

**REPORT OF PRESIDENT
(Annual General Meeting – November 8th, 2020)**

Respected Members of Hindu Cultural Center of London, Ontario,

Namaste,

I welcome you all to the Annual General Meeting of HCC in our newly renovated and expanded Mandir. The AGM had to be delayed because of COVID-19 and Provincial and Federal directives to close all places of worship. The Ontario Government passed an “Order in Council” delaying the AGM’s across Ontario.

The Board comprised of Directors for the year 2019-2020 and they are:

Mr. Tara Persaud – Vice President

Mrs. Anitha Prakash – Treasurer

Mrs. Shanta Doobay – Secretary

Mr. Vikas Sharma – Asst. Secretary / Asst. Treasurer

Mrs. Prema Patil, Mrs. Shashi Bawa, Mrs. Suman Singh, Dr. Dev Sainani, Mr. Nimish Shukla, and Mr. Sanjay Singh,

We have three members of the Board who are completing their three-year term, I along with Mr. Sanjay Singh and Dr. Dev Sainani. Dr. A V Singh resigned in April 2019 and the Board selected Mrs. Prema Patil as a Board Member for the term of the Board year.

I had the special privilege of being the President of HCC for last two years seven months, as AGM could not be held due to COVID. I have completed my three-year term on the Board and as President after the completion of the expansion of the Mandir.

I call it as irony of fate, my good luck and God’s blessings that I was given this special privilege to be involved in these two most memorable events in the history of HCC. The first one was in 1987 for the construction of our mandir and again in 2017 for expanding the mandir. I must thank Mrs. Suman Singh and Mrs. Geetha Swaminath who persuaded my family for me to stand for elections to the Board of HCC in March 2017 and Mr. Ranchod Bhana to nominate me as President in March, 2018.

I am grateful to Mr. Tara Persaud, VP of HCC for having worked tirelessly and shoulder to shoulder with me in the expansion project. I will add that it would not have been possible for the expansion, if I did not have Mr. Tara Persaud with me.

I had given a promise to you all on April 1st, 2018 that with God’s blessings and your commitment and help you will have an expanded Mandir in two years. I am very proud to say that the expansion was completed in December 2019, well ahead of my two-year commitment.

I had promised you all that I will be “Open, honest, and transparent” during my term as President of HCC. You will agree with me that I have kept the community informed throughout the expansion project and been honest and transparent. I have tried my utmost to uphold the dignity of HCC, which is very sacred and of paramount importance to me personally.

In April 2018, when I was elected President of HCC, I was given me the following mandate:

1. Expand Prayer Service Area
2. Expand Preeti Bhoj Area
3. Safe for Elderly
4. More Parking

Significant Dates for expansion:

1. Dr. Merchea elected as President – April 1st 2018.
2. Groundbreaking – May 19th 2019
3. Construction started mid-July 2019
4. Substantial completion – January 15th 2020 – mandir was ready on December 14th 2019
5. This is the fastest construction adding almost 4500 sq ft in just 5 months.
6. All due to God’s blessings and your commitment with donations.
7. Grand Opening February 7th to 9th 2020 – over 700 devotees graced the occasion.

Donations and Fundraising:

1. Funds raised from January 1st, 2019 to December 31st 2019 \$916,666. (as per the audited reports submitted to CRA)
2. This is amazing what you the community gave for the expansion of your mandir.
3. 3 Largest donations ever received in the 52 years history of HCC. (\$ 50K – Mr. and Mrs. Brij Saxena, \$150K – Dr. PC Shah and \$200K – Merchea family)
4. Summer Dinner
5. Diwali Fundraising dinner
6. I bow my head and feel humbled for your generosity.

Recognition:

1. Mr. Tara Persaud – He as Vice President did a Yeomans work in the expansion very much like he did at the time of the original construction of the temple. I do not have words to thank him enough. HCC community should be grateful to his selfless commitment.
2. Pandit Doobay for arranging Priests from US for our Grand Opening. Our honorable Priests – Durgesh Tiwari, Dwejendra Doobay, Balram Prashad and

Rajni Shastri. He organized a memorable gala Grand Opening event over three days in February.

3. Mrs. Prema Patil – was a force behind the Summer and Diwali Dinners. She along with her festivals committee raised very significant amount of money. HCC collected close to \$10, 000 on Mata Ki Chowki this year.
4. Mrs. Shanta Doobay – As secretary was admirable in her role and kept very accurate records of the Board deliberations.
5. Mr. Vikas Sharma – He has been a huge asset to HCC and provided legal services and has waived over \$14, 000 in legal fees. My personal thanks to him.
6. Mrs. Anitha Prakash – as Treasurer – I fondly call her Minister of Finance for HCC, was a busy lady in keeping accurate finances of HCC.
7. Mr. Vishal Kothari – A real Vishal – a Tower of help to HCC and me personally in helping in the reconciliation of bank accounts. Even though not on the Board was available for any kind of help. I profusely thank him.
8. There were numerous of HCC members who worked tirelessly and I call them as Unspoken of Soldiers of HCC. They organized – Preeti Bhoj, Bal Vikas Classes, cleaning of the mandir. I must not forget the students, and numerous Volunteers who provided support in the functioning of HCC.

