

# THE COMMUNIQUE

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## *From the Grand Master ...*

Brethren,

This has been a long six months. We have avoided superspreading events and hopefully saved some lives, but it has taken its toll on us individually and as lodges, both mentally and financially.

The Temple Board of my mother lodge described the situation well:

“COVID-19 has reduced significantly the “usage” of our building (or Temple) and literally no Masonic meetings and/or events took place for many months and potentially more months to come. Our Temple is still a very important part of our Masonic life and we are still bound to maintain it, which comes at a cost... The Board reduced as much costs as possible by eliminating building activities such as garbage removal, postponing repairs, etc... but insurance, tax, etc. are still part of our commitment to keep our Temple in place. We would like to thank all of our partners, brethren, lodges, chapters, councils, for their continued support of our Masonic home. In order to have our Temple ready and in proper condition when we return (and we will return), we are asking each of the core voting lodges and concordant bodies to keep their commitment and ask all Masons that are part of our Temple to please keep being dedicated in supporting our Temple for our future.”

Likewise, Grand Lodge has a building to keep up, as well as services to lodges which remain ongoing. We have looked into lowering the per capita, but as you will note from the budget, we are already in a deficit position despite trimming many items (including yours truly's travel budget, which is fine because I'm not going anywhere at the moment.)

Those of us who are retired or have secure jobs, may have fewer expenditures as we have avoided concerts, theatre and dining out in order to reduce the spread. However, it cannot be concealed that we have many members who are not so lucky. With reduced hours of work, lay-offs or struggling businesses, these brethren are suffering. As Masons we are encouraged to relieve the necessities of our brethren and fellows. I know that many lodges have significant Benevolence funds. And even those that don't can consider what they have in their general

funds or put away for a rainy day. For some brethren, it is raining still.

You may well want to do more, but the very least you can do for these brethren is to remit their dues. Section 200 of the Constitution says that a lodge may by open vote remit the dues of any brother, with notice of motion at the regular meeting immediately before, and that the notice of motion must contain the amount of the dues but need not contain the name of the brother. Section 202 outlines the procedure for suspension due to non-payment of dues. As we don't know when we will be able to have regular meetings again these procedures are problematic. **The Worshipful Master, Secretary and Treasurer of each lodge have already been authorized to conduct the necessary business of the lodge until the lodge re-opens, subject to retroactive approval at the next regular meeting. I therefore decree that, until we return to labour, they may authorize the remittance of the dues of any member without requiring notice of motion or a vote. This will, like all their other decisions, be ratified at the next regular in-person meeting.**

Our hearts may be disposed to soothe our brothers' afflictions in a greater way than just looking after their dues. Those lodges that have the funds may want to consider finding out how they can do more. Many districts have benevolence accounts as does Grand Lodge. This is the time to reach out to our brethren and help. (Even just asking may be all the support that some need – knowing we care about him and his family.) Don't forget to ask the widows.

Some of our brethren are needing to use food banks, as well as many in the community. The Masonic Foundation has instituted a new project to support Feed Ontario, a network of 130 member food banks and over 1,100 affiliate hunger-relief programs and agencies across the province. I encourage you to support this endeavour.

Keep safe and look after each other.

**David J. Cameron**  
**Grand Master**

## ***From the Deputy ...***

My Brethren:

If I should be so fortunate as to live to meet my Great Grandchildren, I'm not sure I will be able to explain the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic to them. Or maybe I won't have to – it may be the new reality? My Grandkids are having less difficulty with the current restrictions than I am for sure, but they aren't involved with a fraternity or sorority at their young age. They get to go to school and see their friends all day while I sit at home missing my Lodge hand shakes and bear hugs, content in seeing a few of you occasionally via our videoconferencing that some Lodges and Districts have invited me to attend or address.

One thing I am sure of though is that how fortunate we are to have elected a medical doctor as our current Grand Master during this medical pandemic. The Grand Secretary has received many letters from frustrated Masons who want to assume responsibility for themselves and get back to Lodge. But M.W. Bro. David Cameron has been able to use his many years of medical training to steer the whole membership safely through the many challenges that have arisen during this medical pandemic.

The support for our Grand Master's decisions comes not only from within Grand Lodge. I want to share with you a message of unsolicited support for our Grand Master from one of our Lodge Secretaries in the current Lodge Summons:

"I believe that:

- we are fortunate to have a physician as our Grand Master. He brings to the table a medical background and understanding that many organizations do not have in their leadership during these difficult and confusing times.
- at our core, we are a social organization! We meet during the time of the year where indoor gatherings are the norm. Our meeting rooms are often small and poorly equipped with air quality monitoring and management. On many occasions, these gatherings are crowded and "cozy".
- we are a group that greets and interacts through enthusiastic contact during our social and ritual settings. The "shaking of hands" is synonymous with Masonry!
- our demographic is generally one of a more mature nature where medical challenges are the norm rather than the exception.

In short, through our normal practices we offer the ideal conditions for the effective nurturing and spread of a viral entity like this strain of coronavirus. If precautions had not been taken and maintained, the Masonic order may have been responsible for much pain and suffering within and outside our ranks. I strongly believe the cautious actions taken by our Grand Master and Grand Lodge should be commended and supported with gratitude for our own and our families' wellbeing.

I believe challenges such as these stimulate growth and strength within organizations that recognize and appreciate the full scope of the situation and its importance. Masonry will be stronger because of COVID and our actions and resolve through COVID will foster growth and revitalization. Be patient and remain resolved." (Thanks Rob!)

To assist the Lodges in keeping in contact with their membership, your Grand Lodge has created a GoToMeeting account for each District. The access information has been sent to each District Deputy Grand Master who was charged with providing this to each of the Lodges in their respective District to share. It was suggested that a District schedule be created such that every Lodge can host a monthly meeting on their regular meeting night to communicate with their membership, cover any business that is permissible, provide some Masonic Education and generally to take an account of the health of their membership and Lodge.

We are also continuing to publish a monthly Resource Digest – from which you probably received this Communiqué. We need your help in the distribution of these tools. It was reported at our Virtual Board of General Purposes Chairmen's September meeting that of the 680 copies distributed via email to the Grand Lodge Officers and Lodge Secretaries, 216 weren't even opened! Hard to say they are being distributed via Lodge email contact lists if a third of them weren't even opened. Please help us keep in touch with our membership by forwarding all the communication from Grand Lodge to as many members as possible. It will be appreciated by the creator and the receiver and ease the transition when we go back to our Work.

Stay well until then!

***Thomas W. Hogeboom  
Deputy Grand Master***