



Report of the MIA President and Executive Council - 2015

Manitoba Islamic Association
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Dear Members of the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA),

Assalamu Alaikum.

On behalf of the Manitoba Islamic Association Executive Council (EC), I am pleased to present to you the Annual MIA President's report for the Annual General Meeting 2015. This report highlights MIA's activities, programs and future plans.

As an EC, we recognize that we are building on the foundation laid for us by generations of previous MIA officers, in addition to all of those who volunteered over the almost 50 year history of our organization. We are particularly humbled that many who belong to the founding generation are still involved in MIA and have shown us examples of how one can live a life of service.

MIA is primarily a volunteer run organizations. We are thankful to all the hard working volunteers who make the MIA possible and who are its beating heart. We also thank all of our generous donors for their unwavering support.

During the second year of our three-year term, the MIA EC continued to focus on professionalizing operations and sustaining and developing community services and programs. We have also begun to focus on long-term goals and to increase our outreach into the community at large.

Operations

The EC consists of 7 members. Internally, the EC has organized itself so that each of its members is responsible for certain aspects of its operation. This, along with the support of the staff, ensures that the MIA operates smoothly and efficiently and continues to meet the needs of the community, insha Allah.

The major areas of responsibilities of the EC members are as follows:

1. Idris Elbakri, President. Outreach and public relations, fundraising, khutba committee.
2. Aziz Mian, First Vice President. Outreach and public relations, funeral services, Manitoba Muslim magazine.
3. Salman Qureshi, Second Vice President. Facilities, maintenance, IT.
4. Ferdose Shiekheldine, Secretary. Membership committee, events committee.
5. Eid Mahmudov, Treasurer. Auditing and finance, takaful committee.
6. Deema Al-Syed, Member. Educational programs, Al Noor weekend school.
7. Reda Elgazzar, Member. Waqf committee, religious affairs (imams), Food-o-rama, scholarship committee, Al Fajr Quran institute.

Facilities

There have been several maintenance issues in both the mosque in the Hazelwood and the Grand Mosques.

In Waverley, columns were placed to prevent parking on the grassy patches and to reduce the traffic jam during Friday prayers. In Hazelwood, new furnaces were installed and the roof shingles were replaced.

The washrooms at the Grand Mosque require upgrading to make them more suitable for high-moisture environment. Plans are being developed for these upgrades.

Two years ago, a concern was raised about the pillars in the Hazelwood mosque, where cracks in the pillars glue was observed. The previous EC obtained an engineering report suggesting repairs. We have since consulted with two more engineers. All concur that repair is needed but that there is no immediate danger. The EC is currently developing a comprehensive plan for renovating the Hazelwood mosque and it was decided to combine the issue of the pillars with that.

For all substantial facilities upgrades (such as furnace replacement, roof repairs, etc....) MIA obtains multiple quotes and selects a contractor based on both cost and quality considerations.

Staffing

The MIA EC did not introduce any new positions in 2015. We continue to employ two religious services officers/prayer leaders, one in each mosque.

We also employ 3 building care takers (2 part time, one full time). They are responsible for general care taking of the buildings, cleaning and minor repairs.

A part-time office manager is responsible for many of the administrative aspects of the MIA, such as responding in inquiries, organizing documentation, following up with donation pledges and supporting the MIA EC as needed.

The staff are doing a fantastic job, often going above and beyond the call of duty. The staff receive feedback and direction from the EC and undergo performance evaluations regularly.

Community Communications

The MIA website was revamped in 2014. It is a great resource of information about the MIA and its services. It receives over 10,000 hits per month.

Many updates regarding programs and activities are shared with the community over the MIA email list. The email list has over 2000 subscribers. Since the beginning of 2015, we have sent over 50 email updates, not including funeral announcements, emails specific to MIA members and the Manitoba Muslim e-newsletter.

MIA has also a growing presence on social media. Since January 1, 2014, the MIA Facebook page grew from 418 followers to 1374 followers. MIA events and programs are routinely featured on the Facebook page.

Policies and Procedures

In addition to existing policies and procedures, this year we developed a policy for establishment of satellite sites. This policy was developed in response to the interest from Muslims in the Pembina Valley region to run their community affairs under the umbrella of the MIA. The policy sets objective conditions under which such requests are to be evaluated, including compliance with MIA's charitable status requirements, accounting and auditing practices and commitment from the local community to cover the costs of their activities.

In addition, the facility booking policy was recently updated. We simplified the booking process and introduced non-bookable times around high-attendance daily prayer times (Isha in winter, Maghrib in summer). We also introduced moderate booking fees.

