



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

GRAND SECRETARY

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Covid-19 Update August 11 2021

August 11, 2021

Brethren,

Sometime in the near future, the Province may enter the Exit Step. We have prepared this update to help you plan for a re-opening of lodges. These guidelines are based on our interpretation of the Roadmap Exit Step document

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200364#BK0>

as published on July 29, 2021. If clarifications published later differ from our interpretation or if, when the Exit Step is implemented, there are any changes to these regulations, these guidelines will be amended. In all cases, provincial, municipal and local public health regulations take priority over these.

The moratorium on indoor meetings will end and **these guidelines will take effect when we go into the Provincial Exit Step, or September 01, whichever comes LATER.**

Guidelines for the Resumption of Meetings:

The following meeting guidelines are to be observed:

The following guidelines apply to regular and emergent meetings, rehearsals, Committee of General Purposes meetings, *etc.*

Masks or face coverings **MUST** be worn at all times when entering or within the building.

Government approved signs must be posted at the entrance. A template can be found at https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/COVID_19_bus_orgs_question_signage.pdf.

Contact information must be gathered for everyone who enters the building. A second sheet of paper **must** be provided at the Tyler's desk and everyone attending **must legibly print** his name and telephone number on it. This is in addition to signing the Tyler's register. This sheet of paper will be taken home by the Lodge Secretary after each meeting and must be available for health authorities if requested. Note also that this list must be kept by the Lodge Secretary for 30 days and then destroyed.

A Safety plan must be posted in the building. We will shortly put a sample template on the Grand Lodge website and will update it when there are changes.

Cleaning and disinfecting must be done according to government guidelines.

Lodge regalia and furniture – wands, gavels, *etc.* – which can be sanitized, should have that done before and after use. Once sanitized they should only be touched by the brother who will be using them. Those that cannot be sanitized - officers' collars, VOSL – should be put out and put away by the brother who will be using them.

Hand sanitizer must be readily available around the lodge room, ante room, at the entrance and in any other place people gather.

Gloves cannot be sanitized with hand sanitizer, so they should not be worn. Grand Lodge officers will not wear gloves.

Windows and doors may be left open where practical.

There will be no singing.

Guidelines with respect to Distancing and Avoiding Physical Contact:

Distancing does not seem to be a requirement **under the Exit Step** except when masks are removed for eating or drinking, but it is not totally clear. **Because further clarification is needed degree work (including Installations) is NOT permitted at this time.**

Festive Board/Fourth degree: The multi-page government document related to the serving of food and beverages must be followed: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/restaurant-and-food-services-health-and-safety-during-covid-19>.

Balloting:

- ballot balls should be disinfected before and after each use
- if possible hand sanitizer should be used prior to receiving the ballot balls and after depositing them
- to determine how balloting should be performed, the maintenance of social distancing should be considered

Elections and Installations:

The Book of Constitution must be observed with respect to the scheduling and performance of elections and installations.

Election and Installation scheduling options are still under review and will be communicated later:

Options being explored include but are not limited to:

- Current officers stay in place until next regularly scheduled installation
- Elect and Install a new set of officers now for a term to last until the next regularly scheduled installation.
- Elect and Install a new set of officers as soon as possible who will stay for an extended term (remainder of this year and the next Masonic year)

Additional Guidelines:

The following activities may commence only after we enter the Provincial Exit Step, or September 01, whichever comes LATER.

Masonic Memorial Service:

Masonic Memorial services will be permitted **(based on the highlighted note above)** in the lodge or at the funeral home as long as local and provincial health guidelines are observed as well as the policies of the facility. Graveside services are not allowed in this jurisdiction.

It is also hoped that lodges will consider holding a Memorial Service in the lodge to honour all those that have passed since the Masonic lockdown came into effect.

Official Visits:

An Official Visit by the DDGM will be required for every lodge during the 2021-2022 Masonic year.

Rapid Tests/Vaccination Passports:

Unless government regulations change, these will not be mandated.

Finally:**Lodges not wishing to open yet:**

We acknowledge that some lodges, due to their membership or their building may not wish to open yet. They may continue to operate under the current pandemic rules. A lodge may issue a summons that says that a meeting will occur on a stated date but whether it will be virtual or in-person will be determined later. Once lodges re-open, despite whatever the summons may say, a meeting may be cancelled at short notice without penalty (provided every effort is made to contact all members).

Brethren who are at high risk or with household members at high risk may wish to observe more intense precautions or may even not wish to partake yet. That is perfectly reasonable and we would ask you to keep their circumstances in mind. Should a brother wish to maintain a 2 m distance, we will accommodate him. (Note: if you see a brother sitting or standing at a distance, ask before moving closer to him.)

Disclaimer:

To re-iterate, this update is to help you PLAN for a re-opening of lodges. These guidelines are based on our interpretation of the Roadmap Exit Step document

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200364#BK0> as published on July 29, 2021.

If clarifications published later differ from our interpretation or if, when the Exit Step is implemented, there are any changes to these regulations, these guidelines will be amended and communicated as needed.

Fraternally,



D. Garry Dowling,
Grand Secretary



David J. Cameron,
Grand Master