REPORT BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DEVI MANDIR
January 1, 2024

Namaste

Happy New Year! We hope that everyone had a wonderful break over the holiday period.

It has been approximately nine months since the current Board of Directors (the "Board") was elected at the last Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Devi Mandir. An initial report was issued in the summer, so it is an opportune time to update our members on activities at the Mandir since then.

Upcoming Events:

Maha Gyaan Yagya – January 9 to 13, 2024

Your Board has organized a Maha Gyaan Yagya to start the new year and to help re-establish the religious fervor that is so much needed in a place of worship. Please plan to attend to benefit from the scriptural knowledge and oratory skills of our five outstanding VyasJis:

Tuesday, January 9, 2024 – Dr. Budhendra DoobayJi
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – Pandit Hardat AshwarJi
Thursday, January 11, 2024 – Pandit Surender Shastri SharmaJi
Friday, January 12, 2024 – Pandit Neil Dev PersadJi
Saturday, January 13, 2024- Pandit Roopnauth SharmaJi.

Ram Mandir Mahotsav – Monday, January 22, 2024, from 5.30 p.m.

We will be celebrating the historic inauguration of the Sri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on Monday, January 22, 2024, with Sunderkand, bhajans, aarti, prasad and bhojan. The service will include a live feed from the Sri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. This service is being organized by the South Asian segment of our congregation.

Fundraising Gala – Saturday, February 24, 2024

As you will notice from the Capital Projects section below, we have a number of urgent projects that will require substantial cash outlays. The planned gala is a one-time fundraising event that will help to generate some much-needed funds.

Further details of these events are included on the Devi Mandir's website.

Updates from portfolio teams

Religious

We were able to employ another Priest (Pandit Lalit SharmaJi) on a full-time basis from November 10, 2023, for an initial period of one year. We thank Pandit Surender ShashtriJi for making Pandit LalitJi available to Devi Mandir, as this avoided the need for a search in India and the attendant visa issues.

We are in the process of renewing our agreement with Pandit Neil Dev Persad, under which he will be at Devi Mandir for certain specific events during the year.

Pandit Ravi Sharma was employed on a short term-basis from July 1 to December 31, 2023, to assist Pt. GirishJi, as there was a need to have two Priests due to the Mandir being opened for 12 hours per day, seven days per week. We thank Pandit Ravi for his assistance during our time of need.

Many thanks to Roma Bisnath for reviewing/drafting the agreements and for working out the schedule for the resident Pandits.

We have updated the governance structure of our religious portfolio. The Religious Committee is responsible for the Kirtan group and Event planning teams, while the two resident Priests are responsible for the Altar teams (now separated into Murthi clothing and Altar Upkeep) and Bal Bikaas. The Religious Committee and the Priests report to the Religious Director.

The Religious Calendar for 2024 has been reviewed with the Priests, and dates have been finalized for all the major religious occasions (including Yagyas leading up to such occasions).

The following is a summary of the outcomes of our religious calendar events for 2023:

- The Maha Rudra Havan on July 15, 2023, was well-attended, as was the Krishna Janmasthmi celebrations, which included a Yagya that was presided over by our resident Priests, as well as Pandit Roopnauth SharmaJi from the Mississauga Ram Mandir and Dr. Dinesh Dhanrajh from Brampton Triveni Mandir.

- Devi Mandir hosted a GaneshJi Yagya and then participated in Ganesh Visarajan celebrations at the Alex Robertson Park in Pickering with other member temples of the Hindu Federation on September 23, 2023. Our contributions helped to make the event the success that it was.

- Sharad Navratri celebrations were vibrant, and included presentations by our resident Priests, as well as Pt. Neil Dev Persad (who was sponsored by Buddy and Mary Rampersad and their family). It also included a Chowki by professional musicians, as well as a Garba session that was organized by the South Asian component of our congregation.

Our core service at the Devi Mandir is religious and we will continuously seek ways to ensure that it exceeds the expectations of our congregation.

Finance

We continue to conduct business with Scotiabank, even though our accounts with RBC have been re-opened (they were previously frozen). We recently met with the RBC Manager to review our accounts and our banking needs. We will restart our monthly pre-authorized payment (PAP) with RBC and have also opened a fundraising account.

