

## **FMMandir Update#8**

Dear brother and sisters,

It is long, since an update came out. Sorry for the delay – as you know, all of us are busy in our official and personal life, and any time spent on such massive community project should be applauded.

This time, the update is a different one. We know, there are some ambiguities and concerns around different societies. Our stand is fully explained in the following clarification.

On a general note, there is limited progress to report on Land, Registration and Fund raising activities. The fact is that, when we go deeper, we realize, the challenge is greater.

Getting suitable Land in Fort McMurray , is the greatest challenge ! We are working hard on various options.

The Executive Council is meeting every alternate week to review the progress and the path forward.

However, please be assured, MANDIR will become a reality, as Lord wants it to happen !

In order to get the message across members, well wishers and the general public, we are resuming public meetings, once every month. Details will follow soon.

We would also like to inform you that we raised around \$2,200/- from the last MahaPooja and the next MahaPooja (**Anjaneya Pooja**) is planned for April 17th or 18th. Details will follow soon.

With warm regards,

Executive Council

Sanatan Mandir Cultural Society

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### **Here are some facts about Fort McMurray Mandir Project.**

#### 1. **What is SMCS & FMMandir**

- SMCS (Sanatan Mandir Cultural Society) was primarily formed from an initiative of HSFM (Hindu Society of Fort McMurray).

- It was observed that HSFM and so also other regional associations, due to their existing activities has limitations and also could not garner support from all sections of Indian community.
- FM Mandir is the yahoo group, providing you the updates and programs from SMCS.

## **2. Why separate bodies?**

- As the Mandir construction is estimated to be minimum \$1.5M, SMCS needed the status of Income Tax deduction allowance on donations/membership.
- SMCS required greater clarity and depth on its Governing documents to be presented to Revenue Canada.
- Registration under Religious Charities act is a faster way to get the CRA approval
- If HSFM registration is changed to Religious Charity, it becomes ineligible to receive the volunteer grant from Suncor (upto \$15,000/year) .
- Members involved in the Temple Project should be able to focus only on Mandir and related spiritual activities; Otherwise, it is time wasted in all other activities.
- Leadership with professional approach and great motivation was required to focus on Mandir without any interference.

## **3. What was the necessity?**

- HSFM restricts programs and functions to its present paid members, which includes members of Muslim community as well.
- SMCS required the support, cooperation, pledge, donation and voluntary services from all Indian families of Fort McMurray.
- Otherwise, our dream mandir might not have been possible; There was no way out, without making separate identity from the existing HSFM.

## **4. What are the objectives?**

- Construct, Operate and Maintain a Mandir and community centre.
- Propagation of Hindu and all Indian origin religions and way of life.

## **5. How it was formed?**

- Through systematic public meetings and their inputs with several weeks of notices, minutes of meetings, task force for drafting constitution/ bylaws etc.
- All activities and minutes are recorded and 100% transparency is made in the formation of SMCS.
- Public input was always requested and taken into consideration before finalizing anything.

## **6. What advantages?**

- Fresh beginning to start with an independent organization to gain acceptance by people of all states of India.
- Full fledged governing documents (constitution & bylaws) to satisfy Revenue Canada guidelines.
- Complete freedom, time and energy with capable personalities to take the mission to success.

## **7. What are the programs?**

- Primary focus is on Fund raising for the land and construction of Mandir.
- Organize mass religious functions (Maha Poojas, Discourses on scriptures and some other religious/spiritual programs) to attract all Indian families (estimated to be more than 500).

## **8. Why these programs required?**

- In order to get CRA approval, the Society has to justify and conduct religious services to community.
- Generate/sustain religious fervour within our community.

## **9. Does it conflict with the functions of other Societies ?**

- It will not conflict with the functions Gujarati Society or other cultural societies from different states.
- It will not conflict with HSFM activities as they will continue with the monthly poojas and all other cultural and community activities; Once the Mandir is built, all religious activities should take place in Mandir.
- SMCS will support the monthly poojas carried out by HSFM. It is also expected that with mutual co-operation, bigger religious functions/ programs could jointly be arranged.

## **10. What is the current status?**

- Fund raising – collection of pledges are going on ~\$270K
- An account has been opened in the name of SMCS.
- Vigorous hunt for suitable land is underway.
- Provincial Registration process is underway
- CRA registration will be taken up after provincial registration is complete. (timeline 6 to 8 months)

## **11. What are the future plans ?**

- Shortlist the options for Land
- Finalise the Land with consultation of General Body
- Raise the cash (borrowing from Bank is imperative) and buy the land.
- Engage the Architect for Building design and start construction. Building Plans will only be formalised with inputs from members.
- If land is not available in the next 3-4 months, then explore the feasibility of temporary building for Mandir (rental property) on a limited basis.
- Fund raising outside Fort McMurray and other fund raising options to be explored

## **12. How can I participate in Mandir initiative ?**

- All are welcome to participate and contribute to the success of this initiative. No barriers – we need to raise the funds, at least \$1.5M.
- Our goal is Mandir and nothing else. Is someone willing to drive this forward with vigour? Please come forward, with your creative ideas, suggestions and plan of actions. You are most welcome !

Executive Council

Sanatan Mandir Cultural Society