

**Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada  
in the Province of Ontario**

**Temporary Business Policies during Continuation of the  
COVID-19 Lockdown**

[Overview February 2021:](#)

The longer the COVID-19 lockdown continues, the more we will be facing pressures to permit the conducting of certain lodge business via virtual meetings. In order to accommodate the necessity of making certain decisions while in lockdown and by means of our membership voting on business online, temporary business policies are needed to ensure certain Sections of the Constitution are not violated.

Thus, the following policies are to be considered temporary only during the lockdown. Once the lockdown is ended, we must revert back to the policies and procedures for conducting our business as laid out in the Constitution.

**In creating these temporary policies the paramount concern is that EVERY MEMBER of the lodge still has the opportunity to cast a vote on any business items that arise.**

In any of the following situations meticulous minutes and preservation of all correspondence with any of the lodge brethren must be kept on record for audit purposes.

This document refers to the following COVID-19 Temporary Polices:

**Part A:**

- Applications
- Demits
- Suspensions (NPD)
- Restorations after Demits and Suspensions (NPD)
- Expenses Exceeding By-Law Limits
- Use of Ritual During Virtual Meetings

**Part B:**

- Amalgamations
- Voluntary Surrender of Warrant
- By-Law Amendments

## Part A:

### **Temporary Polices for:**

- 1. Applications**
- 2. Demits**
- 3. Suspensions (NPD)**
- 4. Restorations after Demits and Suspensions (NPD)**
- 5. Expenses Exceeding By-Law Limits**
- 6. Use of Ritual During Virtual Meetings**

#### 1. Policy and Procedures for Applications:

##### **Applications for Initiations and Affiliations:**

Rushing to process applications when we cannot even attend meetings serves no purpose. Any new initiate becomes a Mason for life and thus there is no rush. While applications can be accepted by the Lodge Secretary, the further processing of applications for Initiation and Affiliation is not permitted during the lockdown.

**Therefore, the current processes in place for the processing of applications for Initiation or Affiliation will not change during the lockdown period.**

#### 2. Policy and Procedures for Demits:

##### **Demits:**

The policy already in place for the processing of demits during the lockdown will remain in effect. That policy is stated as follows:

- all demits must be processed in accordance with Sections 190-194 of the Constitution.
- the effective date of a demit is the date on which the demit was submitted in writing to the Lodge Secretary.
- to issue a demit in good standing, the member must be fully paid up as of the date of the request of the demit (otherwise the demit is ‘dues owing’).
- Before a demit is issued, hopefully an investigation should be conducted by telephone to ascertain if benevolence may be required.

During the lockdown, demits can be received by the Lodge Secretary. If the member requesting a demit is up to date in his dues his name will be read out at the

next regular meeting of the lodge (whenever that will take place) and the demit in good standing will be issued following that meeting but effective the date the request was received by the Lodge. These demits in good standing are to be recorded on the first semi-annual return submitted after the demit was received in writing by the lodge Secretary.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, a request for demit can be withdrawn by the member provided that:

- A withdrawal request is submitted to the lodge Secretary in writing
- The request has not yet been read out at the next regular meeting of the lodge
- The demit has not already been reported on a semi-annual return

**The current processes in place for the processing of demits during the lockdown period will not change.**

### 3. Policy and Procedures for Suspensions (NPD):

#### **Suspensions NPD:**

The Constitution of Grand Lodge enforces automatic suspension of a member in default of his dues for a period of 12 months. Therefore, the suspension does not require an in-person vote.

However, the names of any brethren more than 12 months in arrears must still be read out at the next regular meeting of the lodge and the Worshipful Master will then declare them (officially) suspended. The brethren will be suspended as of the date of the end of the 12 month period and reported on the next applicable semi-annual return.

**The current processes in place for the processing of Suspensions NPD during the lockdown period will not change.**

### 4. Policy and Procedures for Restorations from Demits and Suspension (NPD):

#### **Restorations after Demit (Dues Owing) and Suspension NPD:**

There is no reason to change the restoration process during the lockdown and thus the constitution must be followed with respect to reinstatements.

Points to note:

- During the lockdown, the committee of inquiry can conduct its business via phone or virtual conferencing rather than in person. However, a brother cannot be officially restored until the vote is taken in lodge.

- The restoration is effective the date the vote is passed in Lodge.
- In Sec 197 (a) or (b), Sec 198 (a) or (b) and Sec 203 (a) and 203 (b), it is the date the application for restoration is made to the lodge that is the determining factor regarding the application of the three year time period.
- Regulations regarding the three-year time period still apply.

Withholding the vote until labours resume should not be an issue as there are no meetings to attend in any event.

**The current processes in place for the processing of Restorations after Demits and Suspensions (NPD) during the lockdown period will not change.**

#### 5. Policy and Procedures for Expenses Exceeding By-Law Limits:

##### **Large Expenditures of money (over By-law limit):**

Any expenditures above a limit imposed by the lodge by-laws **cannot** be approved by just the Worshipful Master, the Secretary and the Treasurer.