Volunteer Committees

Dedicated and selfless volunteers do the majority of the MIA work. Below is a partial listing of the active communities of the MIA (in no particular order):

1. Maintenance and grounds committee: this committee does much of the maintenance work on the grounds at the Waverley Mosque and indoors in both facilities. This includes lawn care, flower bed, parking organization and minor maintenance projects.
2. Fiqh committee: The fiqh committee consists of shaikh Ismael Mukhtar, Imam Atef Ibrahim, Imam Muhiadin Omar, shaikh Ammar Khateeb and Dr. Nazir Khan. This committee assists with religious counselling, determination of religious holidays and research and fatwas in areas that are of interest to the community as a whole.
3. Khutba committee: The khutba committee schedules, trains and selects khateeb for Jumua prayer. It consists of Shaikh Ammar Khatib and Dr. Nazir Khan. Shaikh Ismael Mukhtar also assists with khateeb training and is consulted by the committee when needed.
4. Waqf committee: The Waqf committee is chaired by Dr. Abdel-Ilah Soussi Ghouni, with membership of shaikh Ismael Mukhtar, Dr. Reda Elgazzar, Dr. Youssef Bezzahou and Dr. Ali Khan. The committee was formed last year for the goal of establishing a long-term endowment for the MIA. The committee is currently finalizing draft bylaws to guide the development of MIA waqf.
5. IT committee: This committee is chaired by Imran Rahman. It is responsible for many of the technical aspects of MIA operations, including website support, email system, booking system, A/V. Members of the committee include Mahmoud Al Zaibak and Mokhtar Joundi.
6. Auditing committee: the auditing committee performs internal audits, assists with preparation for the external audit and financial resources, and helps MIA maintain sound accounting practices. Its members include Salman Idris, Nazir Ahmad and Dr. Youssef Bezzahou. The MIA also consults with other members of the community with accounting expertise such as br. Roy Jabbar.

7. Takaful committee: This committee is chaired by br. Khaled Al Nahar and is one of the longest serving committees in the MIA. Its main focus is to assess requests for financial assistance from needy members of the community and to disburse Zakat funds according to their needs.
8. Events committee: The events committee is involved in the organization of major events, including Eid carnival, outreach open houses, dinners, etc. Its members include Merdia Imam, Lubna Usmani, Imran Rahman, Abid Ashique, Rani Claire and Mariam Arunkiet.
9. Outreach committee: The outreach committee is a newly formed committee, in response to the growing demand for information on Islam and Muslims. The outreach committee trains outreach speakers to visit schools, churches and other groups seeking opportunities to learn about Islam and Muslims. It is chaired by sr. Saadia Qureshi.
10. Manitoba Muslim magazine. The magazine is published quarterly by an editorial board lead by shaikh Ismael Mukhtar. The magazine is cost neutral to MIA.
11. Scholarship committee: When funds are available, the committee awards scholarships to worthy Muslims students pursuing higher education.
12. Land committee: This committee consists of Dr. Ehab El-Salakawy, Dr. Asim AShique, and Dr. Idris Elbakri. The mandate of this committee was to identify a land development company which can advise MIA on suitable development plans for the land adjacent to Waverley. The first goal of any development would be significant revenue generation for the MIA.
13. Hazelwood committee: the Hazelwood committee works with the MIA EC and the staff at Hazelwood to look after the affairs of that masjid. Its membership includes Dr. Youssef Bezzahou, Hajj Bashir Rajput, Hajj Hammad Saleh and Dr. Sadeq Almiski.
14. Pembina Valley committee: the PV committee works with the MIA EC to serve the needs of the increasing Muslim presence in south-central Manitoba, around the towns of Morden and Winkler. Its members include br. Zahed Zehri, Dr. Abdulrazak Abu Jazia and Mr. Bassam Qasem.
15. Funerals committee: Body washing and preparation is taken care of by an all-volunteer committee, including sr. Zulaikha Mustafa, sr. Ferdose Rahman, Hajj Bashir Rajput, sr. Razia Rajput, Br. Ehab Saleh, sr. Mian Hameed, sr. Neghat Hameed and sr. Zubaida Mussadiq.

Finances and Transparency

Revenue from donations and other sources for this year was \$578,720 compared to last year's revenue of \$330,293. The higher revenue is largely attributed to various fundraising activities of the MIA, including Food-o-rama and bake sales (approximately \$44,000), as well as program specific revenue (youth and children education programs). Total cash revenue for this year was \$712,430. Total cash disbursements this year were \$544,628 creating a net surplus of \$167,802, compared to last year's net loss of \$181,735. The total from general expenses and wages is similar between this and the previous fiscal years. The cash position as of September 2015 is \$271,741 (up from \$119,760 in the last fiscal year).

