

TDSB To Mark November As Hindu Heritage Month



TORONTO: The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has resolved that month of November each year be declared as Hindu Heritage Month.

TDSB Trustees, in their April 18 meeting, passed a motion which included: "Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate and educate all our students and school communities about this ancient and spiritual way of life."

The motion was moved before the Toronto District School Board by 36-year-old Parthi Kandavel, whose father is of Sri Lankan origin and mother is from India. He said he championed the motion because of a "desire."

While November is already observed as Hindu heritage Month in the province of Ontario, that was "fairly symbolic", he said, while a similar observance for

schools would have "substance."

While Hinduism is among the world's oldest belief systems, the "unfortunate reality" is that many educationists were unaware of it, he said, and there were reports of "students being bullied for being Hindus." The TDSB presides over a student population of nearly 240,000. The motion was co-sponsored by another trustee Avtar Minhas, who was gratified that it came as TDSB celebrated April as Sikh heritage month. "We want every child to grow in this city of Toronto the way their culture is, their traditions are," he said, after the motion was passed in the presence of dozens of members from the Hindu community in the gallery observing the proceedings and cheering the outcome.

The motion also said: "Canadians of Hindu faith have greatly



contributed to civic life in Canada for decades, and are a vibrant part of the growth and prosperity of Toronto, Ontario and Canada."

"Hinduism (or *Sanathana Dharma*) encompasses a broad range of...contributions to learning through mathematics, astronomy and science, and well-being through health practices such as yoga, meditation and a vegetarian diet.

Kandavel said the next step after the passage of the motion will be interactions with community groups and throughout the school system so that a theme can be developed for November and also create lessons that can be used every year and activities based on the theme selected.

Meanwhile, Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada commended TDSB for the

declaration, and urged all school boards of Canada to do the same.

Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, urged TDSB also to declare Diwali, most popular Hindu festival, as an official holiday in view of presence of substantial number of Hindu students in the District.

Hinduism is oldest and third largest religion of the world with about 1.1 billion adherents.

Peel Volunteer 'Stars' Recognized At Glittering Gala

MISSISSAUGA: Volunteer MBC and its community service organization members, supporters, and friends gathered this past week to celebrate volunteering in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon at Volunteer MBC's Gala - The V-Oscars. This was the eighth year that Volunteer MBC has rolled out the red carpet to recognize the achievements of volunteers in Peel region.

The event was held on Thursday, April 19, at the Sagan Banquet Hall & Convention Centre, in Mississauga. Volunteer MBC Board President Jake Dheer emceed and engaged the over 300 guests who were in attendance.

Guests included Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson, Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey and other dignitaries. During The V-Oscars, 15 recipients received awards in many categories, and over 40 Volunteer Galaxy Stars were afforded special recognition.

Those who received awards:

- Bonnie Ledson, recipient of Hazel McCallion Power of Giving Award.

- Norman Bindon (nominated by Rotary Club Brampton), recipient of the John Huether Award for Volunteering Excellence.

- John Sanderson (nominated by Bethell Hospice), recipient of the Bonnie Yagar Award for Community Engagement Leadership.

- Lyla Durette (nominated by William Osler Health System), recipient of the Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award.

- Juliana Boateng (nominated by Volunteer MBC), recipient of the Newcomer Gem Volunteer Award.

- Aalia Khan (nominated by Credit Valley Conservation), recipient of the Leader of Tomorrow Award.

- Claudine Thinghuus (nominated by MICBA Forum Italia Community Services) recipient of the Helping Hands Award - Mississauga.

- Harvey Webster (nominated by William Osler Health System), recipient of the Helping Hands Award - Brampton.

- Madeleine Norrie (nominated by Caledon Meals on Wheels), recipient of the Helping Hands Award - Caledon.

- Ebony Wright (nominated by Volunteer MBC), recipient of the Leader in Volunteer Engagement Award.

- Mars Canada (nominated by Caledon Meals on Wheels), recipient of the Corporate Volunteer Engagement Award - Caledon Community.

- Newell Brands (nominated by Volunteer MBC), recipient of the Corporate Volunteer Engagement Award - Brampton Community.

- Cummins Eastern Canada (nominated by Community Living Mississauga) recipient of the Corporate Volunteer Engagement Award - Mississauga Community.

- Rise Above Adversity (nominated by Volunteer MBC) recipient of the Youth LEaD By Example Award.

- David and Susan Aiken (nominated by Riverwood Conservancy) recipient of the Family VolunTree Award

"Volunteers are the backbone of every community service organization and we set out to create a very special evening to honour and celebrate these incredible volunteers in Peel and the organizations where they spend so much of their time helping to realize their respective missions," said Carine Strong, Volunteer MBC's Executive Director.

"On behalf of our entire team at Volunteer MBC, we extend congratulations to all of the



From left :Regional Councillor Martin Medeiros, Volunteer MBC's Executive Director Carine Strong & Mayor Linda Jeffries.

amazing volunteers. We would also like to thank our generous sponsors and donors; we could not have done this without their incredible support."

Board President Jake Dheer shared his personal thoughts about volunteerism and the impact that volunteerism has on building communities in Peel. Guests were treated to a reception and dinner, with entertainment provided by Maria-Therese Alfano, Andrew Lie and Naomi McDonald.



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**Tickets are also available from Art of Living - GTA Centre
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