

THE LINK

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN
FUNERAL COOPERATIVES NETWORK

August 2007

The Canadian network takes shape!

The release of the first issue of *The Link* and the announcement of the creation of a Canadian network of funeral cooperatives has aroused a great deal of interest all across the country.

Sent electronically to over 300 persons working in the Canadian cooperative sector, *The Link* has also been forwarded to many organizations and groups wishing to set up a funeral cooperative. Some people in Manitoba have already informed us that they want to create a cooperative in their community and join the Canadian network.

In response to an invitation from Larry MacKinnon, general manager of the East Prince Funeral Home in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives set out for the Maritimes.

Last June 12 the Federation paid a visit to the funeral cooperatives of PEI. Assembled in New Glasgow in the spacious premises of the Central Queens Funeral Co-op were 20 persons who saw a presentation on the services of the Federation and the benefits of creating a Canadian network. Representatives of the

seven funeral cooperatives of PEI, as well as Max and Mary Lockhart from the Annapolis Valley Funeral Home Cooperative in Nova Scotia, were in attendance, and demonstrated keen interest in the project. The PEI cooperators agreed to meet again in August to discuss the project further.



We also visited the four funeral cooperatives in New Brunswick. Two of them are Franco-phone and already members of the Federation: La Colombe in Tracadie-Sheila and Passage in Shediac. The other two cooperatives are Anglophone: Fundy in Saint John, and Carleton in Jacksonville.

So we have now met with a dozen funeral cooperatives in

the Maritimes, and the enthusiasm is palpable everywhere.

In addition to these visits, the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives is increasing its field trips so as to broaden its network of contacts liable to participate in the development of funeral cooperatives. For instance, we took part in the annual general meeting (AGM) of *The Cooperators* last April in Calgary, Alberta. We also had the opportunity to meet with the CoopZone cooperators at the National Community Investment Forum in May in Guelph, Ontario. In June we attended the AGMs of the *Conseil canadien de la coopération* in Quebec City, Quebec and the Canadian Co-operative Association in St. John's, Newfoundland. To wrap things up, we attended the AGM of *SOCODEVI* in Quebec City.

The establishment of this Canadian network is an exciting challenge! Thanks to all those we met with for your generous welcome.

*Annie Normandin,
Cooperative development
adviser*

Your next funeral clients

Where will your next customer come from? How do families select a funeral home?

A survey conducted in the United States by the National Funeral Directors Association shows the main reasons given for choosing one funeral enterprise rather than another.

funeral represents a live interview with a few hundred persons. Remind yourself that your future clientele is in the room. These events will help determine whether you have a good reputation which will result in providing you with another customer (50.4%). In 19.2% of cases, persons attending a funeral can have an influence on another family. So

go for the lowest price without considering other factors. Finally, rare are the families who will be influenced by the yellow pages alone, or because they saw or heard an ad by your cooperative prior to the death of a family member.

Be careful, however, because advertising could affect the other factors. How did the 22% of people who have a pre-arrangement find out about the cooperative? How did you build your reputation, if not in part by publicity? So advertising is one factor which serves to bring in other factors, but no funeral enterprise can survive on major advertising campaigns alone.

And how does the co-op factor enter into this? Well, there lies your trump card. As a private business, a portion of your funeral services come from pre-arrangements. But you are also able to do recruitment and develop customer loyalty in another segment of the population – something that private funeral homes cannot do.

Your members can also be ambassadors for your cooperative. They have the capacity to have a direct effect in 20% of instances of death, and they

Company was previously used by the family	51.7 %
Location	50.9 %
Reputation	50.4 %
Attended the company's funeral services	24.8 %
Prearrangements	22.1 %
Facilities	19.8 %
Recommendation	19.2 %
Price	8.8 %
Advertising	3.4 %

So in the majority of cases, your cooperative will already have provided service to your next client. You will have directly buried one of the client's relatives (51.7%) or the client will have previously attended one of your funeral services for an acquaintance (24.8%). Hence the importance of good customer service. During funerals, all eyes are focused on your staff. Every

three of the four main reasons are directly related to the quality of your service delivery.

Obviously, location is important. Your facilities will also play a role: the quality of the rooms, the decor and so forth, will influence one family in five.

Price, however, is not significant. Only 8.8% of families will

can also help build a good reputation for the cooperative (50.4%).

Your recruitment capacity is the main advantage that cooperatives have over the private sector. You can win the loyalty of a portion of your clientele simply by selling membership cards.

Your competitors are jealous of your membership list. They would love to be able to rely on a few hundred or thousand persons who have paid to become a member of their company.

Therefore the member is a precious asset to be cared for. What will members think of

their cooperative if they have not received news from it for years? Even though funeral cooperatives basically offer funeral services, you must develop other services to meet your members' needs as soon as the membership card is signed.

A satisfied member will use your services and spend thousands of dollars on them. Your cooperative has every interest in investing a tiny fraction of that amount in offering members funeral planning tools (guides, magazines, etc.). The Federation has developed a whole range of tools of this kind, which will be presented at the annual meeting of funeral cooperatives next

September 28 and 29.

We have to work hard to keep our clientele. We have to work harder to win over the competition's clientele. And above all, we have to utilize the tools that make us different.

Alain Leclerc
General manager



Invitation to funeral cooperative directors and administrators

Annual meeting of the funeral cooperatives of Canada

Come live the Acadian experience in Moncton!

The Coopérative funéraire Passage in Shediac and the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives invite you to join us on September 28 and 29, 2007 for the second annual meeting of the funeral cooperatives of Canada. Some very interesting workshops will be offered on

this occasion.

Overview of the workshops

One person you will be meeting is Mr. Mike Burchmore of Magog Caskets, who will present the many products of his company and what is involved in the bulk buying of caskets offered to members of the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives.

You will also have the chance

to participate in a workshop offered by Ms. France Denis, communication advisor for the Federation, where she will present all the promotional and educational tools that have been developed for the funeral cooperatives. Learn how to use these tools to recruit new members for your cooperative, and so become stronger.

Alain Leclerc, the general manager of the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives, on the

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strength of his research and ongoing competitive intelligence, will lead a workshop on future trends in the funeral market and the place of cooperatives. What are the challenges and issues your cooperative will be facing in the years ahead? Is the famous “death boom” finally coming? These are just a few of the questions the group leader will try to answer.

Come be part of establishing the major directions of the Canadian network for the months to come. Come talk to us about your concerns, your challenges, your success stories

and your needs.

For dinner, we have a unique experience reserved for you: *Lobster Tales* aboard the vessel *The Ambassador*.



During this tour, you will be able to raise lobster traps and learn how to cook and crack this crustacean. The finishing touch will be a complete lobster

meal. To get your mouth watering, visit www.lobstertales.ca.

Mr. Réginald Savoie, general manager of the Passage cooperative in Shediac, next invites you to a guided tour of his facilities. He will be pleased to introduce you to his funeral cooperative, which has its own unique character.

The annual meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1005 Main Street, Moncton, New Brunswick. For more information about the hotel's facilities, please visit www.crowneplaza.com/moncton.

In the days ahead, the funeral cooperatives of Canada will be receiving an invitation, which will contain the registration procedures and all the details of the meeting.

Take part

The Link is also available in French. If you wish to receive it in French, if you have any comments about the proposed Canadian network of funeral co-operatives or if you want to write to us, you may contact Annie Normandin by e-mail at normandin.fcfq@reseaucoop.com or by phone at (819) 566-6303, extension 22.

