

# The plot thickens

Shortage of cemetery space on the horizon for the city

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Lethbridge Herald

Lethbridge is running out of room to bury bodies and may have to start doubling up to save space until a new cemetery is built.

Using double-depth plots for two bodies is one of several options the city could consider to extend the life of its three active cemeteries, council was told Monday.

The city could also create a new cremation garden at Archmount Cemetery, reconsider the dimensions of plot layouts, or infill at Mountain View Cemetery.

Eric Lees of Lees and Associates told council there are about 21,000 people buried in Mountain View Cemetery, but

only room for about 5,000 more. If something isn't done to extend the space of the cemetery, it will be full in five to seven years.

"There really isn't significant room for expansion," Lees said.

If the city can find more room in its active cemeteries, they may last up to 12 years.

Lees said St. Pat's is full but there is room for expansion. And while there is still room at Archmount on the westside, it has some drainage problems.

"It is not a preferred site."

Lees and Associates has drafted a cemeteries development and management plan which urges the city to begin looking now for land that could become a cemetery. Lees suggested the southeast portion of the city would be most suitable.

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HERALD PHOTO BY DAVID ROSSITER

The eternal flame burns at the entrance to Mountain View Cemetery.

## CEMETERY SPACE

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He pointed out the city can expect the number of deaths each year to increase, and projected about 1,400 people will die in the city every year by 2030. About 670 people die each year now, which is still below the national average, partly because of the large student population in the city.

Lees said new land will be needed by 2011 and should last for at least two generations. The means the city would need 35-50 hectares of land.

Lees also suggested setting aside land now,

and even though it wouldn't be needed as a cemetery for several years, the city could use the land for a park or other interim use. He also suggested the city consider environmentally friendly green burial options, which include allowing only wooden caskets without metal handles, not embalming bodies, and burying bodies in shrouds only, without caskets.

Council directed administration to incorporate the cemeteries plan into future capital and operating budgets, which will likely come back to council for approval during the next round of budget deliberations.

"I just hope we can bury this issue for once," quipped Ald. Ryan Parker