



November 18th, 2024

Open Letter to Mississauga City Council

Re: Ontario Gurdwaras Committee Objection to Restrictions Around Places of Worship

The Ontario Gurdwaras Committee (OGC) wishes to express our deep concern regarding a recent motion passed by the City Council, seeking to ban peaceful protests outside places of worship. The OGC also condemns the motion's unsubstantiated claims of violence, rooted in misinformation spread by Indian right-wing media outlets. The motion was presented without any consultation with the Sikh community or the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Malton, the Sikh place of worship that was targeted by an angry mob. This is especially surprising given the motion was seconded by the local councilor, Natalie Hart.

The OGC seeks to highlight facts and context overlooked in this motion. The demonstration outside the Hindu Sabha Mandir was a lawful and peaceful protest aimed at the consular activities taking place within the facility, not an attack on the place of worship itself. Similar protests have taken place across Canada in response to consular programs being offered inside places of worship, with law enforcement informed and actively engaged at each event. The portrayal of this event as an "attack" on the Hindu Sabha Mandir misrepresents the intentions and conduct of the protesters, and distorts the actual nature of the gathering and what transpired.

Additionally, given the RCMP have publicly stated they have strong evidence against Indian government officials being involved in campaigns of violence and intimidation against our community, heightened vigilance is indeed warranted. Amidst these mounting concerns about foreign interference and divisive consular activities, the OGC respectfully requests that Council, the RCMP and CSIS investigate Councillor Dipika Damerla's potential connections with Indian government officials and intelligence agencies, as this motion and Councillor Damerla's past record aligns closely with their false narratives.

The OGC urges the Mississauga City Council to reconsider the language and implications of this motion. Such mischaracterizations not only stigmatize peaceful assemblies unjustly but also set a dangerous precedent for undermining Canadians' rights to lawful expression.

The OGC is firmly opposed to any new restrictions to limit peaceful assembly. Any gatherings that threaten public safety or incite violence are already guarded against through existing hate laws, public order regulations and law enforcement capabilities. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us should you require further information.