



HINDU CULTURAL CENTRE OF LONDON ONTARIO
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President - Dr. Mohan Merchea, Vice-President - Mr. Tara Persaud, Treasurer – Mrs. Anitha Prakash
Secretary - Mrs. Shanta Doobay, Asst. Secretary Treasurer, Mr. Vikas Sharma,
Members: Mrs. Shashi Bawa, Mr. Sanjay Singh, Dr. Dev Sainani, Mr. Nimish Shukla, Mrs.
Prema Patil, Mrs. Suman Singh

NEWSLETTER – January 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A VERY HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

I am sure 2020 will bring lots of happiness in your and your extended family. We have had a very busy and fruitful year for our mandir. It is all due to your devotion and generosity of donations for the expansion.

We have a virtually new and expanded mandir for the new year.

I AM VERY PLEASED TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY THAT ON DECEMBER 18TH THE CITY HALL BUILDING INSPECTORS WITH THE OUR ARCHITECT SPENT ALL DAY INSPECTING THE FACILITY AND HAVE APPROVED THE FACILITY FOR OCCUPATION. MY PERSONAL TAHNKS TO SPRIET & ASSOCITAES AND NORLON BUILDERS FOR THE WORK THEY HAVE DONE.

Diwali Fundraising Dinner was held on Saturday November 16th, 2019 at Clarke Road High School. The event this year surpassed all our events of all previous years. The performances were amazing, the organization was great the turn -out was marvelous. I have heard comments that this was the best of all the Diwali functions held in London. Mrs. Prema Patil, Chair Festivals Committee and her festivals committee worked very diligently and to produce an excellent program. They deserve our very special gratitude. My personal thanks to all performers for putting up an exceptional program.

My thanks to all the organizers of all the festivities. They put in lot of efforts and they deserve all the thanks.

Diwali Dinner was attended by our London mayor, Mr. Ed Holder and Mr. Peter Fragikatos a local MP.



Mr. Michael Kim, CEO of Hanstone Canada and Hyundai Canada was very kind to donate quartz for the altar of mandir, kitchen and the washrooms. The total cost of the quartz would have been close to \$50,000.00. (This excludes the fabrication and installation) He was honored as a Patron Member of HCC at our Diwali dinner. HCC thank him and his company for their generosity. I also want to thank Mr. Nitesh Parekh and Mr. Aashish Shah for organizing the donation of quartz for HCC. May God bless them.

The HCC community was very generous in their donations and we raised almost \$475,000 at the Diwali Dinner.

The donation receipts for the Diwali fundraising Dinner (as much permitted under CRA rules) have already been issued and you should have received them by now. If any one has not received the receipts so far please let me know.

HCC dedicated the auditorium and the Dining Hall in memory of Late Mrs. Jyoti Shah in perpetuity. Dr. PC (Raju) Shah and his family donated \$200,000.00 in her memory. HCC thanks them and God bless them for their generosity.

This was followed by another generous donation of \$150,000.00 by Mrs. Kanta and Dr. Mohan Merchea & family. HCC dedicated the kitchen in perpetuity and will be named "Kanta & Dr. Mohan Merchea and Family Annapurna Rasoi"

We still have the following areas of our mandir which can be dedicated in perpetuity: Men's and Women's Coat Rooms for \$50,000.00 each and Elevator for \$100,000.00.

This is a good the time for you all to donate generously to the good cause of expansion of the Mandir. We need funds very acutely. You can donate whatever amount you wish. One can become a Life member by donating \$6000.00 or a Patron member by donating \$10,000.00 over a continuous period of three years. You can donate every month over a continuous period of three-years. This will help HCC in getting very minimal mortgage.

Some of our community members have donated securities in kind for a better income tax credit from CRA. I am attaching an article on the same subject which highlights the tax advantage of donating securities in kind.

The major part of construction has been completed and the elevator has been installed. Certain things have still to be completed both inside the mandir and in the grounds. The parking lot and the groundwork will be completed in the spring. The kitchen is being renovated and so are the coat rooms.

