good visibility. A brick building with garage. Landscaping is prestigious and includes a water fountain which adds richness to the whole. A big parking lot of about 100 spaces is available, in addition to the parking possible in neighbouring streets.

This service point contains a chapel, a reception hall and a flower store.

## Heritage Funeral Services

This funeral company has two service points: a funeral home in the northwest of the city, and a crematorium in Queen's Park Cemetery.

The company has a poor-quality website that contains a lot of information. An Internet request for information and a price list went unanswered. This leads us to question the company's capacity for Web response to its clientele.

We were warmly welcomed on our unannounced visit to this funeral company. In 45 minutes we were able to obtain information and prices and tour the facilities.

Below is a description of each of the two service points.

Heritage Funeral Home  
1708 - 16th Avenue N.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 299-0100  
www.calgaryfunerals.com

H



This funeral service point is no match for the facilities of McInnis & Holloway, SCI or Arbor. The company is located on Calgary's Highway 1 with its three lanes in each direction. Visibility is good but access is difficult for persons driving from the west of the city. However there is a pedestrian crossing over the highway that is close to the company.

The outer appearance of the building is outdated. It is a brick construction that has been repainted. The roof is cedar shingle. A parking lot with about 30 spaces is available. A few shrubs embellish the landscaping.

Inside, the service point has a chapel that can seat 180, a refreshments room and a little room for intimate visitations. There is no reception hall, but the premises can accommodate a group of 75 or less. A selection room containing about 20 caskets completes the visit. Furnishings and decoration are also outdated.

Calgary Crematorium & Funeral Services  
3219 - 4th Street N.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 299-0111  
[www.calgaryfunerals.com](http://www.calgaryfunerals.com)



Situated in Calgary's Queen's Park Cemetery, this service point, more recent than Heritage, contains a crematorium, large chapel and two columbariums. Thanks to the great popularity of the first columbarium, in operation since 1970, the second was added in 1994. Both are of high quality. The premises are soothing and luxurious. Only natural flowers and plants are accepted.

The recently renovated chapel has a capacity of 150. The seats are removable and the room can be converted to a reception hall in just a few minutes if necessary. It is also possible to show videos, since the chapel is equipped with a screen and speakers.

A small office used for family consultations can also be converted for viewing of the deceased and visitation by the immediate family.

The premises are decorated with taste and refinement.

The building is brick and has a canopy. Fruit trees, picnic tables and a bike path through the cemetery give the place the appearance of a garden cemetery. There is also a large parking lot with about 40 spaces.

It should be noted that website as indicated on the leaflet, [www.calgarycolumbarium.ca](http://www.calgarycolumbarium.ca), was not functional when we were doing our research.

## Pierson's Funeral Service

The Piersons have been serving the residents of Calgary since 1960. In 1983 they decided to open their own funeral company. Some time later, they had the opportunity to acquire a flower shop with a solid reputation, established since 1957. The Pierson family also made an important strategic partnership with the Rocky View

Garden of Peace municipal cemetery, where they lease and operate the funeral home and crematorium. Hence the company operates two service points.

The company's mission as advertised in its corporate literature is: *To deliver, with pride, exceptional funeral and related services to Calgary and area communities, exercising honesty, integrity and compassion in all aspects of our business.*

The company has a good-quality website that contains a lot of information. An Internet request for information and a price list went unanswered. This leads us to question the company's capacity for Web response to its clientele.

The website refers to nine employees. We have in hand two business cards of two employees who are not mentioned on the site. Does the company now have 11 employees? Is the website not up to date?

Pierson's Funeral Service claims to be able to serve different cultural and religious communities, e.g. Buddhist, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, etc. Calgary being a cosmopolitan city, the company has become specialized in repatriating the deceased to the country of origin.

Below is a description of each of the two service points.

Pierson's Funeral Service - Forest  
Lawn Chapel  
4121 - 17th Avenue S.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 235-3602  
[www.piersons.ca](http://www.piersons.ca)

N



This service point was entirely renovated and expanded in 1994. The visual appearance of the building from the outside is excellent. The outer surface has an acrylic skim coating. The flower shop adjoins the building.

Visibility is very good. 17th Avenue is a major commercial artery. There is a bus stop just across from the company. Opposite the funeral centre is a school. The site has a small parking lot that can accommodate about 30 vehicles. The outdoor sign says "*Quality is our speciality*".

