



**Report to the Minister of Justice  
and Attorney General  
Public Fatality Inquiry**

Fatality Inquiries Act

WHEREAS a Public Inquiry was held at the Provincial Court of Alberta  
in the City of Calgary, in the Province of Alberta,  
(City, Town or Village) (Name of City, Town, Village)  
on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2008, (and by adjournment  
year  
on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2008),  
year  
before A.J. Brown, a Provincial Court Judge,  
into the death of Sheldon Todd Houston 29  
(Name in Full) (Age)  
of Calgary, Alberta and the following findings were made:  
(Residence)

**Date and Time of Death:** 2:02 a.m., November 7, 2006

**Place:** 1200 block of Deerfoot Trail SE at Barlow Trail in Calgary, Alberta

**Medical Cause of Death:**

("cause of death" means the medical cause of death according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death as last revised by the International Conference assembled for that purpose and published by the World Health Organization – The Fatality Inquiries Act, Section 1(d)).

Multiple Blunt Force Injuries

**Manner of Death:**

("manner of death" means the mode or method of death whether natural, homicidal, suicidal, accidental, unclassifiable or undeterminable – The Fatality Inquiries Act, Section 1(h)).

Accidental

**Circumstances under which Death occurred:**

Sheldon Houston was a regular patron of the neighbourhood pub, Riverbend Station. He was accustomed to stopping in as frequently as four to five times a week, having something to eat and between four and six drinks, visiting with friends, watching a hockey game, etc. Bartender Chad Laverick described Mr. Houston as a loud, boisterous person with many friends.

On November 6, 2006, Mr. Houston entered Riverbend Station between 9 and 9:30 p.m. in a celebratory mood as he had just finalized a business deal that had been tentative for some while. He had a meal and more drinks than usual; he also bought rounds for other patrons in the bar. When last call was announced between 12:45 and 1 a.m. on November 7, Mr. Houston urged Mr. Laverick to stay open past closing time and continue to serve him. Mr. Laverick refused and Mr. Houston became somewhat belligerent. Mr. Laverick, a bartender experienced in noting signs of intoxication, did not observe any slurring of speech, redness of eyes or impairment of motor skills in Mr. Houston. He did however suggest that Mr. Houston take a taxi and leave his vehicle parked overnight at the pub; Mr. Houston emphatically declined, saying, "You know I don't do that."

Without any apparent difficulty, Mr. Houston walked out of Riverbend Station around 1:30 a.m., entered his truck and drove out of the parking lot.

Approximately 25 minutes later, while driving south on Barlow Tr on the ramp merging onto southbound Deerfoot Trail, Mr. Houston lost control of his truck on the curve after steering abruptly to the left. The truck began a counterclockwise rotation, mounted a grass median separating Deerfoot and Barlow, struck the concrete median between the north and south lanes on Deerfoot and came to rest facing north across two southbound lanes of Deerfoot. Mr. Houston, who was not restrained by a seatbelt, was ejected from the vehicle and was found deceased in the median lane of southbound Deerfoot.

Post-mortem toxicological analysis of Mr. Houston's bodily fluids showed a blood-alcohol level of 270 to 290 milligrams per cent, more than three times the legal limit.

The collision analysis and vehicle analysis of Mr. Houston's truck disclosed no traffic, road, weather or mechanical factors contributing to the collision.

Therefore, Mr. Houston being the only occupant of his truck, his death was accidental, the accident attributable to a driver error caused by Mr. Houston's alcohol consumption and a contributing factor being Mr. Houston's lack of seatbelt restraint.

**Recommendations for the prevention of similar deaths:**

Given that the bartender who dealt with Mr. Houston just before his death was not only trained according to a program equivalent to ASIP (Alberta Server Intervention Program), Serving it Right, but also acted in accordance with his training by refusing to continue serving him and encouraging him to take a taxi, there are no recommendations I can make to prevent similar deaths in the future.

DATED January 15, 2009 ,

at Calgary , Alberta.

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A.J. Brown  
A Judge of the Provincial Court of Alberta