Our Treasurer, Latchmie Singh, has been diligent and proactive in his role. We continue to present monthly financial results to the congregation after each Board meeting.

The following is a summary of the Mandir's financial results (on a cash basis) from the date that the current Board commenced its tenure (April 23, 2023).

Devi Mandir

Statement of Revenues & Expenses (Cash basis)

For the Period - April 23 - November 30, 2023

Revenues	
Aarti	93,426
Donations	37,219
Rentals (including cleaning)	24,775
Fundraising programs (Pt. Munelal and Pt. Neil)	15,254
Diwali program	8,023
Government grant	7,500
Sunday sponsors	6,901
Rudra Hawan	3,992
Other	1,601
Memberships	1,531
Elexicon rebate	529
	200,751
Expenses	
Building repairs and maintenance	34,087
Loan interest	22,750
Payroll	13,649
Kitchen supplies	7,384
Hydro	6,357
Office supplies and printing	4,840
Waste collection	4,492
Cleaning (weddings)	3,500
Audit fees - 2020	3,390
401 signage	3,390
Annual general meeting -professional fees	3,198
Religious services	3,180
Insurance	3,040
Musicians - chowki/navratri/Diwali	3,025
Bench at Cremation Ashes Site in Pickering	2,700
Pandits' dachina	2,600
Gas	2,283
Snow removal	2,260
Water	1,668
Bank charges	661
Miscellaneous	656
Phone and internet	447
Garden supplies	308
	129,865
Excess of revenue over expenses	**70,886**

A few points of note:

- The amount for Aarti is much higher than for donations, an indication (perhaps) that the number of devotees who attend the Mandir is on the increase.
- We have revised our rental rates and have seen an increase in bookings.
- Our Diwali program grossed just over $8,000, and we were successful in our grant application for $7,500 to help to improve our security.
- We hosted two fundraising programs – one by Pandit MunelalJi that raised just over $6,600 (this program was organized and funded by Radha and Ken Kelawan) and the other was the Bhajanavali program by Pandit Neil Dev PersadJi that raised about $9,000 (this program was organized (and mostly funded) by Krish and Dolly Doolsingh).
- Deo Prasad, our Capital Projects Director, and Rohan Persaud, our Building Maintenance Director, have been busy over the past few months, as they try to make our facilities compliant with local laws. Some of the major expenses have been:
    - Roof repairs $8,233
    - Alarm system upgrade $6,285
    - Parking lot painting $3,155
    - Elevator inspection $ 2,800
    - Plumbing (snaking) and hood cleaning $2,451
    - HVAC repairs $2,225
    - Lighting $2,159

  The glass door that was broken during the temple break-in has been replaced, and we have also repaired our heating and HVAC systems. The payments for these were made in December and are not reflected in the above amounts.
- The loan of $600,000 with a private lender currently bears interest at 6.5% per annum. Refinancing of this loan is contingent upon the availability of audited financial statements.

The Mandir received a $60,000 COVID loan from the Federal Government in 2019 and 2020. Repayment of $40,000 is due by January 18, 2024, in order to be eligible for forgiveness of the other $20,000. The Mandir plans to repay the $40,000 by the due date.

With respect to the audit of the Mandir's financial statements, we were able to engage another Auditor for the 2021-year end, as the Auditor of record for 2020 was unable to continue with the audits due to staffing issues.

The financial records for 2021 were received from the previous administration, but much time had to be spent organizing the documents and ensuring that they were properly recorded in the general ledger. A number of adjustments had to be made to have the financial statements ready for the audit (which is currently in progress).

Only some of the financial information for 2022 and 2023 (up to April 23) has been provided to date, but the rest has been promised to be delivered soon.

IT and Communication

We have engaged a professional to rebuild our website, as the current website was built with outdated technology. In the meantime, we will continue to keep the current website updated. The expected completion date is the end of February 2024, and part of the cost will be donated back to the Mandir.

The Board decided that we will not stream our religious programs. This is to encourage devotees to return to in person services at the Mandir. The Facebook page has been re-activated and is being managed by Anjali Sookar.

