

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

- J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

What does it take to be a leader in unprecedented times? Perseverance, flexibility and imagination.

This month will mark the anniversary of the "year that didn't exist" as we are wont to call it. We decided that since we weren't meeting we would extend all the Grand Lodge officers' terms for a year so that we could take up where we left off and eventually visit all those lodges that had been on our agendas. But that is not likely to be. We wish this had not happened in our time but all we could do is decide what to do with what is given us.

We rapidly adapted to videoconferencing. The Board and their committee members, with extra time on their hands, reviewed and revised our programs. The Grand Treasurer thoroughly examined multiple scenarios of how we could fund our activities for the upcoming years. (See his letter included in this Communiqué.) The Grand Secretary, Chief Operating Officer and the office staff held down the fort. And District Deputies and District Secretaries shepherded the lodges in their charge through these challenging times, setting up videoconferences, staying in touch with the brethren by phone and newsletter, and managing the business of the districts.

We now have the capability to hold elections electronically for District Deputies and other Grand Lodge officers. Some incumbents may wish to run again. Some brethren were planning on running last year and have been patiently waiting for a chance. And there may be some who will put their name forward this year for the first time.

All this while not knowing when they will be able to resume all the traditional duties of the office, but ready to pitch in and help the Craft. Knowing they may have to persevere with videomanagement for the first few months. Knowing that the large banquets and gatherings may not be possible at first. Having the flexibility to switch between virtual and in-person duties. And having imagination to try new things.

If this describes you, I would recommend you consider letting your name stand for a Grand Lodge office. Although the elections seem a long time away, there are some deadlines to consider. Candidates for Grand Registrar, Grand Wardens, Grand Treasurer, Grand Secretary and the Board must have their nominations into the Office by April 1 as usual. Nomination papers sent in last year have been held over so those brethren do not need to resubmit. Anyone wishing to withdraw their nomination can do so until April 15.

In order to be able to have electronic voting for District Deputy Grand Masters this year, candidates for DDGM will have to submit written nomination papers to the current DDGM by May 30. Candidates should complete the work for their qualifying certificate by that date. The DDGM Preparation Team will run another course before then, and of course the College runs their course continually (and it's free during the lockdown!)

Please follow the Grand Secretary's correspondence for details on nominations and elections.

The upcoming year will have its challenges, but if you have a desire to help in leading the Craft to new heights, consider putting your name forth now.

"It's the job that's never started as takes longest to finish." - Samwise Gamgee

David J. Cameron
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

Who says your Grand Lodge doesn't listen to its members?

After the first month of socializing the proposed Constitutional amendments, your Grand Lodge has listened and have revised our plans based on the feedback we have heard.

The initial proposal was to re-introduce all the twelve proposed Constitutional amendments from 2020 that were held in abeyance last Summer when a very short form of our Annual Communication was held. The plan was to add those twelve to the six, rather lengthy proposed Constitutional amendments from 2021. This would mean that we were going to have eighteen proposed Constitutional amendments amounting to twenty-nine pages of material on an electronic ballot that we were also experimenting with for the first time. And that doesn't count the allowable explanation capability for each that our new e-balloting system would allow.

The determination of your Grand Lodge to get caught up on all these proposed amendments has been perceived by some as a daunting task. The expectation of each member to work through every one of these proposals, spending the required amount of time to make a conscientious decision on each, was wishful thinking and that the process may not receive the appropriate attention it deserved.

So, we spent last week deciding which of these proposals were essential and which we could hold over until the Annual Communication of 2022 with the hope of having two manageable lists of proposals rather than one daunting list.

Again, as I mentioned last month, the Grand Secretary will be addressing all the new amendments from this year that deal with the proposed revisions to the Annual Communication including electronic voting on the proposed Constitutional amendments and the election of Grand Lodge Officers that will enfranchise every eligible voting Mason. As you will see by reading this Communique further, the Grand Treasurer will continue to communicate the very important amendment to increase the Grand Lodge assessment. That leaves me with only four proposed

amendments to review.

Two of these proposals regarding Section 104 of the Constitution as discussed last month were to add the Form L4 Lodge Master's/Treasurer's Report to subsection (b) to be inclusive of all the reports required to be submitted in the report to Grand Lodge after an Official Visit of the District Deputy Grand Master and the addition of subsection (c) and (d) to deal with the suspension of Lodge Warrants for failure to submit these said L forms within forty-five days of an Official Visit.

