

# Dying to get in: Vancouver cemetery may seek bids for burial spots

BY GERRY BELLETT, VANCOUVER SUN FEBRUARY 10, 2011



The Commonwealth War Graves section of Mountain View Cemetery. The 125-year-old, 43-hectare cemetery that sprawls across southwest Vancouver south of 31st Avenue and west of Fraser Street was closed to casket interment in 1986. But the city is now considering reopening the cemetery, which contains as many as 1,500 unused grave sites, to the highest bidders.

**Photograph by:** Ian Smith, PNG files

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VANCOUVER -- Fancy being buried in Vancouver's historic Mountain View Cemetery — one of the only two "green" cemeteries in Canada — in a casket with all the trimmings?

Then get ready to submit a sealed bid for the privilege and hope it's high enough to get you admitted.

The 125-year-old, 43-hectare cemetery that sprawls across southwest Vancouver south of 31st Avenue and west of Fraser Street was closed to casket interment in 1986.

But the city is now considering reopening the cemetery, which contains as many as 1,500 unused grave sites, to the highest bidders.

"The recommendations in this report provide a solid financial base to support the re-initiation of the sale of in-ground graves. The increased revenue will be used to provide a return on the investment by taxpayers in the cemetery infrastructure and, as the revitalization continues, to reduce to ongoing

subsidy to the cemetery from the tax base," said the report from Brenda Prosen, deputy general manager community services.

And given the cemetery is in the middle of one of the self-styled greenest cities in Canada, the report proudly proclaims Mountain View one of the few cemeteries "recognized by the Green Burial Council for providing eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable options."

The cemetery also contains an Infant's Garden, an area for Canadian veterans from the two World Wars, flowering cherry trees honouring the Japanese workers killed in the 1910 Rogers Pass disaster and bright red burners used by those of the Buddhist faith to honour their dead.

In 2008 the city began selling above ground niches for cremated remains in what are called "columbarias," said the report.

"In ground lots for cremated remains will become available in 2011 and will have a range of price points and memorial options including upright markers. A further step in the redevelopment of MVC is the pending release of interment rights for casket graves that will accommodate full body burial," it said.

The report said that while 75 per cent of deaths resulted in cremation of remains, "there was still a strong demand in Vancouver and the surrounding area for casket space."

The report said the limited number of casket spaces was contributing to higher market values.

And, if the city allowed upright markers to be placed on graves again, the price could go even higher.

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