



**MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE
of ANCIENT, FREE *and* ACCEPTED MASONS of
BRITISH COLUMBIA *and* YUKON**

Office of the Grand Master
M.W. Bro. Donald W. MacKenzie

16 November 2021

Brethren,

I hope you are all well and staying safe during this unprecedented health problem in British Columbia. I miss the opportunity to meet and greet all of the brethren from our great jurisdiction. Hopefully, we will be able to get together in the near future.

I am writing to you to provide additional information on the difficult decision to move *from an operational Cancer Car Program to one that reflects a financial contribution*. This was a difficult decision by myself and your executive officers but one that needed to reflect the current state of Freemasonry in British Columbia and Yukon. Although the current covid-19 pandemic was certainly a factor, this infection was only one consideration. Several previous Grand Masters and their executive officers have been reviewing the operation of the program for a number of years with a view to reducing risk, legal exposure and financial risk for our fraternity.

The first consideration was to reduce risk and legal exposure for our fraternity and its officers. Several years ago, two very serious accidents, where cancer clients were injured, pointed out the additional risk and liability that Freemasons of British Columbia and Yukon faced. Over the last few years, increased scrutiny by legal firms for other not-for-profit organizations, sports teams and municipalities have raised the spectre that organizations and their officers may become legally liable for accidents.

As a result of these reviews, many organizations, including the Canadian Cancer Society, have implemented additional training and eligibility requirements for volunteers. This included criminal record checks, follow-up on sponsors, and ICBC insurance reviews. One consideration for us as an organization to reduce risk and liability was to hire a person to ensure that all volunteers received ongoing training and that criminal record checks, and ICBC driver abstracts are reviewed at least once a year. This would be an added cost to the organization and would change us from a volunteer organization to an independent contractor.

The second consideration was financial. When we started the program, we had over 20,000 Freemasons in British Columbia and Yukon. This year we will be down to around 5,000. Our *per capita* assessment of \$20 currently generates approximately \$100,000 per year for our

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"Improvise, adapt, and overcome"

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Masonic Community Charities Fund. This amount covers less than one third of the cost of the program. Fortunately, we have received contributions from wills, bequests, and donations from individuals and organizations along with earnings from the Community Charities Fund to help cover the balance of the costs.

Our third consideration was the aging of the masonic community volunteers who drive, dispatch, and manage the organization. The number of masonic members who volunteer has been shrinking steadily each year and non-masonic volunteers significantly outnumbers our active masonic members. In addition, those willing to volunteer to run the program are also aging and there will come a time when we are not able to replace these dedicated and courageous individuals who have ensured that our program helps those in need of transportation.

I had hoped that we would have an opportunity at the last two Grand Lodge communications to put forward this information and seek input from the members of Grand Lodge. Unfortunately, due to covid-19, that opportunity was not available. I have asked that a report be prepared for our next Grand Lodge communication in June 2022 so that we can start to make some plans for the future.

In August of 2020, the executive officers met to review the status of the program prior to a restart scheduled for the fall. Our first and foremost consideration has always been the cancer clients who are the recipients of our program and secondly our wonderful volunteers. With these points in mind, the Grand Lodge executive decided to restart operations on Vancouver Island and the Interior as the type of operations and the separation of clients could be obtained that protected clients and volunteers.

Over the last two year we had been negotiating with the Canadian Cancer Society on a new operational agreement. These negotiations had pointed out to us that we would be facing additional risk if we continued with this agreement. Our next consideration, therefore, was to advise the Canadian Cancer Society that we would only extend the agreement to 30 September 2021 and that we were looking at developing, with them, some action plan that would continue past that point. A copy of this letter was sent to all lodge secretaries.

Over the fall and winter, I asked VW Bro. Bill Wray to explore alternatives that would ensure that cancer clients transportation needs continued to be met and that the Freemasons of British Columbia and Yukon would only operate as a financial funder and not an operator. Proposals were submitted by both the Canadian Cancer Society and the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society. Both of these proposals were reviewed to ensure that they had the capacity to ensure that the client transportation needs were met, that they were a registered society, and had a tax status that would allow us to fund them.

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In May 2021, the Grand Line officers met to review and discuss the proposals. Revised options were provided to both organizations along with some terms and conditions. In June 2021, both organizations accepted the proposals with the revised terms and conditions. In June 2021, we formally transferred responsibility for the program to the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society to provide transportation services in the Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond and New Westminster areas.

Following a request by a committee of Freemasons on Vancouver Island, the Grand Line delayed a transfer of the Vancouver and Interior operations until that request could be reviewed and considered. Following several discussions and meetings with the Canadian Cancer Society, Grand Lodge executive, and the committee members, it was decided that we needed to move forward with the Canadian Cancer Society proposal effective 1 October 2021. A letter to volunteers was sent to all lodges advising them of the change to the program.

The resulting three-year agreements are as follows

1. Canadian Cancer Society - \$150,000 every 4 months for a total of \$450,000 per year, for a maximum of 3 years with an annual review provision to ensure that cancer clients have transportation on Vancouver Island, Okanagan Interior and Prince George.
2. Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society - \$50,000 every four months for a total of \$150,000 per year for a maximum of 3 years with an annual review provision to ensure that clients have transportation in the Greater Vancouver Area.
3. Reduction in risk and legal liability for Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.
4. The Masonic Community Charities Fund will still have funds following the three years of the contribution program.

As noted, I look forward to a discussion at Grand Lodge in June 2022 to look at the future of the Masonic Community Charities Fund.

Fraternally,



MW Bro. Donald W. MacKenzie
Grand Master

/twm

by email