A thorough review of the MIA finances will be presented at the AGM by the MIA treasurer, br. Eid Mahmudov.

Financial transparency is important for MIA. Our finances are reviewed by both internal auditors as well as a professional auditing company. Audited financial statements are made public annually and in 2015, we published mid-year finances in both English and Arabic. We also have an external book keeper who reviews our expenses regularly and is in charge of issuing cheques.

MIA Pembina Valley

There is a growing Muslim community around the towns of Winkler and Morden. Muslims in that area were gathering informally for prayers and to socialize. Friday prayers were held in a private garage. Several community members approached MIA about establishing a presence in that region to enable the community to operate under MIA's umbrella. MIA EC held several meetings with leaders of the community in that area, and visited the area several times. Eventually, MIA established the MIA Pembina Valley Committee, to serve the Muslims in the Pembina Valley. One immediate need was that of a place to prayer, as the private garage arrangement was no longer available. A commercial property was leased and is used for establishing prayers and holding community gatherings. This has been launched as a pilot project for one year with commitments from the local community to support and finance its operations.

Programs and Activities

The MIA is Alhamdulillah a hub for activities and programs. A variety of social, educational and spiritual activities took place. This year's Ramadan was again enjoyed with the talented Egyptian Qari Sheikh Hassan Adwi. The Eid Festival was another phenomenal success. An estimated 3,000 people attended the event. Of note was the introduction of the Food-o-rama program, which celebrates the diversity of culinary cultures within our community. Food-o-rama has been a source of great support for the MIA, while also bringing the community together to celebrate and enjoy each other's cultures and cuisines. So far, we have had an Egyptian, Libyan, Pakistani, Bengali and Syrian Food-o-rama's and more are planned insha Allah. Several of the Food-o-rama programs have been attended by members of city council and the Winnipeg police service as part of MIA's ongoing outreach efforts.

A partial list of programs and activities includes the following:

1. Weekly drop in sports for boys and girls. The boys program is supervised by br. Alex Simard and the girls program by sr. Zulekha Mustafa.
2. Bake sales on Good Friday and before Ramadan. All the proceeds went to support the MIA operations.
3. MIA supported community youth in several programs and initiatives, including hosting guest speaker Shaikh Yassir Fazaga, supporting the Unpack Your Potential camp, and supporting a youth-organized clothes drive in Ramadan.
4. MIA organized a formal banquet with guest speaker Dr. Ingrid Mattson. The banquet was attended by several public officials including the Manitoba minister of multiculturalism, members of city council and the Winnipeg Police chief.

5. Eid carnival was again a great success, thanks to the effort of the events committee. Over 3000 people attended the various festivities including the signature fireworks show.
6. In Ramadan, we again hosted our guest Qari, Imam Hassan Adawi. MIA also organized a Quran memorization competition in which over 50 participants, of all ages, took part.
7. MIA organized Eid dinner for Eid ul Fitr, at which all of the participants of the Quran competition were honoured and received gifts.
8. MIA organized a workshop with the Winnipeg Police on the topic of domestic violence. Also, MIA hosted shaikh Yassir Fazaga who gave a workshop on the topic of health and sex education.
9. During Ramadan, MIA collaborated with the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute on collecting and distributing over 50 Eid hampers to needy Muslim families.
10. Sisters in the community organized a unique program, a Mother-Daughter Tea. The event was well received and all proceeds went to support the MIA.
11. MIA worked with Canadian Blood Services in organizing a blood donor clinic and a bone marrow donor drive at the Grand Mosque.
12. MIA organized a special town hall on the topic of Bill C-51, with speakers from ISSA, MIA, and Amnesty International.

Land Development

In order to move our community and organization closer to becoming more financially self-sustaining, the EC started to explore the possibilities around developing part of the land adjacent to the Waverley mosque. A land development committee consisting of Dr. Ehab El-Salakawy and Dr. Asim Ashique was formed, with Idris Elbakri serving as the EC liaison. The committee was tasked with identifying a development company that would advise the MIA on this issue and help us develop a plan for land use. In addition to meeting the needs of our expanding community, the land development plan would have to include revenue generation as an important and first component.

The committee met with representatives of 4 development companies and received formal quotes from 3 of them. In the end, Mr. Ross Mitchell, from the WSP group was selected as a consultant to advise MIA on this issue. The WSP group is a large public company and one of the world's leading engineering professional services consulting firms. You can learn more about them at www.wspgroup.com.

