



The Grand Lodge of Alberta
ANCIENT, FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

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To: ALL Lodge Secretaries and District Deputy Grand Masters for immediate circulation

Brethren,

As you are in the process of preparing for your Annual District Meetings, there are many questions that are being asked with respect to how to complete this task within the framework of Covid-19 restrictions. The Grand Line and Executive Committee have met and reviewed available options that are within the compliance of our Rules and Regulations and the circumstances as they apply to our ceremonies and responsibilities under Part II, Chapter 2; Regulations for the Administration of Masonic Districts.

Recognizing that Covid-19 has not disappeared and is still present in our jurisdiction we must obey the guidelines from Alberta Health Services. We must recognize that many of our meeting facilities have restrictions placing a cap on seating capacity much lower than what the facilities have been licenced for.

In acknowledging the above, we as a Jurisdiction are in the process of finalizing details which will allow electronic balloting , through the use of the platform ***Election Buddy***, for the election of next year's DDGM's and, where necessary, ballot on specific business that may come before each District. This is the same platform that was successfully used at our Annual Communication in June.

We also understand that some Districts may wish to delay their meetings in order to plan and circulate information & instructions – this will reviewed in consultation with the DDGM and the Grand Lodge Office provided the date restrictions set out in the C&R are met.

As the nomination deadline for submitting Form 171 (Nomination form for DDGM Applicants) has been pre-established based on the original date for the Annual District Meetings; that determines the closure date and determines the eligibility for using the option for electronic ballots. All nomination windows will shortly be closed and three conditions exist for choosing the next DDGM's for your District:

1. Districts that have not received nominations prior to the specified closure of nominations (60 days prior to the meeting) **must open nominations from the floor** and the election must be made from those in attendance (subject to quorum being met).
2. Districts that have received one qualified nominee will not require an election as II 2 B 11.b.2.iii states that the Candidate will be declared elected by acclamation at the District Meeting.
3. Where two (2) **or** more qualified applications have been received prior to the specified closure date, these Districts will be able to hold their elections through the use of **Election Buddy**.

In all three conditions noted above, attendance at the Annual District Meeting may be severely restricted. To this end we have looked at options that will allow fair representation of the members and where necessary allow balloting to occur. We are looking at the feasibility of allowing video streaming of a **limited portion of the District Meeting**; as this option is further reviewed more details will be shared.

In all cases our concern is that our membership be protected while assembled from unnecessary exposure to Covid-19. We further desire that our membership have equal opportunity to ballot on a candidate to be their representative as the next DDGM for their Masonic District. It is acknowledged that some moderation of the **Regulations under Part II 2 B** are required to facilitate holding the Annual District Meetings and conduct the necessary balloting at these meetings.

Below is a summary of issues and conditions that each District must abide by in order that fairness and democracy be ensured.

Attendance: - the **minimum** per Lodge be limited to three (3) principal officers or their approved alternate. This number includes the host Lodge but excludes the DDGM and the nominees and scrutineers where required. Additional members may be admitted if done on an equal invitation basis keeping the attendance number below the occupancy threshold.

Note: Stations (Officers) that need to be filled at the District Meeting are: DDGM, Sr. & Jr. Wardens, Chaplain and Tyler. *These stations do not need to be occupied by members of the host Lodge.*

Quorum: - Quorum as defined in our C&R - representation by 50 % of the Lodges within the District. (Ref. II.2.A.5)

Voting: - Voting for the DDGM must be completed by secret ballot. As two of the three conditions stated above require secret ballot, the following options have been adopted:

- Where no nominations have been received prior to the close of the nomination period only those in attendance at the District Meeting may cast ballots. Election is by secret ballot and follows the procedure as defined in the C&R.
- Where nominations have been received in accordance with the Regulations balloting will be open to all **Master Masons** holding membership in Lodges within the District. The limit is one ballot per member. Voting shall be conducted via **Election Buddy** and eligible names shall be compiled based on the membership as determined by the last Semi-Annual Return (June 2020) - completed by the Grand Lodge Office in consultation with Lodge Secretaries. Once approved, this list will be circulated accordingly. (Similar to the process completed in June for Annual Communication).
- Scrutineers – Where **Election Buddy** is being utilized, the DDGM will nominate one official to receive the results from the Grand Registrar or the Grand Secretary. These two individuals are the only two who will have access to the election results. In the case of a tie ballot, determination will be made by the sitting DDGM casting an additional ballot.
- The time period for which the ballot will be open will be clearly noted on the circular sent out to members with their registration details.
- Where more than two candidates have been nominated, the option for **Ranked Ballots** will be implemented. This procedure will have been reviewed and circulated to the members prior to the date of the district meeting.
- Special issues that may be before the District - such as an increase in Per Capita Fees; will be placed on the ballot in advance and will have been circulated to the membership **21 days** prior to the District Meeting.
- Order of Business at the District Meeting: (a) Where the District must receive nominations from the floor for the next DDGM – there are no restrictions to the order of business. (b) Where the District *must elect* using **Election Buddy** the District Meeting will be opened in Form, reception of Past DDGM's and GL Officers will commence. The Agenda will be approved and the election window will be declared **CLOSED**. The DDGM or his delegate (scrutineer) will await the results of the Ballot by email and verify the results before communicating them to the assembly (clear winner and quorum being met).

After the election for the DDGM has been confirmed and the successful candidate declared, the DDGM will be granted the authority for the **Tyled portion** of the District

Meeting to be **closed** and a webcast (Zoom broadcast or other platform) may then be opened for the remainder of the District Meeting if the hosting facility is equipped for that option.

Brethren, as the Covid-19 restrictions on assemblies continue and have an undetermined duration, we are taking initiatives that allow for us to safely return to operations. Where these initiatives stretch the restrictions of our Regulations, but fall within the intent of the same, we have made efforts to see that fairness and equal opportunity are open to all members wishing to participate democratically in choosing their District's DDGM and in other matters. Be assured that this process has been discussed at length by the Executive Committee and that this process has been reviewed by the Jurisprudence Committee, The Committee on the Work and by our Parliamentarian. I thank you for your participation in this process and patience in understanding why we are taking these extraordinary steps.

Fraternally,

Reg Karbonik

Reg Karbonik, Grand Master