This service point includes a chapel with seating for 60, to which 25 more spaces can be added. This chapel is multifunctional, meaning that it can be converted into a reception hall if necessary, as well as a visitation room for large families. The service point also contains two visitation rooms and a selection room. Although the renovations are fairly recent, we note that the decoration and furnishing are mid-range in quality.

Our unannounced visit was well received: we met with the president and co-owner of the company, who took the time to sit down with us, present the different possible options, provide us with a price list and show us around the premises.

Pierson's Funeral Service - Garden of Peace Chapel  
16th Avenue and Garden Road N.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 293-9515  
[www.piersons.ca](http://www.piersons.ca)



O

This service point is located in Rocky View Garden of Peace Cemetery, which is owned by the municipality of Rocky View. It is located at the east end of the city of Calgary, in a rural area. The Piersons lease and operate the funeral home and the crematorium.

This service point is rather small compared with all the others visited in Calgary. The brick building has a canopy. There is plenty of parking. A chapel is also available.

## Companies specializing in cremation

Many companies offer low-cost cremation services that require but very little infrastructure. Some specialize in the sale of funeral services in the home and have sales teams that cover the city of Calgary.

Three of these companies are on the list of funeral companies of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board (AFSRB). They publish their prices on their respective websites.

Commemorative Services  
5502 - 2nd Street S.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 265-1199  
[www.commemorativeservices.ca](http://www.commemorativeservices.ca)



**P**

Located in a light industry sector, surrounded by little manufacturing plants or automobile repair shops, this building is fairly recent and in good taste. The business is not very visible and does not benefit from major artery traffic.

The parking lot is small, accommodating about 10 vehicles at most. However it is possible to park on the streets around the building.

The modern, contemporary-style facilities include visitation rooms, a little reception room and a selection room.

The company also has an average-quality website that includes a complete price list. There is also a virtual cemetery on this website.

Peace of Mind Cremations and  
Funeral Services  
5502 - 2nd Street S.W.  
Calgary  
(403) 258-3808  
[www.peaceofmindcremation.ca](http://www.peaceofmindcremation.ca)

**F**

The address provided by the Peace of Mind and AFSRB websites is the same as Commemorative Services. At that address, however, there is no sign to indicate this business. As a result we were unable to review this funeral home.

The website is of poor quality. It contains only the price lists and a justification for the lower prices.

Simply Cremation and Funeral Services  
103 - 3424 27th Street N.E.  
Calgary  
(403) 265-6393  
[www.simplycremations.com](http://www.simplycremations.com)

G



Located in an office building in a semi-industrial commercial zone, this funeral company has limited visibility. From the outside, the facilities appear to be of poor quality. There is a lot of parking around the building which is shared with the other businesses in the building.

Inside, we found a waiting room, a small room for family consultations, and a small chapel seating 30 persons which can also serve as a visitation room. Furnishing and decoration are simple but in good taste.

The website is of average quality. It contains the price list and death notices, and mentions that the company has its own cremator, which partly explains its low prices.

In the yellow pages we found companies not on the list of the Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board (AFSRB). Very often only a telephone number is available. As a result, we did not review these companies:

- Personal Alternative Funeral Service. [www.personalalternative.com](http://www.personalalternative.com). Also present in Red Deer, British Columbia and the United States.
- Horizons Funeral Services: 403-264-0694
- Planned Passing Inc.: 271-8896
- Party of your life: 540-9339
- Calgary Burial and Cremation Society
- First Memorial Funeral Services: 403-216-2222

## Ethnic or religious enterprises

We found one firm in this category: the Jewish Memorial Chapel. It is not listed with the AFSRB.

## Memorial societies

Memorial societies are non-profit organizations that serve members who want to reduce stress and tension for their family by pre-planning funeral services that are simple, dignified and as economical as possible. Their main role is to negotiate funeral packages and special prices with funeral subcontractors on behalf of their members.

Calgary has one memorial society: the **Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society (CCMS)**. In operation since 1966, this non-sectoral non-profit cooperative is managed by a 12-member volunteer board of directors.

At the moment the CCMS has over 23,000 members. A lifetime share costs \$20 per adult. Children aged 18 and under are included in their parents' membership. An administration fee of \$25 is also payable at the time of the funeral or the signing of a prearrangement.

The CCMS maintains close relations with the cooperatives in its community. For example, CCMS membership forms are available in all CO-OP stores. An article on the CCMS was also published in the spring 2009 issue of the Calgary CO-OP members' magazine, *CO-OP News*. A copy of this article is appended.

