

Bereavement Information for Canada

Prepared by
British Consular Services Canada

www.gov.uk/government/world/canada

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Information Source: Consular Guidance & Local Information

The death of a relative or friend is always distressing. But if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems. Consular Directorate in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and High Commission and Consulates General in Canada are ready to help in any way that they can. You may be uncertain what to do next or who to contact for advice. These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. While care has been taken in compiling these notes, no legal liability for their contents is accepted by the British High Commission or Consulates General in Canada or HM Government.

You should be aware that procedures in Canada might differ to those in the United Kingdom. While we understand your need to make arrangements as quickly as possible, this may not always be possible.

The use of the terms body, body parts, remains, deceased etc. are not meant to offend you in any way. We realise that we are referring to your loved one and we mean no disrespect to the person you have lost.

STANDARD PROCEDURES

In Canada it is not necessary for the deceased to be identified by the next of kin. Identification can be carried out by means of documentation such as a passport or driving license, fingerprints, dental records or DNA. This process could take up to a few months.

In general Canadian undertakers are modern, well-equipped companies and used to working with foreigners.

Following the death of a British national in Canada, their next of kin, or a formally appointed representative, must decide whether to repatriate the deceased to the UK, or carry out a local burial or cremation. If the deceased was covered by travel insurance, it is important for next of kin to contact the insurance company without delay. If there is no insurance cover, the cost of repatriation or burial will need to be met by the family. Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor our High Commission or British Consulates General in Canada have budgets to meet these costs.

If the next of kin is in the UK the country case work team, based in the UK, will assist the family informing them of how they wish to proceed with the cremation or burial, where they wish this to take place and details of who is taking responsibility for the costs involved.

It is important to remember that if the deceased was travelling with a tour operator, they can be a valuable source of assistance and advice.

MORTUARY FACILITIES

There are mortuaries at most hospitals throughout Canada. The standards are similar to those within UK morgues.

BURIAL, CREMATION OR REPATRIATION

A body is usually released for burial, cremation or repatriation after the death certificate has been issued, or on completion of the autopsy. Funeral homes are the local equivalents to UK undertakers. They provide a full range of funeral, burial and cremation services. Many Canadian funeral homes act as agents for British funeral undertakers offering an international repatriation service.

If the deceased is covered by travel insurance, the insurance company will normally have a standing agreement with an international funeral director in Britain to arrange repatriations. If the

deceased is not covered by insurance, the next of kin will need to appoint an undertaker in the Canada or an international funeral director themselves.

In certain circumstances immediate repatriation may not always be possible. Our consular staff will try and inform next of kin as soon as possible if this is the case.

For additional information visit our guide on [Gov.UK for death abroad](#).

TRANSPORTATION OF HUMAN REMAINS

It is best to check airport authorities guidance regarding transportation and shipping of human remains.

INQUESTS AND POST-MORTEMS

An autopsy is not always mandatory for foreign nationals who die in Canada. Autopsy is required for all homicides and suspicious deaths, most accidents and suicides, and some deaths due to natural causes. Autopsies are carried out at the Coroner's Office and at most hospitals - usually within 24 hours of death.

Organs are removed temporarily to extract samples for examination. If the deceased was a permanent resident of Canada and had consented to donate organs after death, then these might be given to patients awaiting transplants. When the autopsy is completed a body is usually released for burial, cremation or repatriation.

A verbal preliminary autopsy report giving the cause of death is usually available on request from the coroner within 2 days. A written report can take several months. In Ontario inquests only take place if death occurred in police custody - and for a small number of deaths at work places.

POLICE/JUDICIAL INQUIRIES RELATING TO SUSPICIOUS DEATHS OR ROAD ACCIDENT

Police in the relevant jurisdiction will investigate a suspicious death or a road traffic accident; when the investigation is complete, a report citing a suspected culprit(s) is passed to the Prosecutor. The victim's family is entitled to a copy of the report and to comment.

The Prosecutor will then decide whether further enquiries are necessary, or whether to submit the case to the Court for trial. This can be a lengthy process, often subject to delay. Even after the Court has reached a verdict an appeal can be submitted to the Superior court of justice. Each Province operates its own legal aid and criminal compensation scheme.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Personal effects are normally returned to next of kin - or their authorised representative - upon presentation of verifiable ID. The personal effects may be held at the hospital, coroner's office, police station or the deceased's former place of residence.

DONATION OF BODIES TO MEDICAL SCIENCE

A body donation can be conducted at the time of death, or can form part of a person's last will and testament.

It is a very straightforward process that begins with a telephone call to a medical school in any of the provinces. Hospitals will be of great assistance with donations of bodies to medical science.

The organization or institution you opt to donate with will determine how the registration and donation program works. When a death occurs and the body is to be donated to science, a medical school should be contacted immediately. They will arrange to collect the deceased from the place of death, coordinate the anatomical donation, and arrange the cremation of the

deceased following the donation.

CONSULAR DEATH REGISTRATION AND LOCAL DEATH CERTIFICATE

A death certificate is completed by the attending physician or by the coroner and then sent to the Registrar General. A death certificate, citing the likely cause of death, will be issued within 48 hours of death. Where cause of death is uncertain, this process can take much longer. We do not issue death certificates in Canada.

Consular Registrations are made by [Overseas Registration Unit \(ORU\)](#) in the UK. However, they **do not** carry out consular registrations for Canada. This is because of the historical links Canada has with the UK and because Canadian authorities provide a similar standard of civil registration as in the UK.

The death certificate issued by the Canadian authorities will be sufficient for all purposes in the UK.

BRITISH PASSPORT CANCELLATION

In order to avoid identity fraud a deceased person's passport should be sent to the British High Commission in Ottawa or passport office in the UK for cancellation. Next of kin can request the passport to be returned. Likewise if the passport has been lost or mislaid, relatives should get in contact with either the British High Commission or passport office for instructions on reporting the loss of the passport.