Financing:

1. TD – Mortgage – HCC was able to secure a mortgage of \$500, 000 for a 5 year term with 15 year amortization at 3.25% from October 28th 2020. I will like to recognize Mrs. Anitha Prakash to provide \$250, 000 surety to the bank for the mortgage.
2. Up to \$50, 000 can be prepaid every calendar year without any penalty.
3. Now it is down to \$450,000 after \$50, 000 prepayment this year
4. My recommendation to the incoming Board will be to paydown \$50, 000 every year as the fundraising continues.

Governance:

1. HCC should revise the constitution as the present one is over 15 years old and needs revision.
2. HCC should bring back “Trustees” to ensure long term sustainability of HCC.
3. Term “Custodians” used in present constitution should be abolished, as some of Board members equate them with the custodians of the schools for cleaning the washrooms and sweeping the floors. The intent in the constitution with regard to custodians was to protect the assets of HCC.

Untoward Occurrences:

1. In 2018, after I took over as President, it was brought to my attention that the “Chattar” donated in 2003 for Durga Mata was missing. I am happy to report that this has been recovered about 8 weeks ago, while cleaning and renovation the HCC house.

2. There was a water leak in the laundry room of the house in early fall and it was reported to me as a "Burst Copper Pipe". In my experience copper pipes do not burst unless it is extremely cold. On closer inspection, it was discovered by Mr. Tara Persaud that it was likely a sabotage and in the process the property of HCC was damaged. I will recommend to the incoming Board to investigate this sabotage so that the property of HCC is protected.

EXPANSION

In addition to the mandate given to me in April 2018 as initially highlighted by me, I was also able to achieve a number of things over and above my mandate. The list of these is attached as addendum for you to see.

Pandit Tiwari helped me admirably during the construction to keep me abreast of the progress during my working hours when I was busy. Thanks to Pandit Tiwari for this.

There are some significant deficiencies in the expansion by Norlon Builders, to name a few – Water Pooling in the new parking lot, water pooling on the roof, provision of hot water at the altar and proper preparation and seeding of the grounds. Both the Norlon and Spriet Associates are well aware. HCC should continue to pursue these in the coming months.

You are all aware that HCC's leaf project raised funds toward the construction. I have not been able to initiate this project. Mr. Sanjay Singh suggested this project and was looking after this project; he wishes to carry forward this project and he will be responsible to HCC community for this project.

Budget of the Expansion project:

After the contracts were finalized with Spriet Associates and Norlon Builders, the budget for the expansion came to \$ 1.8 million.

The actual amount of money spent in the construction has been \$1,725, 101.88 so far. This includes some of the items completed over and above the mandate as mentioned in my addendum. For example, the entire mandir had to be sprinkled, fire hydrant on the property, safety issues identified during the construction, mold and damage in the emergency exit stairway, grease trap in the kitchen, universal washroom, and repair of the waste pipe from the men's washroom.

In addition to the construction expenses, a very significant amount of money was expended for operating expenses of the mandir, groundbreaking, grand opening and general overheads.

The total revenue of HCC during the period April 1st 2019 to November 6th, 2020 has been \$112, 543. Despite the pandemic this has been an amazing donation and fundraising in the history of HCC. Thanks to you all.

We also have pledges for approx. \$ 75000 for the next three years. I applaud you all. May Bhagwan bless you all.

HCC has been able to get \$ 40,000.00 interest free loan from the Federal Govt. and \$ 10,000.00 will be forgiven if \$ 30, 000.00 is paid by December 31st 2022. Recently Govt. has expanded this to \$60, 000 with \$20, 000 as forgivable if repaid by December 31st 2022. I will strongly urge the incoming leadership to avail of this. HCC has also benefitted from Wage Subsidy offered by the Federal Govt. I hope HCC will access this assistance.

HCC has a security deposit with the City Hall in the amount of \$68, 064.00, but we have received a refund from City Hall for \$53, 064 and the security deposit now is \$15, 000.00 and the balance in the bank account on November 6th, 2020 is **\$86, 387.64**. The balance of the security deposit will be returned to HCC after the City of London has certified that the expansion has been completed as per the plans.