Until December 2008, the CCMS served the municipalities of Brooks, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Pincher Creek and Taber. Since the provider agreements expired on December 31, 2008, the CCMS has renegotiated them. Being unable to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement with two funeral service providers, the CCMS no longer has subcontractors to serve the municipalities of Brooks and Pincher Creek.

The funeral services subcontractor in Calgary has been McInnis & Holloway since 1992. Between November 2007 and October 2008, the CCMS recruited 1,783 new members. Of the 23,000 total members, the CCMS estimates that nearly 90% live in Calgary. In 2007, 561 members died and used the CCMS's services. This figure rose by 12% to 631 in 2008. According to the CCMS registers, 77% of the members who died in 2008 made use of cremation.

The CCMS employs one part-time resource (20 hours per week) who is responsible for recruitment.

The CCMS is in good financial health. Donations are made every year to different community organizations.

# Funeral Practices

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## a) Physical facilities

We noted during our different visits to funeral companies that the visitation rooms are very small, and can serve only the immediate family of the deceased.

Chapels, on the other hand, are very common, and can accommodate between 100 and 275 persons. The offices for family consultations and the showrooms are of normal size. Reception halls are also quite widespread.

## b) Types of funerals

According to the Cremation Association of North America, the cremation rate in Alberta was 59% in 2005. We do not have the figure for the city of Calgary, but can readily suppose that its rate is higher. Cremation as a mode of disposition is traditionally more common in the large urban agglomerations.

Calgary residents also enjoy a good service offering from many companies that specialize in direct cremation (cremation of the body with no visitation and no ceremony).

## c) Prices

The average price of a funeral in Alberta in 2006 was \$6,370. This item of information is not made public for each municipality. Hence we do not have an average price of a funeral for Calgary.

Our visits to the different service points allowed us to get the players' prices. In most cases, the names used to designate services are different from one company to the next, so it is difficult to compare prices for the same types of services with any certainty.

The brochures that we collected showing the price lists can be inspected in an appendix.

In the following table you will find a price comparison for four categories of services. The first category is direct (basic) cremation, which consists in appropriation of the body and cremation. There is no visitation and no ceremony. The second category is the memorial service, which also consists in appropriation of the body followed by cremation, but with a ceremony in the presence of the ashes. The ceremonial service involves viewing of the body, followed by a ceremony in the presence of the body and then cremation. Lastly, the traditional funeral consists in appropriation of

the body, viewing of the body, and a ceremony in the presence of the body, followed by burial. We also noted that two providers offered direct interment services with less ceremony.

As for the price analysis, we find that SCI is the provider with the highest prices. In the table we have separated the prices for comparison purposes, but in reality prices are established as a package which the client cannot modify without a penalty. For a traditional funeral, then, the package costs \$11,250. This package includes the casket, vault, bouquet of flowers for the casket, and funeral stationery. SCI is followed by McInnis & Holloway, Heritage, Pierson's and Arbor.

In summary, having identified SCI as having the highest prices, we can say that the other major players -- McInnis & Holloway, Heritage, Pierson's and Arbor -- have a price list that is fairly similar. At the bottom of the list are the companies that specialize in direct cremations. As a rule, it is the clients of the memorial society that obtain the best prices.

## Price Comparisons for Funeral Services Providers in Calgary

	Service Corporation International JK	Arbor LM	McInnis & Holloway ABCDE	Heritage HI	Pierson's Funeral Service NO	Commemorative Services P	Piece of Mind Cremations F	Simply Cremation and Funeral Services G	Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society
<b>Basic Cremation</b>									
Professional Services					1190		665	495	
Cremation fee		495	595	585	490		630	375	included
Cremation container		not included			not included	included	included	from \$150 to \$1,228	included
Basic urn		not included			not included	included	included	not included	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2455</b>	<b>2420</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>\$1,825 to 2,785</b>	<b>1295</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>875</b>
<b>Memorial Service</b>									
Professional Services	included	included		included			included	included	
Cremation container	not included	not included		not included	not included	included	included	not included	included
Basic urn	not included	not included		not included	not included	included	included	not included	
Cremation fee	695	495	595	585	490		included	included	included
<b>Total</b>	<b>5190</b>	<b>4235</b>	<b>4935</b>	<b>4460</b>	<b>\$3,770 to 4,160</b>	<b>\$4,155 to 5,115</b>	<b>2150</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>1385</b>
<b>Ceremonial Service</b>									
Professional Services	included	included	included		included		included		
Funeral coach	included	included			included		included		included
Rental casket	not included	not included		not included	not included		included	not included	included
Cremation container	not included	not included		not included	not included		included	not included	included
Cremation fee	695	495	595	585	490		included	included	included
<b>Total</b>	<b>6690</b>	<b>4905</b>	<b>4960</b>	<b>5360</b>	<b>5925</b>		<b>2995</b>	<b>2130</b>	<b>3495</b>
<b>Traditionnal Funeral (Burial)</b>									
Professional Services	included	included		included	included	included			
Casket	not included	not included	not included	not included	not included	included			
Viewing	included	included	included	included	included	included			
Vault						included			
<b>Total</b>	<b>5995</b>	<b>4355</b>	<b>5845</b>	<b>5645</b>	<b>5435</b>	<b>\$6035 to \$7725</b>			
Graveside service				325					
<b>Basic Burial</b>									
Professional Services							665		included
Casket							not included		included
Vault									
<b>Total</b>							<b>665</b>		<b>\$1,425 to 1,590</b>
Graveside service							150		

