

July 27, 2017

Mike McIsaac, Road Foreman,  
Bill White, CAO Clerk,  
Town of Minto,  
5941 Hwy. #89,  
Harriston, ON N0G 1Z0

**"One can tell the morals of a culture by the way they treat their dead" – Benjamin Franklin**

Dear Mr. McIsaac and Mr. White,

I was going to write a quick letter to summarize my concerns regarding the proposed placement of a Columbarium in Harriston Cemetery and request clarification of some contents of the Minto Cemeteries, Cremation Gardens and Columbariums report presented at Minto Council on July 18, 2017. That plan has changed as I have returned from repairing my Father's grave and now will include a formal complaint.

First of all let's address the proposal to place a Columbarium in the Center Circle of Harriston Cemetery. Take a look at a map of the old part of Harriston Cemetery, it's a thing of beauty, a work of art. While maybe not the most practical design it is esthetically pleasing.

I strongly oppose, no, I vehemently oppose the construction of a Columbarium in the Center Circle. When the decision was made to sell a select few interment rights in the center circle I was the Deputy Reeve of Harriston and a large component of the decision making process was the preservation of the historic design feature. The center area and 4 "spokes" or "radial pathways" were intentionally left intact to retain the designer's vision and at the same time provide adequate access to the section. On a personal note, my family and I purchased our interment rights in the Center Circle (as did others) because of the design features and historic value of the section. I have gone to great expense to specifically design and create my monument to blend in with and compliment the beautiful monument designs of yesteryear. Just the fact there is some open space doesn't make it "a good site for a columbarium". Please give this potential action more thought. If you are having difficulty in the decision making process, take a site visit, enjoy the beauty, tranquility and historic character of the Center Circle. I would be glad to accompany you to enhance your appreciation of what should be considered a Minto treasure. After your visit I'm sure you'll decide against defiling this key design element of the Harriston Cemetery.

Secondly, I am having difficulty understanding parts of the Minto Cemeteries, Cremation Gardens and Columbariums report as presented on July 18, 2017. It starts out in the very first sentence under Strategic Plan. I skip to the Recommendation and there it is again. The Town of Minto plans to enhance internment options. That's a novel idea, combination prison and cemetery, now I'm intrigued. I read on and that's not the case. It appears the words interment and internment are used interchangeably. A definition of inter is: place (a corpse) in a grave or tomb, typically with funeral rites and a definition of intern is: confine (someone) as a prisoner. After seeing the interment/internment issue I felt impelled to read the report more thoroughly. Let me share some of my findings and thoughts.

In the Strategic Plan it mentions increase use as a place to learn about the history of the community. It should be encouraged to use the Cemeteries for education, enjoyment of nature and recreation but at the same time they are places of beauty and memorialization used for quiet reflection and grieving which demand to be treated with a high degree of dignity and respect. The recent hunt for historical

information in the Cemetery was a good exercise but also was a teaching opportunity missed to educate everyone on the true purpose of a cemetery and the proper decorum required when you are present in a cemetery.

The idea of a Cremation Garden in Clifford Cemetery may be a reasonable idea in the future. However I would promote the Columbarium at the present time and not dilute the market for disposition of cremated remains.

If a Columbarium is placed in Harriston Cemetery in the very near future it will stifle sales of Cremation Garden Plots and you'll be left with an underutilized facility. Immediate expansion of the Cremation Section of the Harriston Cemetery in the vicinity of the Chapel and existing Cremation Garden would be an acceptable practice. I've already stated what I think of constructing a Columbarium in the Center Circle just for the sake of filling in empty space. As for preparing land for future interment rights sales, it should be done and in the near future. I'm not sure what's meant by "pre-construct" but an access road should be constructed and the section mentioned should be brought to grade and the soil and turf prepared to industry standards now so it will be suitable for burials and placement of memorials in 3 – 5 years.

Palmerston Cemetery doesn't facilitate Cremated Remains options at the present time. The Harriston Cremation Garden hasn't been really successful, why not incorporate a Columbarium in Palmerston Cemetery (I see it's mentioned in the Comments). I'm sure people have gone to Bethesda or Listowel to access a Columbarium niche rather than buy full burial interment rights in Palmerston.

Your recommendations include mention of "cremorials" and memorial walls but doesn't mention Scattering Gardens which are an excellent revenue stream and economical for the client. The catch with Scattering Gardens is they are usually exquisitely kept areas to attract families to scatter the ashes of their loved one and pay to have a plaque placed.

Under Comments it's mentioned you wish to "develop cost estimates for installations including a financial plan for costing plot sales and perpetual care". I trust you meant "sales of interment rights and ongoing operation". Sale of real property and perpetual care no longer exist. In fact in the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act and Regulations the words "perpetual care" never appear. I hope "perpetual care" isn't being confused with the "Maintenance and Care Fund" which is a totally different entity and serves a different purpose than the obsolete "perpetual care".

It's encouraging to see you've studied the population demographics however you will find information on Bereavement Sector trends to be more helpful. Cremation and "Flameless" cremation now make up over 50% of the final dispositions of remains in some jurisdictions.

In Financial Considerations the term "perpetual care" is used again and that's concerning. In the context used I'm interpreting that to mean tax dollars are used to subsidize the ongoing operation of the Cemeteries.

In Recommendation it mentions financing of new installations over time. I hope the Municipality explores self-financing before they get involved with Financing Companies that provide Columbariums. Some of these companies provide Columbariums as a secondary activity to promote their primary goal of creating a financing revenue stream. Why shouldn't Minto take advantage of a larger revenue stream? You may find higher quality, less expensive products on the open market.

The Minto Cemeteries, Cremation Gardens and Columbariums report does show a rudimentary understanding of the Cemetery industry.

Why should we pay attention to this guy you may ask.

I'm a Bereavement Sector Professional:

- Class 1 Licensed Funeral Director and Preneed Funeral Funding Specialist
- Former owner of a monument retail and manufacturer. I've done business with 100's of Cemeteries.



- Former Member of the Advisory Board to the Board of Governors of Humber College (Funeral Services Program).
- Personally met with Mr. Norm Sterling, Minister of Consumer and Commercial relations to provide information to help formulate the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act.
- Helped small Cemeteries with volunteer Boards interpret and implement the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act and Regulations.

Now for the third and last part of this letter. I would like to place a formal complaint regarding the condition of my Father's grave. On July 26, 2017 I attended my Father's grave and first noticed the rotting flowers left against the monument. Wes was buried on July 14. As I approached the grave I noticed the deep ruts caused by lawn mowing equipment. The grave was torn up and the grass nearby was damaged by what appears to be mowers spinning their wheels. I questioned the young man with a "Culps" t shirt if he cut the grass in the Center Circle. He was less than diplomatic and denied responsibility. The grass cutters disrespected my Father's grave and disrespected me. Harriston Cemetery has not been kept to a high standard as of late. Granted, quite often people are in a state of heightened sensitivity when they visit the Cemetery but that's why Cemetery standards should be maintained at the highest level. I have also been buzzed by a grass cutter while visiting my Mother's grave. I shouldn't have to dodge lawn mowing equipment when I'm paying my respects. As I've mentioned in my letter above, when you're in a Cemetery a certain dignity and respect are a necessity.

I'll be sending a copy of this letter to Councillor Dave Turton, Chairman of Public Works Committee and Deputy Mayor Ron Faulkner who expressed his passion for Cemeteries during the Council meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ken Porter  
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