The initial phase of this project is to collect information and understand what it takes to obtain city approval for a development on the MIA property. WSP and members of the MIA EC have had several conversations with the city administration. This phase will be followed by creating plans for the land, involving input from the community and key stakeholders.

This issue is not as simple as rezoning and getting permits to build, or even seeking funds for development. The MIA property lies in an area that is multi-owner, and the city will not allow development without a Neighbourhood Area Structure Plan (NASP). A NASP requires the agreement and consent of other owners in this zone and developing an NASP can cost upwards of \$100,000. Our research has shown that there is a possibility that the city will develop a NASP in the next couple of years and we continue to meet with city officials to push for the development of a NASP.

Outreach and Public Relations

Outreach and public relations continue to be an area of growth for our organization. This is a strategic issue for Muslims, because of our duty to reach out and educate the community about our faith.

1. There is a lot of demand for outreach speakers to schools, churches, university groups, and we receive groups who wish to visit the mosque almost monthly. To improve our program we are currently redesigning a presentation on the basics of Islam and on Canadian Muslims, and will train a number of speakers to be ready to present it.
2. The MIA organized an outreach iftaar in Ramadan, open to the general community. Food was donated through the kindness of several community members, and all proceeds went to support Siloam Mission, a homeless shelter in downtown Winnipeg. Over 120 people attended the iftaar, including Mr. Brian Mayes from city council who spoke and offered greetings from the city.
3. The MIA collaborated with the Winnipeg Police Service on a workshop on domestic abuse which included speakers from the MIA and from the Police.
4. Food-o-Rama has presented our community with another wonderful outreach opportunity. These dinners are open to all, and we have hosted members of the Winnipeg Police Service and city council several times. Non-Muslim guests have also attended and will continue to do so insha Allah.
5. The MIA is a member of a committee which aims to build stronger relationships between the Winnipeg Police Service and the Muslim community. This committee meets quarterly and discusses issues of concern and areas of collaboration between the Muslim community and the local Police. As a result of this relationship the police have attended several community functions and presented a workshop on domestic violence at the Grand Mosque.
6. The MIA Waverley Gym was rented by Elections Canada on the day of the Federal Elections and used as a polling station for the adjacent neighbourhood.
7. The MIA is building relationships with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. As a result, the Museum hosted a public lecture by Dr. Ingrid Mattson on Islam and Human Rights on the occasion of Islamic History Month in October.
8. The MIA hosted a major banquet in October, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Ingrid Mattson. Attendees at the banquet included Minister of Multiculturalism and Immigration in Manitoba, the honourable Flor Marcelino, Chief Devon Clunis of the Winnipeg Police, Councillor Brian Mayes and Terry McLoed from CBC.
9. During the period leading up to the Federal Elections, many candidates visited the mosque and met with community members.
10. MIA collaborated with councillor Brian Mayes in organizing a city open house to inform the public about sponsoring Syrian refugees.

MIA Programs and Institutes

Al Noor Weekend School: Al Noor is an important program for our community. It has offered Islamic complementary education for over 2 decades. Last year we hired a new program director, sr. Taj Farooqi and increased student fees in order to increase teacher compensation. The program is running well, with close to 100 students enrolled. It consists of both English-speaking and French-speaking classrooms and we are looking at expanding and strengthening the Arabic curriculum.

Al Fajr Quran Institute: This program continues to serve children and more advanced students of Quran hifz. The program is directed by Dr. Abdelilah Soussi-Ghouni and Dr. Cheikh Moulaye. Many members of the community also continue to pursue the serious hifz program supervised by sheikh Atef.

AGM Resolutions

The EC received a request to add 13 resolutions to the AGM agenda. All of them were moved by br. Alaa Kasem.

The EC referred the issue of the ECC. The ECC concluded that none of the resolutions qualified to be included as a separate agenda item. However, a response to each of the resolutions will be provided to the MIA members at the AGM.

Future Initiatives

Several initiatives are a “work in progress” and will insha Allah come to fruition in the coming year, including:

1. Explorations of new possibilities for burial grounds for Muslims.
2. Revenue generation initiatives that bring revenue from sources other than donations.
3. Collaboration with other organizations to support the large number of Syrian refugees expected to arrive in Manitoba.
4. Pursue the issue of land development with the city.
5. Engaging Muslim youth more consistently and establishing a youth program.

Overall, last year was busy and vibrant. There is good momentum in the community. The EC is grateful for the support it received, the feedback and constructive criticism and for all generous contributions that were made. Our community is a great community and we look forward for greater years ahead.

Submitted respectfully,

Idris Elbakri
President
Manitoba Islamic Association