#### d) Market breakdown

The number of deaths handled by funeral services providers is not usually published, so it is difficult to establish with certainty the number of funerals handled by each player. To establish the market shares held by each one, we worked with the death notices published on their website and in local newspapers. The market shares presented below are therefore estimates.

Providers	Market share (%)
Direct cremation providers	30
McInnis & Holloway	30 - 40
Arbor	15
SCI	10 - 15
Pierson's	5 - 10
Heritage	5 - 10

While these are estimates, we can support these figures with the reasoning that cremation constitutes a large proportion of funeral practices. Many death notices in newspapers do not cite a funeral company when identifying to whom the management of the funeral was assigned. In such situations, there will be only a memorial mass or a celebration of the life of the deceased. The implication is that the families have chosen funeral service providers that specialize in direct cremation.

McInnis & Holloway, with its five service points in Calgary alone, mentions on its website that it handles between 120 and 150 deaths per month. This would suggest a market share in the area of 30% to 40%.

Next, the multinationals SCI and Arbor hold between 10% and 15% of the market apiece. The two corporations own two service points each.

We estimate that the smaller providers such as Pierson's and Heritage each hold a market share of between 5% and 10%.

#### e) Regulations

Funeral services in Alberta are governed by the *Funeral Services Business Licensing Regulation*. The Alberta Funeral Services Regulatory Board sees that the law is enforced and grants the funeral company and crematorium operating licences, funeral director licences, embalmer licences and permits for prearrangement sellers.

The regulations cover the customary sanitary standards for preservation and disposition of human remains, practical guides for funeral directors, as well as the depositing in trust of prearrangement contracts.

A holdback of 15% may be made by the funeral home after the 30-day cancellation period without penalty. Interest accumulated in trust remains the property of the buyer in full until time of death. Funeral homes must remit a price list at the request of any consumer. However, the great diversity in the presentation of these price lists poses a problem for consumers, because the names are different and do not necessarily cover the same services.

A copy of these regulations is appended.

## Feasibility of a funeral cooperative project

For a new funeral cooperative to be able to quickly take its place in an ultra-competitive market, it must necessarily be supported by a sizeable membership base. But since recruitment normally takes place through personalized contacts, the task would seem to be colossal or flatly unrealistic in a market like Calgary, before one might hope to recruit a sufficiently large critical mass to generate sales that can guarantee the continuity of the cooperative.

At maturity (15 to 20 years after its founding), a funeral cooperative should target membership in the area of 10% of the total population. Over a 15-year period, it would therefore be necessary to recruit close to 7,000 members a year to reach this objective. As it is unrealistic to think that a promising project can be financed without this significant membership base, a new funeral cooperative will necessarily have to partner with well-established local organizations that share its values.

### **The Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society as partner**

This organization, with its 23,000 members, 20,000 of them in Calgary, has certain values very close to those of the funeral cooperatives, including:

- no-pressure sales and respect for the consumer
- keep prices reasonable
- local ownership and democratic operation
- mission of education and responsible consumption.

Under its current mode of operation, the society recovers only \$25 per funeral it assigns to its subcontractors, plus autonomous dues income of \$20 for each annual membership. With this very meagre revenue, the Memorial Society is managed at arm's length by its part-time employee and the 12 board members.

The Memorial Society's current dependence on a private firm, whatever it may be, makes its relations with its members weaker. What would happen if the private companies no longer wanted to contract with it? If the McInnis & Holloway group were sold to a multinational (SCI or Arbor)?

