

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

Hamilton B District

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March 12th, 2020

Brethren,

Over the past 48 hours, there has been much development with the Novel-Coronavirus or COVID-19, including how countries, provinces and organizations are trying to mitigate the spread of the respiratory virus. Mid to large events have been cancelled; the Province of Ontario is closing schools for two weeks following March Break; the NHL and the NBA have suspended regular season play until further notice; business organizations have cancelled non-essential travel and are encouraging employees to work from home; the PGA Tour; the MLB Spring Training and the NCAA March Madness will be playing without spectators present; and the USA have suspended all travel from Europe for 30 days, to name a few.

On Wednesday, March 11th 2020, the Grand Master, M.W. Bro. David J. Cameron, issued a 2nd update to his initial statement on the Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (see attached).

As well, a great deal of information has been made available through a dedicated website from the Ontario government - updated twice, daily. I applaud the Grand Master for keeping our lodges well informed and providing support to the decision makers of the lodges.

I have sat and watched our 24/7 news media create hysteria throughout the world. In doing so, it provided me with the impetus to search for the truth. In doing so, I came to a simple conclusion: What can I personally do to minimize the spread of this virus within my fraternal organization and my community. Following the recommended personal hygiene and cleaning surfaces was an attainable goal. The other was to reduce the opportunity to transmit the virus to a large number of carriers - "Meetings/Gatherings". What non-essential meetings can I forgo attending? As much as I thoroughly enjoy the social connection and bonds of attending lodge meetings and events, are they truly essential to the well-being of our fraternity and communities? Does the reason for our meetings or events outweigh the concern of becoming transmitters of a virus that could cause serious illness, or even death to our membership or our susceptible family members and friends? Would forgoing these social opportunities for as long as it reasonably takes weaken our fraternity? I think not. In fact, I think it would provide yet another benevolent bond with our communities and families, beyond that of our time honoured financial support. We would be recognized for taking the necessary steps to reduce the number of unwitting transmitters within our communities - our fraternal organization being one of them.

Leading by example can be extremely difficult for the one that makes the decision. For example, I very much enjoy visiting the lodges and brethren of our wonderful District. Taking this pleasure away from myself is by far the most difficult thing I have faced in Masonry. The well-being of our members and their families must always be a top priority for all of us.

**PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE DISTRICT SECRETARY
AT THE ADDRESS SHOWN ABOVE**

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We can all be leaders in this effort against Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19). In fact some of the most effective leaders in these situations are not employees of health or government agencies. We can succeed in this if we make our decisions based on calm confidence, that is based on science and rational thought in the sense and understanding that we are all in this together.

Brethren, I fully support the lodges in the Hamilton B District if they request dispensation to cancel/postpone meetings or cancel/postpone events. Know that I will be making arrangements with lodges hosting my upcoming Official Visits to postpone them until further notice. To do my part in minimizing the spread of the Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19) I will not be visiting lodges or attending lodge events. In the next few days, I will be providing my regrets to each of the lodges or organizing bodies that decide to hold their planned meetings/events. Additional communications will be provided regarding the status of upcoming Hamilton B Events.

I ask that lodges please c.c. myself and the District Secretary on all requests for dispensation to cancel lodge meetings or postpone your Installation or Official Visit due to Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Be well in keeping you and your family safe,

R.W. Bro. Michael R. Martin
DDGM - Hamilton B District

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