**Therefore, the current processes in place for the expenditure of funds over any maximum stated in By-Laws during the lockdown period will change as follows.**

The following procedure must be used to permit such expenses during the lockdown:

- a. A Notice of Motion for the proposed expense must be delivered to every member of the lodge via email or surface mail in a lodge summons.
- b. The Notice of Motion must outline the motion and would indicate that it would be discussed at a virtual meeting (which requires a prior summons) on a specific date. Minutes of that meeting must be recorded.
- c. After that virtual meeting, the minutes relating to the discussion on the motion and proper notification must be sent to all members (in the same manner as the Notice of Motion) with clear instructions on how each member can cast his vote either by email or surface mail.
- d. A specific timeframe for responding to the vote must be indicated. The timeframe must be long enough to allow adequate time to follow up and receive responses.
- e. The lodge secretary must record the vote cast and method used by each member.
- f. If the motion has been approved by the majority defined in the lodge by-laws the expense will be deemed to have been approved by the membership.

- g. Members must be notified of the result of the vote (approved or not approved) in a summons sent to all members of the Lodge. If all members are so notified, any such approved motion does not require ratification at the first regular meeting on the lodge.

#### 6. Policy and Procedures for use of Ritual during Virtual Meetings:

No changes will be made to the current policy of not permitting any ritual to be used during a virtual meeting. Degree rehearsals using the ritual are not permitted in a virtual meeting.

**The current processes in place prohibiting any ritual to be performed in a virtual meeting during the lockdown period will not change.**

### Part B:

#### **Temporary Polices for:**

- 1. Amalgamations**
- 2. Voluntary Surrender of Warrant**
- 3. By-Law Amendments**

#### 1. Policy and Procedures for Amalgamations:

The first six steps of the Grand Lodge Policy and Procedures for Amalgamation may be modified temporarily during the COVID-19 lockdown ONLY as detailed below. Steps 7 through 11 of the Policy and Procedures remain in effect as stated in the Policy and Procedures document.

#### **Amalgamations: Policy and Procedures**

- 1) To satisfy Section 159, each of the lodges considering amalgamation must adopt a resolution that amalgamation proceedings be initiated with the other lodge(s) named in the resolution. Proper notice of motion must have been given at a preceding meeting in each lodge before the resolution can be moved, seconded, discussed and voted on.

**COVID-19 Process:**

- a. A Notice of Motion to initiate amalgamation proceedings must be delivered to every member of the lodge via email or surface mail in a lodge summons.
  - b. The Notice of Motion must outline the motion and would indicate that it would be discussed at a virtual meeting (which requires a prior summons) on a specific date.
  - c. After that virtual meeting, proper notification would again be sent to all members (in the same manner as the Notice of Motion) with clear instructions on how each member can cast his ballot either by email or surface mail.
  - d. A specific timeframe for responding to the vote must be indicated. The timeframe must be long enough to allow adequate time to follow up and receive responses.
  - e. The lodge secretary must record the vote cast and method used by each member.
- 2) To satisfy Section 160, each lodge must appoint a committee of three members to represent the Lodge in defining the terms of reference of the amalgamation. Grand Lodge recommends approving the appointment of the Committee members as a vote in open lodge.

**COVID-19 Process:**

- a. A vote to accept the committee members must also be taken.
  - b. Notification of the vote to accept the Committee members should be given in the same notification as the Notice of Motion above.
  - c. Instructions on how each member can cast his ballot either by email or surface mail would be included in the notification of the vote sent in Step 1.
- 3) Notification must be sent to Grand Lodge containing the text of the Notice of Motion, a copy of the Summons containing the Notice of Motion, the text of the amalgamation motion voted on by the lodge, the date of the vote, the result of the vote, and the names and contact information of the three committee members selected. At this point the lodge should inform the District Deputy Grand Master of the pending amalgamation and keep him informed as progress is made.

**COVID-19 Process: There is no change in this step (All the above information required to complete Steps 1 and 2 must still be submitted to Grand Lodge). This information may be sent via email.**

- 4) As per Section 160, the Grand Master will then appoint a member from another Lodge to act as Chairman of the Joint Committee on amalgamation. Such Chairman will have the power to vote in case of a tie.

**COVID-19 Process: No change**

- 5) The Joint Committee will prepare the Report of the Joint Committee on Amalgamation in accordance with Section 161 (a). There are no rules for how the Lodge should ‘approve’ the report, but a vote of approval in open lodge is suggested.

