

Highlights of the first Annual General Meeting for Funeral Co-operative of Ottawa

The Funeral Co-operative of Ottawa (FCO) held its first members' meeting on June 13, 2011 at the Canadian Co-operative Association's Offices at 275 Bank Street. Approximately 70 members attended the meeting. Highlights of the meeting were:

- A special presentation by Jacques Carrière, one of the founders of the Coopérative funéraire de l'Outaouais. He described the launch of their Co-op 30 years ago and shared some humorous stories about their early years. Their Co-op now has over 14,000 members and handles over 70% of all the funerals in their region of Western Quebec.
- Catherine Lee, the Funeral Co-operative of Ottawa's membership co-ordinator, reported that as of the date of this meeting we have 340 members. A fall membership campaign is planned in order to contact all of our current members and ask them to find one more member each.
- Mark Goldblatt, President of FCO, gave a progress report on behalf of the Board of Directors. Some of the activities of the Board included: preparing vision and mission statements to guide all of the Co-operative's actions in the future; legal incorporation of the Co-operative; development of by-laws; expansion of the Board from 5 to 10 people; preparation of a business plan; meeting with three potential lenders and securing an experienced auditor who has offered to audit the Co-op's finances for free during its first two years. We have been able to establish a line of credit at Alterna Credit Union and have joined the Quebec Federation of Funeral Co-ops which has given us the opportunity to participate in a Canada wide funeral co-operative conference.
- We are involved in complex discussions with the Ontario Board of Funeral Services (BOFS) to meet provincial regulations while offering a complete range of funeral arrangements without owning our own building. The BOFS is adamant that we must have our own funeral establishment in Ottawa which includes offices for our Funeral Director, a meeting room, preparation room and a show room. Under the regulations we will be able to arrange for visitations, religious services, receptions and memorial services by renting facilities in the community.
- There was a straw vote amongst the members present regarding the launch of partial services before having our funeral establishment in place. Of those present two-thirds thought we should proceed with partial services. Nevertheless, when this recommendation was brought back to the Board, after much discussion it was decided that it is in the Co-op's best interests to wait until we had our funeral establishment in place and then launch the Co-op with full services.
- The Co-op's Treasurer reported that the Co-op's finances are in good shape thanks to a grant from the federal government's Co-operative Development Initiative in the amount of \$45,500 as well as a grant from The Co-operators Insurance Group of \$15,000. The members approved the auditor's report to December 31, 2010.

The President thanked Marcel Guy, the manager of the Coopérative funéraire de l'Outaouais for his very helpful advice as well as counsel from the Quebec Federation of Funeral Co-ops and from Daniel Johnston, the Funeral Director of the Co-operative Funeral Home of Sudbury, Ontario, a funeral co-operative in operation since 1952.

The members meeting concluded with a resolution appointing Marcil Lavallée as the auditor for the next fiscal year and ratified that the current founding Board of Directors stay in place until the next members' meeting in June 2012.

The date for the next General Meeting of all members of the Funeral Co-operative of Ottawa has been set for Tuesday June 26, 2012. Location will be announced to members through special invitation.