

TSUNAMI RELIEF PROGRAM

Recommendation

Regional Councillor Mario F. Ferri, in consultation with the City Manager, members of Council and the Senior Management Team, and Corporate Communications, recommends:

- 1) That the City of Vaughan establish a humanitarian relief program to aid the victims of the tsunami disaster in South Asia;
- 2) That this program be structured to support the activities of a major charitable organization that specifically addresses the needs of children in the disaster area;
- 3) That Vaughan Council select the "Sponsor a Child" program administered by World Vision Canada as an appropriate tsunami relief initiative;
- 4) That Vaughan Council allocate the necessary funds (\$42,000) from the Mayor's Golf Tournament to sponsor 100 children;
- 5) That a Relief Program Committee including community members of the affected countries be established and mandated to oversee this new City program and pursue related initiatives to secure additional financial support and involvement of the wider community; and
- 6) That the resolution adopted by the Community Relations Committee at its meeting held on January 5, 2005 be received.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of a Tsunami Relief Program that will involve the community in providing needed support to the victims of this unprecedented disaster.

Background - Analysis and Options

The extent of the tsunami disaster in South East Asia is overwhelming. Canadians have generously supported the relief efforts to help the victims of this unprecedented tragedy, but reports indicate that the need for relief efforts and rebuilding programs will continue for an extended period and there will be an ongoing requirement for financial aid and support from other countries. The Community Relations Committee, at its meeting of January 5, 2005, adopted the following: That the Community Relations Committee urges Vaughan Council to provide an immediate response and take action to indicate that the City of Vaughan is responding to this terrible tragedy in some substantial way.

A number of agencies have been contacted to determine the immediate need. These agencies include: Canadian Red Cross; CARE Canada; Oxfam Canada; World Vision Canada; UNICEF Canada; Doctors Without Borders; and Save the Children. The response from these agencies has been unanimous – they do not want donations of food, clothing etc. due to the cost of shipping these goods. They require money, which will be used to purchase the necessary items from bordering areas for delivery to the tsunami disaster areas.

Based on several newspaper reports indicating that donated food, clothing and other items such as tarps are still sitting in warehouses or are not being quickly delivered to those most in need or utilized for the appropriate purpose, it is recommended that the City of Vaughan not pursue a product specific relief effort.

Since the victims of this catastrophe will face a long struggle to rebuild lives and communities in the face of so much destruction, sponsoring 100 children through World Vision Canada meets the immediate relief requirements in terms of medicine, food and shelter and also addresses the rebuilding period by providing support in such areas as schooling, health services and infrastructure. The child sponsorship money funds Area Development Programs that address the needs of children and adults across the entire community with a potential to reach 10,000 to 80,000 people.

The City of Vaughan relief effort program will be structured to involve the entire community. For example, youth groups in Vaughan could become “pen pals” with the sponsored children. Details and updates on the program would be posted to the City website and could include photos of the sponsored children, copies of pen pal correspondence, and news of local involvement in the program.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council. The necessary resources have not been allocated and approved.

Conclusion

The proposed relief program will address the need for the City of Vaughan to respond to the tsunami disaster in Asia in a proactive and constructive manner. This proposed program will involve the entire community and demonstrate the ongoing support of Vaughan for those in need around the world.

Report prepared by:

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Respectfully submitted,

Mario F. Ferri
Regional Councillor