Until now HCC has been able to pay all the invoices of the construction of the expansion from its own funds and has not utilized the loan from TD bank. We will be borrowing from TD



Canada Trust in the month of January. So far, we have spent in excess of 1 million dollars and of this date we have about \$ 125,000 in the bank. ALL THE CREDIT GOES TO YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY.

Transparency & Accountability

I had promised the community that I will be open and transparent to the community when I was elected as President of HCC on April 1st, 2018.

I have spent closer to two years to persuade a community member to return HCC money that has been withheld for about 30 years. I was able to recover about \$ 3000, but records were maintained with very poor accounting practices. When we have the receipts of all the expenses, it saves money for HCC, as we get a major part of HST back from CRA. It was a very exhaustive and humiliating experience for me, as no one should keep HCC money for whatever reason.

I will be updating the community with a very detailed accounting of the expansion and the books of HCC are open to all and I can assure you that I have fought for every penny spent to achieve maximum savings for HCC. Any member of HCC in good standing can ask me and we will share all the accounts and the expansion accounts.

We had to undergo the following additional expenses which were detected and came to our attention after the construction started and increased my initial projected cost of \$ 1.3 million for the expansion of the mandir. There are also other improvements and additions to the mandir, well above the mandate given to me for the expansion by the community. These are:

1. The furnace servicing the Panditji's house had to be replaced at a cost of \$ 3887.20
2. There were safety issues identified in that the past contractors had left open electrical junction boxes with live wires. This cost us about \$2500.00. This was a real safety issue and code violations. The City inspectors could have shut us down if these repairs were not performed.
3. The sewage copper pipe from the men's washroom from the main floor was badly rusted and had large holes. I do not want to send the photograph of the pipe, as believe me it is disgusting, and one gets sick seeing those holes and sewage from the toilet seeping out. This was giving rise to sewage smell in the kitchen area. This cost us about \$1200.00
4. There were numerous areas where the drywall was damaged and had to be repaired at a cost of about \$2000.00
5. One manhole was buried at the entrance to the property and caused a major problem in bringing in a new 4-inch water supply line for the sprinkler system and added cost to divert this was \$6500.00



6. City insisted and required a Fire Hydrant in the front circle of the property at a cost of about \$4000.00
7. New commercial ceiling fans will be installed in both the old and the new prayer hall at a cost of about \$800.00. These will have ability of reversing the direction during winter months for better heating and saving of heating costs.
8. As informed before there was a lien on the HCC property since 1994, which had not been cleared by the previous Boards. This prevented HCC from getting any construction loan and future mortgage. We came to know of this recently and cost us \$1157.69 to get a court order to get the lien taken off. Now the title of HCC on the property is clear. I must thank Mr. Vikas Sharma for all his efforts in this regard. HCC will have a charge of TD Canada Trust loan on the title of the property for the duration of the mortgage.
9. The manhole in the center of the old parking lot had sunk and was a traffic hazard and had to be repaired.
10. The City has insisted on updated indoor signs for the exits and the washrooms with braille writing. This has cost us another \$1200.00
11. The City insisted for new and extra parking signs to the new building code to be installed.
12. We will be relocating the stoves in the kitchen to make them more accessible and also most importantly safe for the people cooking in the kitchen.
13. The kitchen will be much larger.
14. We will be increasing more counter and workspace in the kitchen.
15. There will be extra storage space in the kitchen.
16. There were a number of safety issues and building code violations identified by the inspectors from City Hall when the adjoining house was built. There were spools of live electric wire hanging in the auditorium hall. I was informed by the architect that most likely many of these alterations were done after the City Hall's approval. We had to get this done at added costs, otherwise HCC will not receive the occupancy permit. As per the architect this work was mostly shoddy work performed after the City inspections when the house was built and by possibly unskilled and unlicensed workers.
17. There have been two more minor incidents in addition to a major one of break-in that the mailbox was broken twice. We will have to undergo an expense for high end and very good quality security system and security cameras. The present cameras are only a very small deterrent, as they do not record recognizable images and I am told that the system has hardly worked for a number of years. I still do not have a price for this.
18. We also decided to renovate the kitchen at a cost of about \$20,000.00. We will have new kitchen cabinets with quartz counters.
19. We had to install new toilets in the men's and women's washroom in the auditorium, as the previous ones did not meet the building code. They were residential use and not for commercial use.



