Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – January 17, 2023

REPORTS

Item No. 12 Sister Cities

COUNCIL DECISION:

On December 15, 2022, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Executive Policy Committee:

Moved by Councillor Wyatt,
Seconded by Councillor Dobson,

WHEREAS the City of Winnipeg, since 1988, has had an existing "Sister City" relationship with Chengdu, People's Republic of China;

AND WHEREAS the purpose of forming a Sister City relationship is to promote cultural and commercial ties between cities;

AND WHEREAS forming and maintaining a Sister City relationship is an important symbolic union, signifies a marriage of cultural and economic interests, and endorses a shared mission of reciprocal support between municipalities;

AND WHEREAS on 23 February 2021, Canada's House of Commons adopted a motion recognizing that China's actions against the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang region of China meet the definition of genocide as set out in the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention;

AND WHEREAS on 31 August 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner released a report assessing human rights concerns in the Xinjiang region of China and found that serious human rights violations have been committed;

AND WHEREAS on 31 October 2022, 50 states represented at the United Nations, including Canada, issued a joint statement expressing grave concern with respect to ongoing human rights violations against the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in the Xinjiang region and possible crimes against humanity;

AND WHEREAS in addition to other human rights abuses, China perpetrated the unlawful and retaliatory detention of Canadian citizens Michael Solvig and Michael Spavor in China for nearly three years;

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

AND WHEREAS among other recent and ongoing national sovereignty, espionage, and security concerns involving China, Canadian law enforcement and intelligence services are aware of and investigating allegations of China's interference in the 2019 federal election;

AND WHEREAS China maintains an official state policy of "unification" with Taiwan, posing a direct threat to Winnipeg's Sister City of Taichung;

AND WHEREAS COVID-19 and the recent vulnerability of international supply chains has highlighted the urgent need for building and prioritizing integrated, domestic economic capacity;

AND WHEREAS there is a growing recognition in western liberal democracies that existing foreign policy focused on engagement with China has largely failed and that the time has come to pursue a policy of "decoupling";

AND WHEREAS continuing a Sister City relationship with Chengdu, in light of China's human rights abuses, is morally untenable for the City of Winnipeg and is no longer reflective of modern foreign policy realities or domestic economic demands;

AND WHEREAS continuing a Sister City relationship with Chengdu risks the City of Winnipeg's implicit endorsement or ignorance of China's human rights abuses and reflects an improper prioritization of domestic interests;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the City of Winnipeg immediately terminate its Sister City status with Chengdu, China;

2. That the City of Winnipeg affirm its ongoing commitment to its Sister City, Taichung, Taiwan;

3. That the relevant by-laws or policies of the City of Winnipeg and Council be amended accordingly;

4. That the Proper Officers of the City of Winnipeg do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.