HCC Board should also consider following in the next year or so:

1. Install benches in the periphery of the prayer hall for the elderly to sit. There should be no chairs in the prayer hall.
2. Finish stage in the auditorium.
3. Invest in more tables and chairs in the auditorium.
4. Complete the leaf wall.
5. HCC should try to rent the house for ongoing income.

HCC has seen a big leap from where it was two years ago and there is now heightened interest, and more people are expressing interest in the affairs of HCC. As a person who has been associated with HCC since 1987 and has been firmly committed to this organization, I would urge you to come to the board if you are ready to work and put in the time. The Board needs skills, commitment, resilience and time. If you do not have the time, then reconsider if this is what you want to do.

I believe that you should nominate people who are religiously inclined, committed to HCC and can make the time commitment to work and not just occupy a seat. I urge you to be judicious, and to carefully consider these factors in determining how and who you vote for.

Just to appraise you of the present fiscal health of HCC after the expansion:

Liabilities: Mortgage - \$450,000

Federal Govt Loan \$30,000
Outstanding construction account – approx. \$25,000

Assets in addition to the expanded mandir:

Cash on hand - \$86,387
Security Deposit - \$15000
Wage Subsidy outstanding - \$4,500
Pledges to date (over next three years) \$75,000

Net Liabilities: \$324, 113.

This makes you the HCC community as a very proud community and I salute you for your commitment to our mandir.

I pray Almighty God to bless you and your extended families.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mohan Merchea

**ITEMS COMPLETEED OVER AND ABOVE THE INITIAL MANDATE.
(This is in additions to the achievements in 2018-2019 fiscal year)**

1. Renovated the coat rooms
2. Renovated the washrooms upstairs
3. Expanded the kitchen with new cabinets and more space and storage.
4. Provided storage space on main floor coat rooms
5. Janitor's room next to kitchen
6. Entire mandir sprinkled
7. Renovated the priest house with new carpet, painting and air conditioning the same.
8. The contract for replacing the roof of the house has been awarded and will be completed by end of July 2020.
9. Change and make up room next to the stage in the auditorium.
10. Provided room next to the altar with water provision and sink.
11. Renovated the altar – altar is almost double than before.
12. Renovated the Shiv Lingam area with water supply and proper drainage.
13. Provided proper area for havan with ceramic tiles, so that carpet is not damaged.
14. Storage space created under the stairs in the auditorium.
15. Storage space accessible from the prayer hall for Durga Murti's to be stored rather than carry them to the basement of the priest house.
16. Handicap accessibility at the entrance.
17. Handicap washroom at the main level.
18. Renovated the washrooms at the kitchen level, with women's washroom with two toilets and two sinks, men's washroom with one toilet and two sinks.

19. Most of the lights in the mandir on both floors are motion sensitive.
20. All the lights are LED lights.
21. Climate control on both levels is excellent.
22. Installed TV in the lobby (in place of notice board).
23. A memorial wall of leaf's will be installed in the HCC grounds (in summer of 2020) after the City Hall has approved the completion.
24. New fire hydrant in the front yard.
25. Entire mandir painted.
26. Four ceiling fans in old prayer hall replaced to match new ones.
27. Defective wiring from the time of construction of priest home, which was causing safety hazard replaced.
28. There were live wires in the junction boxes causing safety issues repaired.
29. Old stairs for auditorium to outside had mold on them and they were repaired and painted.
30. Stoves in kitchen area made safe for cooking.
31. Furnace supplying the priest house replaced.
32. All events for entire year planned ahead of time.
33. 9 High end Security cameras installed.
34. Micro-phone system wires will be coming out of the walls and the wires are not spread across the hall and were a safety hazard.
35. Priest house property tax exemption obtained from City Hall with resultant cost savings.
36. We applied for "Federal Infra-structure Funding" for religious organizations were not successful in the grant.
37. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of Mata Durga Sthapana.
38. We opened a temporary special investment account with TD Private Investment Counsel to park your donations and earned a 2.75% interest for three months.
39. A TD online brokerage account was established and has helped in HCC receiving donations in kind leading to enhanced income tax benefit to the HCC community members.
40. The newsletters were regularly published to keep the community informed about the various events and the expansion of the Mandir.
41. I was able to secure a construction demand loan from TD bank for up to \$ 800,000.00.
42. The amount of loan withdrawn will be converted into a fixed rate mortgage or a floating rate demand loan in next few months.
43. A development agreement with the City Hall was signed and registered as required prior to the issuance of the Building Permit.
44. Covad yatra was celebrated for the first time in the country. Mr. Rishi Bhalla organized this yatra.
45. HCC is now recognized at the London political stage as representative of London Hindu Community.
46. A Summer Fundraising Dinner was held after more than 25 years.
47. All the construction documents of HCC will be held at multiple sites in electronic form, so that they are not lost and or destroyed.

