



HEALTH CORNER



Dead and Gone... When the Funeral Is Over

By Gary Payne, MBA
Founder of Funeral Cost Ontario

There is a moment most families do not expect. It happens after the funeral is over. The service has finished. The chairs are folded away. The flowers have been taken home or left behind. People hug goodbye in the parking lot and promise to stay in touch. Then, slowly, life around you returns to normal. But inside the family

that just lost someone, things rarely feel normal yet.

If I were gone, I think this is the moment I would worry about most for the people I love. Not the paperwork. Not the arrangements. Not even the day of the service itself. Those things, difficult as they are, come with structure. People help.

Funeral homes guide families. Friends bring food. Neighbours stop by. The days feel full. It's the days after that can feel unexpectedly quiet. I have spoken with many families who told me the same thing later.

The arrangements kept them moving. Once those were finished, the reality of the loss settled in more deeply. Grief does not follow the same timeline as the funeral. A service might last a few hours. The emotional part rarely fits into that window.

Some families feel a strange emptiness when the activity stops. Others feel relief that the decisions are behind them. Many feel both at the same time. And sometimes, that is when the second wave of questions begins.

Did we do the right thing? Would they have liked the service? Should we have chosen something different? If I were gone, I would want my family to know something simple. Those questions are normal. Grief has a way of revisiting decisions, even when those decisions were thoughtful and made with care. But no single choice defines the love people had for someone who died. Not the music. Not the number of people who attended. Not whether the arrangements were simple or traditional. What matters most is the intention behind them. I have seen families hold very modest gatherings that felt deeply meaningful. I have also seen large services that brought comfort because they allowed many people to share stories.

There is no universal formula. The truth is that funerals exist partly for the living. They create a moment where people can acknowledge that something significant has happened. But healing rarely ends when the service does. Sometimes it begins there. If I could leave one quiet message for my family, it would be this.

Take care of each other after the funeral, not just before it. Call each other a week later. Sit together again. Tell the same stories that were told during the service, even if you have already heard them. Grief softens slowly when it is shared.

One of the gentlest things families can do for each other is to keep talking about the person who died. Not just during the formal moment when everyone gathers, but in the weeks and months that follow. Because the service may be the public goodbye. But the private remembering continues long after the flowers are gone.

Next week, I will write about something many families only discover after arrangements begin: why two funeral homes can present quotes that look very different - even when the services being considered are nearly the same.



Feeling Alone? Take Comfort — You're in Plentiful Company

Common Sense Health — Diana Gifford-Jones

It's a sad irony. But the truth is, loneliness is one of the most crowded experiences in modern society. Some prefer their own company and are emotionally stable. There's no harm in letting them be. But there is an astonishingly high number of people who can be called "situational loners". These are people who may have recently retired, become empty nesters, have moved to a new community, or lost a spouse.

Some people, once embedded in a tight group of friends, may find themselves geographically or generationally isolated. Maybe they were part of a scene that was once vibrant, but for one reason or another, the scene changed, and they didn't. They long for the past and may feel socially out of place in today's society.

Others have outright rejected a world that offers constant online contact as a proxy for companionship. They see some people thriving with it, but the digital world is not for them.

As a society, we've never been more connected. But on a human level, we are disconnecting. Smaller families mean fewer close-in relatives. The ease of mobility uproots connections to the communities our families called home for generations. Our convenience economy means we don't know basic source information about things that are elemental to our lives.

Call it instability, disconnection, isolation, or uneasiness. It's a societal malaise that is evident as an upward trend in chronic high blood pressure, increased inflammatory markers, weak immune systems, hormonal imbalance, poor sleep, declining cognitive function, and worsening cardiovascular outcomes.

A recent large-scale study has added a striking insight. Investigators analyzing tens of thousands of adults found that loneliness and social isolation are associated with measurable changes in proteins circulating in the blood, many linked to inflammation, immune function, and heart disease. In other words, the body registers loneliness as a form of biological stress, not just an emotional state.

During the latter part of the winter season in particular, problems are magnified. After weeks of less daylight and reduced physical movement, the negative effects start to mount.

What many people don't realize is that the human body responds to connection the same way it responds to good nutrition or exercise. A brief conversation, a shared task, even a familiar greeting can lower stress hormones. These are small interactions, but biologically, they have a beneficial effect.

The mistake many make is waiting to feel better before reaching out. In reality, reaching out is what produces the improvement. Health rarely returns by withdrawal. It improves through participation, however modest.

Late winter is not the time for grand resolutions. It is the season for simple, repeatable habits. A daily walk at the same hour. A regular coffee with a neighbour. A volunteer shift. A phone call made every Sunday afternoon. These patterns rebuild rhythm, and rhythm is deeply reassuring to both mind and body.

It is also worth remembering that nearly everyone you meet at this time of year is carrying some degree of the same burden. The person beside you in the grocery line, the neighbour shovelling snow, the acquaintance you haven't called in months — many are waiting for someone else to make the first move.

So if you are feeling alone, take comfort in knowing you are not uniquely afflicted. You are experiencing a very human signal that it is time to reconnect with light, movement, purpose, and people.

Winter will pass. In the meantime, don't hibernate from life. Step outside, reach out, and give your health the companionship it was designed to enjoy.

HOW IS THE 8 MILLION OUTDOOR POOL COMING ALONG?

OSHAWA - With a price tag of 8 million for an outdoor Oshawa pool. Everyone is wondering when will it be completed.

This project has been the centre of controversy as the 8 million dollar tag is questioned as the pool can only be used 5 months of the year.

So far the City has released the following:

Thank you to our residents and community centre pool users for your continued patience and support as we work through the South Oshawa Community Centre Pool Reconstruction Project. We know how important this facility is to you, and we want to acknowledge the growing frustration surrounding the length of time this project is taking. City staff, contracted crews, and members of Council — including both Ward 5 City Councillors — share that frustration and want the pool reopened as much as you do.

When deficiencies were first discovered in September 2024, no one anticipated the extent of the

work that would be required. To support community understanding, we have included a detailed timeline outlining the work that has taken place since the closure.

We remain committed to completing the work safely, responsibly, and with urgency so that the community and facility users can once again enjoy the pool facilities.

Project Status:

Following the unexpected shutdown of the pool in September 2024, significant challenges were revealed that were not apparent at the outset of the project. As we carried out further investigation, additional areas of concern emerged requiring the project scope to expand beyond our initial estimates.

Exterior Work

Excavation work supporting the required upgrades to the building's foundation drainage system is essentially complete, and the remaining exterior work is limited to the southwest corner.

Fire Suppression System

Work continues on the installation of the access structure for the fire suppression system, including associated electrical and mechanical components. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances outside of the City's control, delays have occurred with the steel work required for this structure. These delays directly affect our ability to advance work on the pool infrastructure as the pool cannot be accessed at this time.

City Commitment:

City Council has made the South Oshawa Community Centre Pool Reconstruction Project a priority and has committed more than \$8 million toward the project. This investment demonstrates the City's commitment to reopening the pool as soon as possible.

We share the community's disappointment and want to assure you that we are doing everything possible — including continuing to commit staff and resources — to ensure the soonest possible reopening of this vital recreational and community resource.

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