Another proposed amendment under the category of Lodge Changes is to revise Form 4, Section 298(a) found in Part VII – Forms, at the back of the Constitution. Form 4 is an example of how a Lodge Secretary should set up the Lodge Minute Book. The revision here was to add Masonic Education as an item that should be a part of every Lodge meeting and so recorded in the Minute Book. As you know, this is one of the important strategic initiatives of the Grand Lodge **Ritual, Education, Mentoring** focus for the next several years.

Be sure to tune in next month when I will review the final proposed amendment for this year on Grand Lodge branding.

We are continuing to take this opportunity to socialize the proposed Constitutional amendments now before voting day when you have them all in front of you at once for your decision. We want to ease this stress and make sure everyone has every question answered long before the vote. Your responsibility is to be a well-informed voter. We have decided that an integral part of this is to make the process manageable by holding some of the less essential proposed amendments back until next year.

If you have any questions related to these proposed amendments, please send me an e-mail at office@grandlodge.on.ca and I will endeavour to make you more comfortable with the amendments and the process going forward.

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Secretary ...

Brethren,

COVID-19 Temporary Business Policies:

On February 12 we distributed another COVID-19 update that related to temporary business policies implemented to deal with the prolonged impact of the Masonic lockdown on lodge business. I trust that it has been widely distributed and that you have taken the time to read it.

Election of DDGMs – Nominations:

Also on February 12 we distributed a document to all DDGMs that details the procedures to be followed for the election of the new DDGMs in June 2021. That communication also contained the nomination forms that **MUST** be used by any brother seeking election to the office of DDGM (no matter which District).

June and July 2021 Electronic Voting:

Included in the current March issue of the Resource Digest there is a communication to each and every eligible member of Grand Lodge entitled to vote in the election for DDGM in June 2021 and the election for Grand Lodge officers and voting on proposed Constitutional amendments in July 2021. If you plan on casting your ballot in these elections, you need to be aware of the details for registration and casting your ballot.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments July 2021:

Finally, also included in this current March issue of the Resource Digest is the final list of proposed Constitutional amendments to be balloted on electronically in July.

Fraternally, Garry

***D. Garry Dowling,
Grand Secretary***

From the Grand Treasurer ...

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING THE PROPOSED GRAND LODGE ASSESSMENT INCREASE

Why Now? For last several years our expenses have exceeded revenue as our membership has declined. There has not been an increase since 2011. Grand Lodge can no longer continue to run at a deficit.

Why in the Midst of a Pandemic? The Grand Treasurer's proposal for an increase was based on his five-year forecast which proceeded the current pandemic. Even then, the forecast really necessitated a greater increase than the one currently proposed. This assessment increase was scheduled for July 2020, but no Constitutional amendments were presented as Grand Lodge was reduced to a virtual meeting of the Board of General Purposes. The last time the Grand Lodge Assessment was increased was ten years ago. A pandemic was not foreseen, but we can no longer postpone the increase in the per capita levy.

Why Such a Large Increase? This Assessment increase works out to an additional \$2.00 per member, per meeting per year. At present your Grand Lodge Assessment is \$20.00 the lowest in Canada; the next lowest is \$29.00 and the highest is \$88.00. The new per capita rate will not become effective until the filing of the semi-annual return due in January 2022.

Why Not Spread out the Increase over several years? This option was discussed at length and rejected. The last time Grand Lodge spread an Assessment increase over several years there was confusion in many Lodges in calculating the correct Assessment payment on the semi-annual returns. This showed us that a single increase was preferred as it was easier to manage and eliminated confusion in the reporting. If the increase is spread out over 3 years, it would result in a permanent loss of revenue totaling \$1,200,000.

What will this Increased Revenue be Used For? Grand Lodge, Lodges and the Membership have recognized the need to upgrade our computer

technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness in many aspects of our operations including the ability to communicate directly to our members. Eligible voters will be able to vote for Grand Lodge Officers and for their District Deputy Grand Masters with the implementation of electronic voting. New data base software & computers will promote better communication and education throughout our membership and increase the efficiency in the way we operate at all levels. While the upfront investment in technology is expensive, we will improve the efficiency with administration workflows resulting in future cost savings.

Why not delay? If we fail to make this investment now, with rising costs we may never be able to catch up. This will also enable your Grand Lodge to look at new ways of conducting the Annual Communication and to enhance our experience of attending every year.

Like any house which has aged, our Grand Lodge building needs some costly repairs to remain viable and up to date. The roof, fence, parking lot and bringing access into compliance with the current AODA regulations are some of the projects to be completed. Since 2011 expenses have increased for Grand Lodge, individual Lodges and Districts and the postponement of this Assessment cannot be delayed.

We trust that the Brethren will understand and appreciate the need and will approve the proposed increase in the Assessment.

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