

**GRAND LODGE A.F. & A.M. OF CANADA
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO**

Fraternal Correspondence Committee

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Fraternal Review

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Grand Lodge of Massachusetts

Stated Communication, Masonic Building, Boston, Massachusetts, December, 2011.

246 Lodges

37,497 Members

In 2010 the Grand Master quoted Brother Benjamin Franklin when he outlined a comprehensive plan to meet the challenges facing the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

“Is there greatness in you?”

One year later, M.W. Richard J. Stewart, Grand Master, responded by pointing to several accomplishments which would answer that question in the affirmative.

“Today, worthy men throughout the Commonwealth have heard [Brother Franklin’s call](#) (A Timely Chat With a New Freemason video, plus many others) and are responding by joining the Craft at a rate we have not seen for decades. In **2005**, our Grand Lodge **embarked** on an ambitious **membership development** program. By all accounts it has been an **unqualified success**. We control our membership in two ways. We have **no control over deaths** whatsoever, but **we do have control** over **retaining** members and **encouraging** new members through the door and **giving them** what we call **good service**.

Prior to 2005, our Lodges were developing somewhere between 650 to 800 candidates per year. Today, we are averaging 1,600 to 1,800, truly an impressive gain. Despite this, we have seen our overall membership decline. But imagine where we would be if we had not embarked on this program in 2005! The average age of our members has also decreased by several years since 2005.

With the **rapid influx of new members** there has been a need to **greatly expand the offerings** of our Masonic Education and Training Committee. These programs- the **Master’s Path for incoming Masters**, the **New Warden’s Workshop** for incoming Wardens and Junior Officers, the **Masonic**

“Believe in Freemasonry”

Leadership Program, the revamped **Lodge of Instruction**, and **Beyond the Third Degree** just to name a few, are providing much needed training and support, and are essential elements in engaging the Craft.

Similarly, the **Membership Development Committee** has **introduced** a number of effective programs to help Lodges in the **recruitment** of new members and the **retention** of all members, new and not-so-new. Out of several, **two in particular** deserve special mention.

The much anticipated **Cable Tow Brothers Lodge Mentoring Program** was finalized and presented to all Lodge Officers by District Ambassadors at the Lodges of Instruction. A commitment to each candidate is necessary to ensure a bond is established within their Lodges, and the goal is to have new members **partnered with Brothers** who will be part of their journey into Masonry.

The **Master Mason Rookie Award** introduced in 2009, is growing by leaps and bounds. In the first year, we issued 36 Rookie Awards. Those 36 Rookies sponsored 35 new Masons into the Fraternity. In 2010, we had 93 new Rookies who sponsored 71 new members. So far in 2011, we have 15 who have sponsored 13 new members, for a total of 144 who have introduced 119 Brothers into the Craft. Please keep in mind, there are 12 requirements to become a Rookie, one of which is the optional requirement to sponsor a new candidate. They are also very active in their Lodges. Such is the success of this program that the Rookies are going to form their own association. To provide a boost to the awareness and importance of sponsorship, Grand Lodge will issue Candidate Sponsor Coins; a Bronze coin for 5 Candidates, Silver for 10, and Gold for 15. These coins will be distributed once a year and the tracking will be done automatically by computer through the Grand Secretary's office.

The **second way to control** membership is to **reduce** the number of **Suspensions**. Since March last, we have lost 356 members due to Suspension for Non-Payment of Dues. In comparison to this time last year, we had lost 750. This is a reduction of 53%. We were finding that **Brothers** were being suspended **without a thorough process** being followed. Grand Lodge is going to handle this problem with the co-operation of individual Lodges. We are doing this because the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Virginia wrote a personal letter to all of the Brothers suspended for NPD, and he retained 70% of those just by reaching out. We are going to put the same program into practice here. This is a controlling factor that we can exert. The Masters and Secretaries have received a letter relative to Non-Payment of Dues and the Demit process. The Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden and Secretary must attest, in an affidavit, that they have followed the prescribed manner in contacting a member who is delinquent in his Dues.

We are committed to continue our membership development activities. We believe they are vital to the future of our Fraternity. With our Lodges working harder on retention along with our aggressive membership development program, we can look forward to being a leader in positive membership growth.

With almost every Lodge in this Jurisdiction **having less than 20%** of their members in attendance on a regular basis (*in 2011-2012 the Ontario average was 26%*), **our Brethren need** to be able to work a systematic plan **to reconnect** with the majority of their **members** and ideally get them to attend again.

A new **Information Services** and Communication Committee has been formed to implement new information **technology systems and updates**, establishing a new, **dynamic information platform** which will allow Grand Lodge to deliver these described services, materials, and information to Lodges and Masons across the Commonwealth. Brethren can now access and complete instruction

courses on a variety of subjects, on-line, statewide, as their schedules allow, with little cost and minimal travel. This site is in addition to the highly successful website EducateMasons.org. developed for Masonic Education and Training in 2005.

All of these programs come at a cost. Since 2005, the Board has spent \$4 million on advertising and public relations alone. The cost of running Grand Lodge has also increased substantially. However, **in the opinion** of many, these **programs** have pulled our Fraternity **back from a precipice**. The financial investment has been considerable, but worth it. The cost is in excess of what we collect in Dues, Rent, and other charitable contributions. That is why you can expect to hear proposals to amend the Grand Constitution in order to increase fees for the Degrees as well as annual Grand Lodge Dues. I urge you to consider well these proposals. Is it fair to the next generation of Masons? How can we properly instruct them on the value of Freemasonry if we ourselves rely too heavily on the contributions and labors of preceding generations to pay our bills?

What is the value of Freemasonry? George Washington once said, “Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your reputation, for it is better to be alone than in bad company.” Being a Freemason is the unlimited opportunity to meet and interact with men of good quality. As active members, we appreciate the role Freemasonry plays in our lives.

For those who feel, as Benjamin Franklin did, **that greatness does lie within**, Freemasonry offers an **unparalleled opportunity** to find it.”