



April 29, 2021

Christopher Tyrell
Clerk of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A2

Dear Mr. Tyrell,

I am writing to provide an update on the efforts made by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) to date on the 20 recommendations outlined in the Annual Report released by the Auditor General on December 7, 2020 that are directed at or impact the BAO.

The BAO values the work conducted by the Auditor General as part of the Value-for-Money Audit and the findings contained in the annual report. We were particularly pleased to see the Auditor General found that the BAO worked quickly and closely with other key stakeholders to minimize the impact of a potential surge of deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic on the bereavement and health care sectors. Our Board of Directors and executive team are committed to ensuring that protecting Ontario consumers remains a top priority for the entire organization, especially in the context of the pandemic.

The BAO's commitment to addressing the recommendations has remained steadfast since the release of the report. We have developed a comprehensive action plan to address each of the recommendations that are directed at or impact the BAO, in a timely and responsive manner. We will be posting our plan publicly and reporting status against progress on a quarterly basis.

I am pleased to report that progress on a number of the recommendations has been made to date. For example, the BAO:

- Entered into a contract with KPMG to manage the implementation of the AG's recommendations.
- Connected with staff at the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SOLGEN), Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC), Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) with respect to the recommendations directed at the BAO and those ministries.

- Is obtaining secret shopper quotes from prospective firms who will help to identify and deter upselling at licensed establishments (ref #2.2).
- Sent a request to local Funeral Establishments and Transfer Service Operators in Dec 2020 to assist with identifying local cemetery management contact details (ref #3.1).
- Is undertaking a research campaign in which the BAO's licensing team is confirming or locating contact details for all cemetery operators that have not renewed their expired licences to determine the reason for non-compliance, plans for becoming licensed and target date to become licensed (ref #3.3).
- Is reaching out to the largest trust companies in Ontario to request that they provide their cemetery care and maintenance trust statements directly to the BAO (ref #4.1).
- Tracked all trigger events for inspections in a central repository, formalized meeting structure, created a Watchlist document, designated a note taker and developed an escalation process document (ref # 7.3).
- Shortened the existing one-year internal policy to follow up on significant non-compliance issues and deficiencies that are not corrected to within 6 months (ref #8.1).
- Established a central repository of active operator conditions to review problem files for non-compliant licensees (ref #8.2).
- Developed guidelines that outline duration and placement for Suspensions, Revocations, Conditions and Discipline of Registrar's actions on the BAO's website based on the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority's (RHRA's) model. These enforcement decisions remain on the BAO's public website pages or posts (ref #8.4).
- Implemented the use of time tracking software (BambooHR) for inspectors and developing written policies that require inspectors to document their time, location, details about workload (ref #9.1).
- Is conducting bi-annual performance reviews of inspectors (ref #9.6).
- Developed a report to assist the Compliance Manager's review of inspection-related documents. This report includes instructions or suggestions for the inspector and/or allows the Compliance Manager to sign off on the contents of the report to confirm and authorize completion (ref #9.3).
- Documented managerial reviews on each inspection file (ref #9.5).
- Hired an IT consultant to undertake an overhaul of the BAO's IT systems to support a number of key AG recommendations about data analytics and reporting (ref #11.2).
- Worked with the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Office of the Chief Coroner to review and update mass fatality plans (ref #12.1).
- Is creating a hybrid licence class (Restricted Transfer Service) using the BAO Registrar's conditions of licensure, that accommodates the realities of certain types of transfer services (i.e., unlicensed Islamic transfer service operators), and working with Humber College to develop modified transfer service education for these types of operators (ref #13.1).
- Is undertaking an email campaign to all class-1 licensed Funeral Operators to identify or verify status and/or record Hazardous Waste Information Network (HWIN) generator number in Oasis (ref #16.1).

- Is working with the Board of Directors to consider the recommendation to reduce the Board size (ref #19.5).
- Is working with the Board of Directors to ensure the reports provided by staff allow them to ensure the Bereavement Authority in meeting its mandate (ref #20.1).
- Developed Terms of Reference documents for the BAO's proposed Discipline and Appeal Committees and issued a call for nominations to solicit members (ref #20.2).

As we continue to focus our efforts on delivering against our planned actions in accordance with the target timelines, we look forward to working closely with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and engaging our various stakeholders as part of the implementation process. Together, we will continue to protect Ontario consumers.

Please let me know if you or any member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts have questions or concerns with the information shared in this letter. I would be pleased to provide additional background as required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Carey Smith".

Carey Smith
Registrar and CEO

c: Karen Hughes, Deputy Minister, MGCS
Michèle Sanborn, Assistant Deputy Minister, MGCS
Glen Timney, Chair of the Board, BAO