

Hindu Heritage Month Proclamation by the Regional Municipality of Durham- Wednesday October 23, 2019

In December of 2016, the Province of Ontario had proclaimed the month of November as Hindu Heritage Month as a recognition of the multi faceted contributions that Hindus have made towards building a strong and inclusive Canada. The Proclamation, known as the Hindu Heritage Month Act, was shepherded by then MPP Joe Dickson and was couched in Ontario Bill 56. Since that time, many Towns and Cities across Ontario have been celebrating Hindu Heritage Month.

On Wednesday October 23, 2019, the Regional Municipality of Durham (the "Region") proclaimed the Month of November as Hindu Heritage Month. Those in attendance included Mayors and Council from all eight municipalities, Representatives of the Town of Ajax MPP Rod Phillips, Durham District School Board, Public Library, Durham Region Police Services, a multitude of Faith and Cultural Group Leaders, Community Service Groups, Lakeridge Health, past MPP Joe Dickson, and other valued Community Partners. In his opening address before handing over to Cecil Ramnauth, the Region's Chair and CEO, John Henry, warmly welcomed those present and pointed out that Hindu Heritage Month is being proclaimed for the first time in the Region.

Pandit Rabindranauth (Rudy) Tiwari of Sankat Mochan Hanuman Mandir and Cultural Centre in Ajax offered Opening Prayers followed by brief remarks. Cecil thanked and recognised all stakeholders and community partners for their collective leadership, and for their resilience towards building strong and inclusive neighborhoods. He also thanked past MPP Joe Dickson for giving Hindus an official and enduring voice in Ontario, and further expressed the hope that this recognition will soon occur at the Federal Level.

Sam Persaud, a long-time resident of the Region, spoke on behalf of the Hindu Federation, highlighting its membership and advocacy role at a time when the Hindu population is on the rise in Canada, and especially in the Region. Sam thanked the Region on behalf of the Hindu Federation for its foresight in being the first major Municipality in Ontario to proclaim November as Hindu Heritage Month.

Shivani Mahadeo - an honor roll grade 11 student, and Cadet Flight Sergeant at 151 Chadburn Squadron in Oshawa, provided the youth perspective of what Hindu Heritage means to her. A recently crowned Miss Diwali 2019 at an event hosted by Epic Entertainment in Toronto, Shivani spoke eloquently about the Scriptural significance of Mother Earth as a core pillar of her Hindu Heritage belief system. She emphasised the teachings of non-violence, along with a respect for nature and all living things as being fundamental. She concluded by explaining the meaning of Diwali, and encouraged those present to quicken their actions to preserve and protect mother earth.

This proclamation would not have been possible without the efforts of Cecil Ramnauth, who is an Ambassador of the Hindu Federation.