

**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 NEW BRUNSWICK

145th Annual Communication, Saint John, N.B. May 2012.

41 Lodges

3,274 Members

(Loss of 156)

The DDGMs Reports **on the 7 Districts** of the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick presented a **blunt** and **candid** overview of the Condition of Freemasonry in that Jurisdiction. They are a combination of good news and bad news. Membership remained **stable in only 9** of 41 Lodges; with **only 3** of them showing a **minimal increase**.

“It would,” according to one Report, “be fine and good to report that everything is fine and good; if all I was reporting about was the just and upright character of fine, dedicated Masons in this District, then it would be an easy report to write. But that would just be applying a bright coating over a very dark centre.”

There are **4 Northern Lodges** who have almost **exclusively** had to **fill** their **Officer** lines with **Past Masters**. Their geographical location may be a factor. No new members are arriving to replace inevitable losses. Time is wearing away at them. The **dedication** of the Brethren **is not enough**. If nothing changes, if no startling event occurs to turn these Lodges around and bring in a huge influx of new Masons, then they may not survive. There are simply not enough Masons to keep them alive for the next 5, 10 or 20 years. The future of this District is in jeopardy.”

Concerns about the decline in Membership and the lack of participation surfaced in other Reports, although they are tempered by optimism and the determination to meet these problems head-on. Membership is growing in 2 Districts, and young, enthusiastic minds are being introduced to practices and taking Offices in their Lodges. The hope is expressed that the corner may finally be turned on this recurring problem, that in spite of the many challenges ahead they are on track in making Masonry in

their areas a vital and growing concern. This will not be achieved by wishful-thinking, but by a focus on new membership, visitation, improving Ritual work and involving and educating the existing membership.

Two Committees, **Membership** and **Strategic Planning**, have **developed a 5 Year Plan** designed to stem the tide and return the Craft to a growth mode. The Masters of Lodges are responding with plans and specific targets of their own. Because of the current condition of many Lodges in the Jurisdiction, there is a strong possibility that some may have no option but to surrender their Charter and go into darkness. The concept of a Home Lodge set up by Grand Lodge, gives members of a Lodge gone dark a home, until such time as they can affiliate with another Lodge. This idea has been approved by the Board of General Purposes.

The **Membership Committee** suggested that **Lodges view** the issue of membership in a **specific way**:

“When it comes to **membership** in the Fraternity, there are **many factors** that come into play, such as **attendance, interest, programs and enlightenment**. The **men joining** our Fraternity today have **high expectations**, but once they have **received** their Degrees they start seeing that **Freemasonry is not** what they have **read about or expected**, and this is due to our shortcomings. We must go back to the basics and practice Freemasonry as it was intended to be and **stop being just another group or gentlemen’s club**.”

We **must remember** that when the **Degree work** has been **completed**, it is **not the end** of the process, but **only the beginning**. When this Brother has been introduced into Freemasonry and the white apron has been placed around his waist, the **wisdom** of the Craft **does not automatically** come with it. This is our biggest misconception and the reason we seem to receive many candidates into the Fraternity and fail to keep them. They are searching for something we have, and we must strive to communicate it to our future candidates.”

The extensive documents created, updated and edited by the **Mentorship Committee** in support of this program, were successfully posted on the Grand Lodge Web Site, as well as a note from the Web Master as to how one would go about getting the passwords necessary to access them at the cost of an e mail. There are several avenues of information open to use when performing Mentorship duties with new members.

The original Mentorship program, designed in 1986, is still available and there should be at least two copies of this document in every Lodge in New Brunswick. For those **Lodges** who take the time, energy and absorb the cost, the *Mentorship Videos of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut* are still available and are a valuable asset. Finally, documents have been posted which have been put together from a wide source of Mentorship material from several Jurisdictions, edited to make sure it applies to New Brunswick Masons. Never before has this Jurisdiction been so rich in terms of information for the new Mason. The Committee hopes it will not go to waste.

The **Training and Education Committee** reported that most of the Lodges are **making a real effort** to have some form of **Masonic Education** at all meetings when they are not busy with Degree work. Many are calling upon their new members to prepare a presentation for the Education portion of the evening.

Financial stability is a vital factor in implementing all these initiatives. The **Finance Committee** reported that the **increase in the Per-Capita tax**, although painful, was necessary. No increase had

been imposed for many years and **Grand Lodge** was in the **dangerous situation** of seeking funds from capital reserves to survive. This situation has been averted and Grand Lodge now operates within its budget.

The burden and **responsibility** of guiding the Jurisdiction through these changes **does not solely fall** upon the shoulders of the **Lodges**. The Board of General Purposes is reviewing its structure and operations. It has been **obvious** for some time that the efficiency of the **Board** as it now stands **is not functioning** at its **peak** because of size, blurring lines of authority and redundancy. To correct this as much as possible the **Board** began by clearly determining the **objective(s)**:

- a) Clearly define the role and mandate of each Committee.
- b) Clearly define the lines of authority.
- c) Reduce the size of the Board
- d) Establish staggering terms of serving on the Board.

Presently, at **40+ members**, the Board **is too large** and unwieldy for efficiency. It **does not require** this many people to properly serve a **Jurisdiction** of around **3,000 members**. Reducing the size to a manageable number while still retaining the key Officers and positions will result in a more productive body.

M.W. Peter M. Whittaker, Grand Master, commented on all of the above and on the State of the Fraternity in New Brunswick:-

“I had truly hoped that we might show an increase in our numbers. Unfortunately, we have seen a small decline, a decrease of 156 Brothers. Yet I feel the State of the Fraternity is good. Our Lodges are raising new members, and as I have witnessed from their examinations, we are gaining some quality Officer material.

Although we feel badly when we lose Brothers to Demits or Suspensions, these men were not dedicated to our cause. **We who remain must set our sights high**. We are the Masons who will stem the tide, and along with the quality of the men we bring into our beloved Fraternity, we will witness the resurgence in our ranks. As I said before, Brethren, keep your shoulder to the wheel!”