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To: Funeral Directors via Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO)

From: Alexandra Schmidt  
Deputy Registrar General

Date: May 20, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Planning – Completing Death Registration Documents using Electronic Signatures

I am writing to you as a follow-up to the memo dated April 6, 2020 regarding the interim process to support the issuance of burial permits. Thank you for your continued support as we implement these interim processes. Below is additional information regarding the interim death registration process and the use of electronic signatures.

### **A) Electronic Signatures on Death Registration Documents**

As a temporary measure to further promote physical distancing, electronic signatures will be accepted on death registration documents, namely, the Statement of Death (SD) and the Medical Certificate of Death (MCOB). An electronic signature may consist of a name typed in or a signature that is scanned and/or created through a computer program.

#### **Medical Certificate of Death:**

A fillable PDF of the MCOB has been created for physicians and nurse practitioners as part of the interim process to facilitate timely completion of the form. Physicians and nurse practitioners will be able to complete the fillable PDF and sign it electronically, if they wish; however, they must still print out the MCOB and provide the paper form to the funeral director when collecting the remains. Enclosed is a sample of the fillable PDF, for reference. This is different than the electronic Medical Certificate of Death (eMCOB) that is being used by coroners.

#### **Statement of Death:**

If a funeral home chooses to allow for informants to electronically sign a Statement of Death (SD), please consider the following before doing so:

- Funeral directors should send the SD to the informant through a secure method (e.g., encrypted email) to sign electronically, if the informant cannot be physically present. Funeral directors should not pre-sign the SD (by hand or electronically) before sending the SD to the informant until they send it back to them with their electronic signature.

- Some electronic signature programs leave extraneous markings on the SD (e.g., notations outside of the signature area). Certified copies of the SD are commonly issued to next-of-kin and estate administrators for settling estates. Extraneous markings may lead some stakeholders who require a certified copy to question the authenticity of the document, resulting in problems for the next-of-kin or estate administrator.
- Funeral homes will need to retain the supporting records and correspondence (e.g., emails exchanged with the informant) in respect of the electronic signature should there be concerns with the authenticity of the signature.

As a reminder, original registration documents will need to be sent to the municipality weekly, on a best effort basis, for processing. Also note, if an informant cannot be present to complete the SD or sign it electronically, a funeral director may sign as the informant.

### **B) Updates to the Electronic Medical Certificate of Death (eMCOD)**

On May 1, 2020, an Emergency Order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act was made to authorize nurses appointed under section 16.1 of the Coroners Act to complete, sign and copy an MCOD. As such, the eMCOD has been updated by changing the term "Coroner" to "Coroner / Coroner Investigator" in field 25 of the form and in the instructions.

Please note that prior to the form update (between May 1 and May 7, 2020), coroner investigators would have included "Coroner Investigator" in brackets next to their name in the certification section and would have selected the box labelled "Coroner". Further, these changes apply only to the eMCOD as nurses appointed as coroner investigators will only be using the eMCOD and not the fillable PDF/paper version.

Thank you for your continued cooperation. If you have any questions or require clarification regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact Melissa Power, acting Operations Manager at: (807) 343-7557.

Sincerely,



Alexandra Schmidt  
Deputy Registrar General / Director  
Thunder Bay Production and Verification Services Branch ServiceOntario

- c. Carey Smith, Bereavement Authority of Ontario  
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

Enclosure