

**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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**313 Lodges**

**38,500 Members**

Most Worshipful John Mason Chambliss Jr., Grand Master, reviewed the State of the Craft in his Jurisdiction by cataloguing events, recognizing success and achievement, while raising matters of concern and offering suggestions for their improvement.

“I think we have the greatest Fraternity in the world and we show signs of growth. I am confident we can build on this foundation and achieve new heights. However, **like most organizations**, we are generally a **20/80** group, wherein **20% of our members attend meetings**, doing the work, while **80% seem content to pay their dues and ignore their responsibilities**. While this ratio is a norm, it is disturbing because it prevents us from accomplishing our full potential.

I equate this phenomenon with a condition I call Fraternal Dementia, because it mirrors the medical and mental conditions of a familiar and dreaded disease. The **conditions** are similar to **ignorance and apathy**, where we display an attitude of “I don’t know” and “I don’t care.” The person becomes reclusive, not wanting to socialize with Brethren of the Fraternity. Once we are **out of the habit** of doing something, it is easy to **lose our confidence**, our **understanding**, and our **willingness** to enjoy fellowship with others. This condition may prove to be fatal.

However, **if recognized in the early stages**, there are treatments that can be administered which will enhance and prolong the quality of life. At this time, there are no vaccinations to provide immunity to this crippling condition. However, attention to detail, care for our Brethren and applying known applications which can strengthen and grow individual Lodges, will certainly contribute positively to the health of our Grand Lodge and our symbolic Lodge.

*“Believe in Freemasonry”*

There are several weaknesses within the local Lodges that need to be addressed. The needs of individual Lodges and Brethren may differ, but the act of acting as a Fraternity and responding to the needs of others remains a critical goal. **We invite members to look introspectively at their Lodges, determine its current health and seek opportunities for growth, and improvement.** The following recommendations should be considered to strengthen and grow our Fraternity with the quality and purpose that we have pursued for years.

**TRAINING:** Provide the training to the rising Officers, so that they learn the Ritual and business proficiency, thus allowing the Officers to advance each year. The Subordinate **Lodge Officer Training Program** provides the means to prepare them to lead the members of the Craft. We must also encourage new members to get involved with the Committees to learn the inner workings of the Lodge, so they will feel vital to its success.

**“BRING A FRIEND NIGHT”** is an event with a proven success record that enables us to open our Lodge doors to people we work with or socialize with and afford them the opportunity to ask questions about the Craft. No pressure to join, just an opportunity to come together in a social atmosphere and learn about Freemasonry. There are no formal guidelines, just whatever works for an individual Lodge willing to make an effort to promote the program.

**LODGE MEETING EXPERIENCE:** Many of the Lodges do not have a meal before the meeting; refreshments after the meeting; educational programs; times of fellowship; activities for the family or community; things of interest to any sub-group of the members which would intrigue them, inspire them, educate them, or even give the members a reason to make Lodge participation a priority or a fulfilling experience. **Many Lodges keep doing things the same old way. *If they always do what they have always done, they will always get what they have always got.*** Grand Lodge has worked diligently in the past few years to **provide tools and assistance** to counteract these trends. They include a monthly **Masonic Education Program**; the **Lodge Services Solvency and Viability Report** which is a *statistical analysis showing the probable future of the Lodge in Membership and Finance if no changes are implemented*; the **Child ID Program**; **Masonic Community Blood Program**; **Scholarships** and the **Community Builders Program**; all provide the opportunity to serve the community and improve the quality of life. **These opportunities** to enhance the Lodge experience **do not denigrate the ability** of the Worshipful Master to rule and govern, **but provide enhancements** to make the task more successful.

**VISITATION:** Many Lodges do not promote Visitation and do not help with Degrees or special activities. All of us need help at one time or another and we can certainly share our time, talent and resources with others. It is also good to experience the work of others, so we can perfect our own, make friends and grow the Fraternity.

**FINANCE:** As in marriage and other situations in life, money (or the lack of it) often poses the most strife we face. We need to do a better job of planning for necessary Lodge expenses and be good stewards of all that is entrusted to us. Set the proper example for others to follow.

**BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION OF CANDIDATES:** The reputation of our Fraternity depends on the character of the men we permit to join our ranks. All the principles of Masonic Philosophy are meaningless if they are not followed by its members. We are all ambassadors and the public judges the Fraternity by how we behave. We recommend that in order to better protect the West Gate and preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied, we follow the path of so many large corporations and other Grand Lodge Jurisdictions by instituting a criminal background check on those who submit petitions for Degrees in Freemasonry. The men most likely to be discouraged from applying will be

those with something to conceal. The cost of the background check should be paid by the applicant by being added to the Petition fee.

I looked back at successful programs of the past and have tried to incorporate the strong parts into the programs for 2011, not to add new initiatives and expense, but to re-evaluate our conditions today. **Let us not take for granted the impact of the minute steps required to complete a task.** Each is critical to a successful outcome. It has been said that without a destination for a goal or a vision, how do we know we have arrived? I believe we have made significant progress in all the areas I have outlined. No one is actually able to create new matter, new beings or new life.

Most of the lessons we have studied have been taught or practiced in the past. But we were able to revive some of them, use them to reignite the passion to take this beloved Craft and breathe new life into it, to find some of those Brethren who have wandered off the pathway and encourage them to walk with us again, and have worked with new Brothers to inspire them to help us grow this Fraternity.”