20. The central dividing arch in the prayer hall has been redeveloped at an added cost of \$8000.00.

21. The washrooms on the main floor will be renovated with quartz counter tops and new partitions in men's washroom.

I had projected a budget of 1.3 million in April 2018 but had to be increased to \$1.8 million after the final bidding and contract from Norlon Builders. The additional costs due meeting prescribed code are:

1. The entire new and old building had to be sprinkled at a cost of \$ 125,000.00
2. A universal handicapped washroom had to be constructed at a cost of \$ 15,000.
3. Sidewalks had to be installed.
4. New washrooms had to be provided with washroom accessories to be compatible with new building codes.
5. Soil testing had to be performed again, as old reports of 1989 (when the mandir was first built) were not preserved by previous boards at a cost of \$ 5000.00
6. The old mandir architectural drawings had to be redrawn on the CAD software as previous architectural drawings were also not preserved at a cost of \$ 15,000.00
7. Three new additional roof top units had to be installed for climate control at an added cost of \$ 50, 000.00.

Everyone is aware that the final cost comes higher than the budget, but I am very hopeful to keep the final figures well below the \$1.8 million budget in spite of the added costs and additional upgrades to the facility as outlined above.

A number of the HCC community members have seen the expanded areas of Prayer hall, Altar and the Auditorium and I have had a very positive feedback.

I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT YOU WILL BE PROUD OF THE EXPANSION, WHICH WILL BE ABSOLUTELY SAFE AND BUILT ACCORDING TO THE CITY HALL BUILDING CODES AND ALMOST 600 PEOPLE WILL BE ACCOMMODATED IN THE NEW FACILITY AS PER THE ARCHITECT. THE KITCHEN AND THE DINNING HALL WILL BE VERY COMFORTABLE FOR CLIMATE CONTROL.

YOUR BOARD IS NOW PLANNING TO DO GRAND OPENING FROM FEBRUARY 7TH, 8TH AND 9TH 2020.

You will be receiving program details of the grand opening as soon as it is finalized. Pandit Doobay and Pandit Tiwari are working very closely with the Board to finalize the same.



You will be approached by Pandit Doobay and Pandit Tiwari along with Mrs. Prema Patil, Chair of festivals committee to be on various teams for the grand opening festivities. Please join in, participate and be a part of this historic event.

We are planning a donor appreciation day on Sunday, February 2nd, 2020. All Patron and Life members will be honored. I do not want to miss any member who has achieved Life and/or Patron member status, so please let any Board member know about your donations.

You have been informed about TD Canada Trust approving a construction loan of \$800,000. This required a personal security for \$400,000 during the construction, which will be released at the end of construction, when a mortgage is registered after the lien period of 60 days is over. Three members of the community (Dr. Mohan Merchea, Mrs. Anitha Prakash and Pandit. Durgesh Tiwari) have come forward and provided the required security to the TD Canada Trust. We will have to pay an interest of Prime plus 2% on this loan during the construction.

Once the construction is completed TD Canada Trust will give a mortgage to HCC for the outstanding amount and the personal guarantees will be released. We will get a fixed rate mortgage likely for 5-year term to save on the interest costs.

Membership Fees: A reminder for the community members to pay the membership dues for the year at the beginning of the year.

The membership fee for this year (2020) is \$100.00. This helps your Mandir for the day-to-day expenses of HCC.

As a reminder you have to pay the membership fee by December 31st, 2020 to be eligible to vote and stand for the elections in March 2021.

I have seen that a number of members pay the membership dues in last few days of the year. All organizations expect the membership fees be paid early in the year and if the fees are paid later they are higher.