With the Society's advertised price structure, we estimate that it leaves a gross profit margin of 50% to its subcontractors. Assuming 600 funerals annually at \$1,400 average revenue per funeral, this would thus amount to over \$400,000 that it transfers to third parties. Clearly, this kind of revenue would quickly consolidate the business plan of a new cooperative.

One of the concerns that the members of the CCMS board of directors must have is the recent agreement reached between CCMS and McInnis & Holloway. The price agreement is valid until December 31, 2012. It should be determined whether there is a no-competition clause in the agreement, we should focus on the possible consequences of a business start-up offering funeral services, in whole or in part.

### **The cooperative project**

The cooperative project presented here assumes that the Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society starts up a funeral cooperative from its own membership. For Calgary, there would be no more subcontractors, since the funeral cooperative would be the designated stakeholder serving the members in Calgary. To repatriate the revenue from its market operations, the new cooperative will necessarily have to propose physical facilities that permit it to offer full services to all clientele. At a minimum, such a project should include:

- Cremator
- Multifunctional chapel (convertible to a reception room)
- Visitation rooms (sizes according to local uses)
- Offices and selection room
- Adequate parking
- Columbarium (if permitted by regulations).

### **Location criteria**

The project should ideally be located in downtown Calgary, on a busy artery where commercial visibility would be satisfactory. A study of the different city wards with a concentration of persons aged 65 and over combined with an above-average growth rate should also be considered in order to determine an appropriate location. The degree of concentration of members of the Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society in certain sectors of Calgary could be another criterion to be considered to ensure quick development of members loyalty.

### **Market penetration**

If the new funeral cooperative succeeded in winning the 20,000 members of the Memorial Society fairly quickly, it could expect to handle around 450 funerals per year by its third year of operation, representing close to 9% of the Calgary market. With an aggressive communication and development plan, the first two years could

permit a gradual increase (250 and 350 funerals annually) toward meeting this objective.

### **Project leadership**

If the Memorial Society decides to commit to the approach that we propose in our study, it would be desirable for it to be supported by leaders from other cooperative communities, who would bolster the current team of directors by segmenting responsibilities so as to permit the project to take shape expeditiously.

Of the organizations that we see as ideal partners in this development and mobilization project, we think that the following might be willing to mandate persons on their directorial teams to support the Memorial Society:

- Alberta Community and Co-operative Association
- First Calgary Trust
- The housing cooperatives
- Co-operators
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- Calgary Co-op

Most of these organizations are well established, and will definitely be able to identify resource persons on their staff who could support the project.

### **Project financing**

Among the financial organizations, the federal government's Cooperative Development Initiative offers, on certain conditions, grants of up to \$75,000 for these kinds of projects. The credit unions certainly offer in their programs or those of their affiliated members possibilities for venture capital financing to support such a project.

### **Alternative projects**

#### **Plan B**

The Calgary Co-operative Memorial Society maintains close ties to the cooperative community of Calgary. One alternative to the project of starting up a funeral cooperative through the CCMS alone would be to start a second-level cooperative that would be owned by the various Calgary cooperatives. That way, instead of having some 20,000 members at start-up, the funeral cooperative would serve all the members of its owner cooperatives. If we consider the membership of the CCMS, First Calgary and Calgary Co-op alone, we already have over 100,000 indirect members that could be served by the cooperative. In addition to starting up with an attractive membership base and the possibility of handling more deaths, the funeral

cooperative would be supported by owners who are in good financial health. Financial risk would thus be shared among many partners.

### **Plan C**

Since two thirds of the members of the CCMS opt for cremation as the mode of final disposition, another alternative would be to open a crematorium with a chapel that can be converted to a reception room. However, the idea of being unable to offer traditional funeral services would require the CCMS to continue contracting with private providers within the territory. These might rebel at seeing the CCMS open a crematorium, thereby depriving them of close to 500 deaths per year. As a result they might decide to boycott the CCMS and do not respect their contract.

### **An achievable project**

The project of creating a funeral cooperative in Calgary by partnering with the CCMS is perfectly achievable. Naturally it will require a good deal of effort, but the results should be very positive if the entire cooperative movement of Calgary gets behind this project, which will benefit the entire community.

This would be a brilliant demonstration of resumption of control of a good deal of the local funeral industry.

Appendix 1  
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Map of Calgary (Wards)

## Appendix 2

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Location of funeral services providers

## Appendix 3

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### Information on Eden Brook Cemetery (Arbor)

## Appendix 4

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Article on the CCMS published in the *Co-op News*

## Appendix 5

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Price lists of funeral services providers

Appendix 6  
-  
Funeral Services Act