There was a backlog of emails that came through our general mailbox (info@devimandir.com), but we are now almost current, thanks to Samantha Rampersad and Pandit Jag Gossai.

We wish to thank Tony Chankar for taking the time to keep the screen in the foyer up to date. It is a vital source of information for all those who attend the Mandir.

Capital Projects and Maintenance

Deo Prasad and Rohan Persaud have been busy identifying areas that needed remedial work, and the expenses above reflect the corrective action taken.

Work has started on the washroom next to the auditorium (this is used by the resident Priests). The work to date has been done on a pro-bono basis, but may involve paid labour if the shower unit needs to be replaced.

The major outstanding project is the roof replacement. This requires third party financing, which in turn cannot be secured unless we have audited financial statements. We are hoping to have this done during the summer of 2024.

The team has also been busy in discussions with Lakeridge Health about a shared parking arrangement. This will help to overcome the left turn lane issue into the Mandir for devotees travelling north on Brock Road if and when that becomes a divided highway. These discussions are progressing in a positive way.

Discussions with the developer (Lebovic) of the property behind the Mandir about a possible entrance through that property to the Mandir did not start out well and have been put on hold for now.

The team has become aware of grants that are available at both the Federal and Provincial levels (some of which will require an equal contribution from the Mandir) and has started to identify the projects that will qualify.

Fundraising

The major event that has been planned for 2024 (to date) is the fundraising gala at the Woodbine Banquet Centre for February 24, 2024. Agreements have been finalized for the venue, artists and technical services.

Community Engagement and Outreach

We hosted Hindu Heritage month on November 11, 2023, in collaboration with the Hindu Federation and will continue to collaborate with other temples in the GTA during 2024.

We hosted a number of visits during 2023 from schools that are part of the Durham Catholic School Board. We continue to engage our congregation from the South Asian community in Durham region. We have identified events on the 2024 Hindu Calendar that are important to them and plan to make them prominent.

Hospitality and Kitchen

Krish Doolsingh has set up teams to ensure the smooth functioning of the kitchen. He also monitors supplies and ensures that we take advantage of all price discounts (and our Treasurer has set up arrangements with preferred suppliers).

The use of the dishwashing machine continues to be a priority but will be dependent on the availability of volunteers.

Office

Bookings through the office are done by volunteers, but the Board is actively considering the need for this function to be done by a paid person (full/part time).

A Google calendar has been set up by Pandit Jag. Updates to the calendar are done in real-time, so that the office volunteer and directors can view current bookings and make informed decisions when a rental request is received in order to avoid conflicts.

Youth Engagement

Samantha has set up MOU's with two other dance schools – Panwar Music and Dance and Abinayalaya Natyalayam Dance School, as well as a Yoga Centre (Maha Sakhti Yoga and Meditation).

We are working to engage more youths as members of our Kirtan Group. Our Bal Bihar classes will recommence on January 7, 2024, and the curriculum has been set for the next semester. Pandit Jag and the teachers (Mani Rampersaud and Andy Bissoondial) are eagerly looking to increase the number of students in the class.

We are looking to collaborate with local post-secondary institutions through their Hindu Students Associations (or equivalent) to find ways in which we can assist them.

Special Bylaw Committee (SBC)

We applaud the members of the SBC (Cecil Ramnauth, Dave Parsan and Sabrina Rampersad) for the incredible amount of work that they have done in engaging with members through the Town Hall meetings. There is much work to be done, as they start to consider the inputs from the various stakeholders in drafting the changes to the Bylaws (which will be presented at a future date to the membership for approval).

In conclusion

The tenure of the Board so far has been full of challenges. Despite these challenges, we believe that we have managed to normalize the operations of the Mandir. Our congregation is providing positive feedback and are encouraging us to stay the course.

There is much work to be done; we need to maintain our focus and to renew our commitment (personally and as Board) to continue to make the Devi Mandir experience an uplifting one.

I wish to thank my fellow Directors for their passion and commitment, and the Trustees for their guidance, during the past months.

Jai Sri Raam

Sam Persaud