



Corporate Report

NO: R035

COUNCIL DATE: March 10, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **March 6, 2008**
FROM: **Manager, Economic Development** FILE:
SUBJECT: **Memorandum of Agreement with Province – Local Government Twinning Relationships**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Authorize the Mayor to sign the attached Memorandum of Agreement on behalf of the City and forward the signed document to the Ministry of Community Services by March 12, 2008.

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the Province's offer of technical and financial assistance to further the Surrey's city-twinning initiatives and to gain approval for the Mayor to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Province on Local Government Twinning Relationships.

BACKGROUND

As part of their Asia Pacific Initiatives, the Provincial government through the Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues, sent a letter to Mayor and Council dated February 25, 2008, offering technical and financial assistance to the City of Surrey in support of its city twinning initiatives. The letter included a copy of the attached Memorandum of Agreement (See Attachment A).

In this letter, Minister Chong acknowledges that while cities are interested in establishing or enhancing twinning relationships with Asia Pacific cities, competing priorities and a lack of resources are often barriers to doing so. With this as background, Minister Chong invites the City of Surrey to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on Local Government Twinning Relationships with the Province.

To be eligible, local governments must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Have a population over 40,000; and
Have an existing Asia Pacific city twin (China, India, Korea or Japan)
- OR
- Be strategically significant for positioning British Columbia as the pre-eminent trade and cultural hub between Asia and North America;
- OR
- Have demonstrated recent initiatives to establish economically-robust twinning relationships with local governments in China, Japan, India or South Korea;
- OR
- Have expressed interest in pursuing twinning relationships, and have a clear need for financial assistance.

With a number of existing Sister/Friendship City agreements in place with cities in China, Japan and India (Attachment B), the City of Surrey meets the criteria. In addition, with its growing economy, two border crossings, deep-sea port, labour pool and other attributes, Surrey is without question a major player in positioning BC as a dominant trade and cultural hub between Asia and North America.

By signing the Memorandum of Agreement, the parties agree to the following:

The Province shall:

- Provide information resources through the BC Asia Twinning Tool Kit and through the www.bcasiatwinnings.gov.bc.ca website.
- Provide support including research on target countries and cities, guidance on establishing economically robust twinings, statistics, education and training, senior government liaison support, city specific expressions of interest, contact with consular offices, embassies and trade and investment offices.
- Subject to being authorized under the Local Government Act to distribute conditional grants to local governments in support of provincial priorities, **provide the local government with a grant for \$50,000.**

The City of Surrey shall:

- Use the grant funding to accomplish deliverables that lead towards establishing economically-robust twinning relationships with an Asia Pacific local government, which will result in one or more of the following by March 31, 2009:
 - Initiation or further enhancement of an economically robust twinning relationship with a local government in an Asia-Pacific country;
 - Conducting a mission to designated twin city (or developing a plan for achieving this); and/or
 - Hosting a return delegation from designated twin city (or developing a plan to achieve this);
- Use the grant to fund twinning-related planning, research, education, promotional materials, human resources or travel activities as specified in Schedule A of the MoA;
- Use the grant funding to supplement and complement existing efforts and not to replace existing initiatives; and
- Achieve the expected results (or develop a plan to achieve the results) and report on them by March 31, 2009.

The City would also be obligated to provide monthly updates to the Province on the status of its twinning-related activities and to abide by a Communications Protocol as outlined in Schedule B of the MoA.

DISCUSSION

The support and funding available through this Provincial program could assist in addressing an issue raised in December, 2007 by the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee (IAC), which unanimously agreed that the City should explore means to better honour its Sister City and Friendship City arrangements that have been established over time. Members of the IAC agreed that a community-based Sister Cities Committee should be struck and a five-year Strategy developed, to strengthen Surrey's Sister City relations.

To date the commitment demonstrated by Surrey's Sister and Friendship Cities in China have not been equally reciprocated by Surrey, with visits to those cities being comparatively few and far between. The last visit to Zhuhai by a Surrey delegation was in 2004 and, to date, Surrey has not sent a delegation to Ningbo.

In late summer of 2007, Zhuhai sent two delegations to Surrey in celebration of the 20th anniversary of our Sister City relationship. In late November of 2007, a delegation from Ningbo visited Surrey, providing a comprehensive overview of their city and expressing a strong desire for Surrey's Mayor to visit their city in 2008.

At the time of receiving Minister Chong's letter, the City was in the initial stages of exploring the possibility of sending a delegation to Sister City Zhuhai and Friendship City Ningbo.

CONCLUSION

As part of its Asia Pacific Initiatives, the Provincial government has invited the City of Surrey to sign a Memorandum of Agreement on Local Government Twinning Initiatives with Asia Pacific cities.

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that the City enter into the Memorandum of Agreement on Local Government Twinning Relationships with the Province of BC, which should assist in building stronger ties with the City's existing Sister/Friendship Cities in the Asia Pacific and increase the possibility of realizing economic benefits from these relationships.

Donna Jones
Manager, Economic Development

Attachments (2)