I will be bringing forward a resolution at the AGM, that the membership fees paid after April 30th of the year will increase to \$125 a year.

As clarified earlier the membership fees are tax deductible.

Sponsorship for Fundraising Events of HCC:

We were able to get sponsorship from various businesses for the Summer and Diwali Fundraising Dinner. This avoided almost all the expenses of hosting these events.

I will request the community members to come forward and advertise your business by sponsoring the future events of HCC. Please approach Chair of festivals committee or any board member for the sponsorship. This will highlight your business and your personal achievements.



Preeti-Bhoj Sponsorship:

We are always looking forward to the members sponsoring a Preeti- bhoj on a Sunday. Your Board has established a committee headed by Mrs. Shipra Lala and Mrs. Shashi Bawa for preeti-bhoj. Any devotee wanting to sponsor a preeti-bhoj, kindly contacts any member of the committee. All the devotees look forward to the Sunday Preeti-Bhoj.

Heritage Classes and Youth Group Classes:

As Pandit Tiwari has moved to his own home, we have more space for our heritage and youth group classes.

The heritage classes have started under guidance of Mrs. Mani Bhasham, Mrs. Suman Singh, Mrs. Shanta Doobay and Mrs. Usha Rao. Kindly enroll your children in the heritage classes.

Dr. Dev Sainani has been organizing youth group classes now every two weeks. I will encourage all of our youths to join. Dev has been very committed to this group for a long time and his efforts are appreciated.

Seniors Group:

Your Board will be organizing a Seniors Day full of activities at the HCC premises this year in early spring. Please watch the dates.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS:

We need about \$700,000 dollars more for our expansion dream. Let us keep on the enthusiasm of your generous donations to keep the mortgage amount to a minimal amount.

One of my close friends from Pakistan is donating three vanities for the prayer hall storage room, men's and women's washroom in the auditorium. May God bless him and his family.

Bricks/Leaf: Mr. Sanjay Singh floated the idea that the community members can donate a brick/leaf for \$500.00 each brick/leaf. The brick/leaf will have the name of the donor and up to 45 letters including punctuations. This will be displayed on a wall to be built on the Mandir grounds.

In fact, about 250 bricks/leaves have been subscribed. This will remind our future generations of your contributions to your mandir.



The Donor Recognition Tree in the hallway of the temple will be refurbished and all eligible names will be displayed. I would request all the community members to let us know about their donations, so that proper name plates can be made.

The Donor Brick wall and the Donor Recognition Tree will be protected, so that no one can damage and vandalize them.

Website of HCC:

Please visit the website of HCC for latest information and we will make sure it is kept updated with the latest information. We appreciate efforts of Mrs. Suchita (Ranu) Jain for maintaining the website.

Volunteerism

Everyone knows the value of providing volunteer services. This mandir was built with lot of efforts of our community volunteers in 1989. Everyone is asked when they apply for a job or apply for admission to any educational institutions, about their volunteer service.

I was dismayed when I saw some community members objecting and making a scene in the mandir to my requesting community members for volunteer help. In spite of this, the entire new altar has been built voluntarily by Mr. Tara Persaud with help by Mr. Ranchod Bhana. I highly applaud their services. In addition, it has been such a wonderful experience when I see lot of our community members coming forward and performing volunteer service at the feet of God. In fact, a number of you have approached me and offered their help even without my request. May God bless them. A lot of them work behind the scene and are not seen. I am grateful to our students, who help in the mandir.

Calendar of events for 2020

I am attaching a calendar of events for 2020. As the present Board term ends on March 31st, 2020, this can be changed by the new Board of Directors. This will be posted on the HCC website.

AS THE NEW YEAR STARTS YOU WILL BE PREPARING YOUR INCOME TAX RETURNS AND IF ANYONE HAS NOT RECEIVED THEIR DONATION RECEIPTS, PLEASE CONTACT MRS. ANITHA PRAKASH – TREASURER OR MYSELF.