



**The Corporation of the
Municipality of Mississippi Mills**

Council Meeting

Resolution Number 079-22

Title: Information List #05-22 Township of South Glengarry Resolution re: Abandoned Cemeteries

Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Moved by Councillor Holmes

Seconded by Councillor Dalgity

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the Municipality of Mississippi Mills hereby supports Prince Edward County's call for government action concerning the current legislation and regulations surrounding municipal requirements to take over and maintain abandoned operating cemeteries;

AND FURTHERMORE that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Minister of Government & Consumer Services, ROMA, the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus and all Ontario municipalities.

CARRIED

I, Casey Munro, Deputy Clerk for the Corporation of the Municipality of Mississippi Mills, do hereby certify that the above is a true copy of a resolution enacted by Council.



Casey Munro, Deputy Clerk



From the Office of the Mayor
The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward
Shire Hall, 332 Main St. Picton, ON K0K 2T0
T: 613.476.2148 x1001 | F: 613.476.5727
sferguson@pecounty.on.ca | www.thecounty.ca



December 6, 2021

Mayor Robin Jones
ROMA Chair
30 Bedford Street
P.O. Box 68
Westport, ON K0G 1X0

Sent by Email: rjones@villageofwestport.ca

Dear Mayor Jones:

RE: Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 and Ontario Regulations 30/11

I am writing you on behalf of the County of Prince Edward (PEC) to express our concerns about the current legislation and regulations that require municipalities to take over and maintain pioneer (closed) and abandoned operating cemeteries when volunteers or owners can no longer manage them. As with other rural communities in Ontario, PEC is facing increasing financial and operational pressures due to obligations the current legislation, the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 and Ontario Regulations 30/11, and believe that the magnitude of the problem warrants action.

We are asking that ROMA act on our collective behalf to find some solution to this growing financial obligation.

When municipalities take over the management of abandoned, closed or neglected cemeteries they must deal with the following:

- acquiring ownership of the cemetery land;
- there is no care and maintenance trust fund, or it is too small to generate the interest needed to cover annual maintenance costs (grass cutting, brushing, tree removal);
- the cemetery is full or closed so there is no revenue from sales of interments rights;
- the property has been neglected and needs extensive maintenance to bring into compliance with the legislative requirement of making a safe environment for visitors and workers – Trees & brush removed, monuments stabilized etc.; and
- the records of burials are incomplete or even nonexistent so if there is still room in the cemetery the selling of interment rights will be problematic.

The initial costs of assuming the cemeteries will vary on the size and condition of the cemetery being turned over however they can be quite substantial. Annual costs of maintaining a closed

or active cemetery, grass cutting, weed wiping, brushing repair of sunken graves, fencing, tree removal, monuments will also vary from cemetery to cemetery.

While we acknowledge there is some history and cultural significance to pioneer cemeteries, the care and maintenance costs are increasingly hard to justify to the tax-paying public who have little or no personal or emotional attachment to these abandoned properties. Many are small parcels of land in out of the way rural settings which are not easy to access. At a time when municipalities are recognizing and declaring a climate emergency, the energy and resources that are required for ongoing grass cutting and tree/vegetation maintenance and the resultant CO2 emissions is hard to justify to the public.

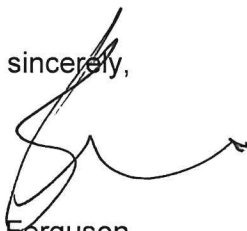
To use our current situation as an example, a list of cemeteries in Prince Edward County completed in the mid 1980's identified 76 cemeteries. Currently, PEC manages and operates 53 of those cemeteries; 46 are designated as pioneer (no longer open for sales) and 7 are active (open for sales and interment) and one for interment but no sales. Of the remaining 15 cemeteries, 3 have already inquired about the process for turning the cemetery over to the municipality.

We would like the government to consider the following:

- Develop a grant program that:
 - Provides seed money to properly fund the initial costs of taking over a cemetery; and
 - Annually helps cover the ongoing costs of maintenance and care that the legislation and regulations require.
- Change the legislation to provide relief to rural municipalities that cannot bear the costs downloaded to overburdened taxpayers. A consideration in this regard would be:
 - To allow municipalities the opportunity to choose whether there is any historical /cultural significance justifying taking it over.

We hope that action is taken to address the increasing financial and operational pressures due to obligations in the current legislation. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter further in a meeting with the goal of resolving these concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Ferguson
Mayor

c.c. Members of Council
M. Wallace, CAO
Hon. Ross Romano, Ministry of Government & Consumer Services
Hon. Todd Smith MPP, Bay of Quinte
Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus
Cemetery Advisory Committee