

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - MAY 2, 2008**

### **EARTHQUAKE CATASTROPHE IN CHINA**

#### **Recommendation**

Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco recommends:

1. That the Mayor and Members of Council, on behalf of the citizens of the City of Vaughan, express their condolences to the Chinese community and the people of China on the recent earthquake disaster that has caused major catastrophe to the lives of the Chinese citizens; reportedly with an anticipated death toll of close to 50,000, many of whom are school children,
2. That we ask the citizens of Vaughan to reach out and extend their compassion through donation or financial assistance in helping the earthquake victims in China; and
3. That this resolution be forwarded to the Consul General Madam Zhu of the People's Republic of China, to the Ambassador to Canada, Honourable Lu Shuming for the People's Republic of China, to the Premier of Ontario and to the Prime Minister of Canada.

#### **Economic Impact**

N/A

#### **Communications Plan**

The City of Vaughan Corporate Communications Department will issue a News Release on the following recommendation.

#### **Purpose**

Recognizing the wonderful relationship the City of Vaughan has established with China through its Sister City Friendship Agreement with Yangzhou and our recent Trade Mission to China, we ask the City of Vaughan and its citizens to pay tribute to those that have lost their lives, loved ones, and/or their belongings as a result of this catastrophe. And to also offer support and assistance for those that are in need.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

A 7.9 RS earthquake struck Wenchuan County, Aba Prefecture in Sichuan Province in China on 12 May at 14:28 hrs Beijing time. According to USGS (United States Geological Survey), the neighbouring cities of Jiangyou (population:127,000); Tianpeng (60,000); Guangyuan (213,000); Mianyang (264,000); and the provincial capital, Chengdu (3,950,000) received extensive damage and continuous aftershocks.

Recent news reports (Xinhua News), quoted the Sichuan Provincial authorities that the official death toll now stands at 19,000 and climbing, with many more that are still buried under the rubbles of collapsed buildings. Communications with the earthquake-affected area have been cut off, including the town of Wenchuan (population: 100,000), which is approximately 30 km from the epicentre. In the city of Doujiangyan, 50 students were reported dead and 900 students buried due to collapsed school buildings.

The devastating effects of this earthquake were felt as far away as Hong Kong, Thailand and the neighbouring countries. 4.3 Million homes have been destroyed or have sustained severe

damages. This earthquake has impacted on almost 400 dams, including the Zipingpu Dam which has been impacted with “severe” cracks. The State Government has deployed 2,000 state troops to help stabilize the dam from further damages.

While information regarding the environmental consequences of the earthquake is thus far limited, the media has reported that two chemical factories in Shifang were destroyed, spilling 80 tons of toxic liquid ammonia, forcing 6,000 people to evacuate their homes. As Sichuan Province is one of China’s most highly industrialized and densely populated areas, a vast array of agricultural and industrial activities could present a myriad of potential sources of environmental risks in the earthquake-affected area, in addition to risks to human life and health. Therefore, any actual or potential secondary risks should be assessed as soon as possible.

The extensive damage to physical infrastructure continues to hamper access by land to the affected area. Furthermore, heavy rains also constrain access by air. Information on affected populations and prevailing needs therefore remain difficult to obtain.

### **Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020**

Demonstrate Leadership and Promote Effective Governance.

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

### **Regional Implications**

N/A

### **Conclusion**

It is important for our City to offer assistance and support to the great suffering that is happening in China right now. The people in China are suffering extensive damage and a rising death toll; they are in need of our support.

### **Attachments**

N/A

### **Report prepared by:**

Anita Micoli, Council Executive Assistant

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Yeung Racco  
Councillor, Concord/Thornhill