



Corporate Report

NO: R008

COUNCIL DATE: January 17,

2005

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: January 13,
2005

FROM: City Manager FILE:

SUBJECT: Visit to China and India

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve for the Mayor and City Manager to visit Sister and Friendship Cities including Zhuhai and Taicang in China as well as to visit selected cities in India, including cities of Jalandhar and Ludhiana in the State of Punjab to establish Friendship City relationships.

BACKGROUND

The City of Surrey has two Sister Cities, Zhuhai in China and Koto-Ku in Japan and two Friendship Cities, Ningbo and Taicang, both in China. The primary purpose of these relationships is to provide opportunities for development and promotion of economic and cultural activities as well as to better understand the role of business relationships within the Asian community and how to leverage that understanding into business and cultural growth.

In terms of economic development, while we are unsure of the exact number of Surrey firms who do business in China and India, we are generally aware that an increasing number of companies import products from China and India and others export finished goods to China and India to an increasingly voracious consumer market. It is well recognized that both China and India are considered to be the largest growth markets in the world and provide huge opportunities for economic growth to businesses.

In 2004, City of Surrey received 6 formal delegations from our Sister and Friendship cities in China. In addition, elected officials and Senior Staff from several cities in the State of Punjab also visited our City and requested consideration of establishing Friendship or Sister City relationships.

DISCUSSION

Surrey has a large (over 38%) ethnically diverse population with the largest, by far, being of Indian origin. There have been repeated requests both from the community stakeholders as well as from the visiting delegations for Surrey to establish Sister or Friendship City relationships, particularly from Cities in the State of Punjab, which is where most Indo Canadian Surrey residents are originally from. There continues to be very strong ties of the Indo Canadian residents with their birth country at all levels, be it extended family, cultural or business community. The trade and economic activity of Surrey businesses with India is growing and the potential is even greater. Many have strongly expressed that an on going long term "City to City" relationship will assist them in advancing their business activities. This observation is, in part, already borne out by City of Surrey's relationships with cities in China. It is therefore proposed that Surrey establish Friendship city relationship with the cities of Jalandhar and Ludhiana in the

State of Punjab.

In addition, a 'hands-on' first-hand experience related to local government decision-making and service delivery in cities in India and China - particularly as they relate to land use and density, by-laws, public input, and youth & seniors issues - will provide a unique insight for new and creative approaches to integrating diversity and their perspectives in our City's service delivery.

It is proposed that the Mayor and City Manger visit Taicang and Zhuhai in China as well as selected Cities in India, focussing on Cities of Chandigarh, Jalandher and Ludhiana in the State of Punjab. Meetings will be arranged with the local governments of these and other cities to discuss cooperation and participation initiatives related to cultural and economic activities as well as local governments' service delivery. Arrangements will be made to establish friendship city relationships with the Cities of Jullunder and Ludhiana in the State of Punjab. These visits are planned for the period March 15 to March 31, 2005, as there are no Council meetings scheduled for this period. It is believed that while most of accommodation and meals will likely be covered by respective host local governments, the City of Surrey will need to pay for airfares and transportation costs.

CONCLUSION

As the 10th largest city in Canada, it is becoming increasingly important that Surrey be in a forefront position on the international stage as a location for business and to be recognized as a vibrant international centre of growth and cultural experience.

Within the Asian context, it is considered important that relationships be established for the furtherance of business and economic opportunities.

Umendra Mital
City Manager

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