**COVID-19 Process:**

- a. The Joint Committee shall meet virtually to draft the Terms of Reference Report.
  - b. Once a draft is prepared it must be distributed to every member, either by email or surface mail with instructions on how to respond with questions or concerns.
  - c. Another virtual meeting which requires a prior summons is then scheduled to discuss the draft report and answer all concerns.
  - d. Then, after any edits have been made, the final draft must be distributed to every member again (via email or surface mail) with notification on how (via email or surface mail) and when to vote providing a deadline which allows time for adequate follow up and the receipt of responses.
  - e. The lodge Secretary must record the vote cast and method used by each member.
  - f. The last draft of the report shall be approved by a majority of the members voting.
  - g. The Grand Master and Grand Secretary shall be sent all draft versions of the Terms of Reference for review.
- 6) Once the final Report of the Joint Committee on Amalgamation has been approved by the Joint Committee a copy of the Report of the Joint Committee must be sent to each member of each lodge at their last known address according to Section 161 (a). The mailing to each member must clearly articulate that unless 25% of the membership (as reported on the last semi-annual return of the lodge) notify the Secretary of the lodge, in writing of their objection to such amalgamation, within ten days from the date of mailing of said notice, the amalgamation shall be carried into effect as soon as the Grand Master approves of such amalgamation.

**COVID-19 Process:**

- a. The final Terms of Reference Report must be sent to each member by email or surface mail with instructions on how to respond and vote (email or surface mail) on acceptance.

- b. The lodge secretary must record the vote cast and method used by each member.
- c. Follow up is strongly recommended to receive responses.

**Note: Unless otherwise directed by the Grand Master, this temporary policy in effect during the COVID-19 lockdown does NOT permit the actual amalgamation to take place until labours resume.**

## 2. Policy and Procedures for Voluntary Surrender of Warrant:

The policies and procedures for a Voluntary Surrender of Warrant are very similar to that of an amalgamation. Therefore the temporary policy changes for amalgamations will for the most part apply to Surrender discussions. Please consult the Grand Secretary for further details.

**Note: Unless otherwise directed by the Grand Master, this temporary policy in effect during the COVID-19 lockdown does NOT permit the Voluntary Surrender of Warrant to take place until labours resume.**

## 3. Policy and Procedures for By-Law Amendments

There is some urgency during the lockdown to enable amendments to lodge by-laws to be discussed, voted on and submitted to Grand Lodge for approval during the lockdown period.

### **By-Law Amendments: Policy and Procedures**

305. (b) No amendment shall be made in the By-laws of a lodge, unless by "Notice of Motion" given at a regular meeting; the proposed amendment shall be duly entered in the minutes and inserted in the lodge summons for the next regular meeting, when the proposed amendment shall come up for discussion. If the amendment is regularly moved and seconded, and passed with the support of a majority of the members present, it shall, as soon as it receives the approval of the Grand Master, become law.

#### **COVID-19 Process:**

##### **Step 1:**

- a. The Notice of Motion to amend the By-Laws must be delivered to every member of the lodge via a summons sent by email or surface mail.

- b. The proposed amendment shall be included in the summons indicating the date and time of the virtual meeting (which requires the prior summons) at which the motion will be discussed. Each member must be given clear instructions and a timeline indicating how he can submit questions or concerns if he is unable to attend the virtual meeting.
- c. All questions and concerns will be raised at the virtual meeting, discussed and results documented.
- d. The lodge Secretary must record all questions and concerns raised by each member and the resolution.
- e. If any changes are made to the proposed amendment the process must begin at Step 1 again. In such case it is recommended that the document containing the resolutions to all questions and concerns be delivered to every member with the Notice of Motion.

Step 2:

- a. The document containing the final resolutions to all questions and concerns must be distributed to every member of the lodge with clear instructions on how each member can vote on the proposed amendment either by email or surface mail.
- b. A specific timeframe for responding to the vote must be indicated. The timeframe must be long enough to allow adequate time to follow up on and receive responses. The lodge Secretary must record the vote cast and method used by each member.

306. In submitting by-laws or amendments thereof to the Grand Secretary for approval by the Grand Master, after they have been confirmed by the lodge, the following documentation signed by the Master and the Secretary under the seal of the lodge is required: (1983)

- (a) one certified copy of the lodge notice containing the notice of motion in which the proposed amendment is printed in full;
- (b) one certified copy of a complete set of the current by-laws of the lodge; (1983)
- (c) one certified copy of that portion of the minutes of the meeting at which notice of motion was given, setting out in full the proposed motion; and (1989)
- (d) a certificate in duplicate in accordance with prescribed Form 5 (page 183), that the amendments (setting them out in full) were legally carried by a majority of the members present and voting.

COVID-19 Process:

The above documentation must still be submitted to the Grand Secretary after being confirmed by the lodge. However, the lodge Secretary may submit the required documentation electronically via email without the lodge seal provided the email includes the statement “**Please consider this email and its attachments approved and certified by the Worshipful Master and Secretary as if they were signed by each of them under the seal of the Lodge**”.

Fraternally, submitted,  
D. Garry Dowling  
Grand Secretary  
Lou Domjan,  
COO