Executive Policy Committee
City of Winnipeg
Tuesday, January 17, 2023

Re: “Sister Cities” resolution, item 12 in Reports

Good morning.
I am opposed to the proposed termination of Sister City status with Chengdu in the People’s Republic of China.
If passed by the Executive Policy Committee, this resolution would place before City Council a very important choice: Either to jump aboard the pro-war bandwagon or to support restraint by Canada and its allies in relations with China.
The resolution is an important reminder that peace is everybody’s business, of people’s movements representing oppressed Indigenous Nations, working people, women, youth and students, even of civic and provincial governments.
The resolution authored by Councillor Russ Wyatt lacks accurate diplomatic, historical and economic context.
It condemns national oppression within China when here in Canada Indigenous Nations comprising about four million people continue to feel the heavy hand of oppression by the two primary non-Indigenous nations, Quebec and English-speaking Canada.
This resolution would send an unmistakable message that this City Council believes problems of anti-Indigenous racism, impoverishment, unresolved land claims and national liberation simply do not exist in Winnipeg or Canada.
Throwing stones from a glass house will never fix the problems of that house.
If the intention of the author is to draw attention away from problems at home, the intention would be disingenuous at the very least.
If the intention of the author is to create enmity between the peoples of Canada and China, only a small handful of people will benefit from that enmity, in the first place the U.S. war industry, at least for a while.
Some people are fooled some of the time, but the fact is this resolution would bring us closer to war between the world’s most powerful nations.
The United States has a long history of diplomatic engagement with China, starting with president Nixon’s so-called ping pong diplomacy that paved the way for his state visit to China in 1972. At the time, China had serious military disputes or territorial claims with most of its neighbours – India, the Soviet Union, Burma and so on, not only with Taiwan which historically was a province of China. Later in 1979 China invaded Vietnam.
Yet none of China’s poor behaviours affected diplomatic ties with Canada, the United States or other wealthy and powerful capitalist states.
Councillor Wyatt is particularly offended by China’s longstanding claim regarding Taiwan, a claim challenged by the United States’ armed forces for nearly the same length of time. He is offended enough by China’s policy towards Taiwan that he would scrap ties of people to people friendship with the citizens of Chengdu.
If anything is needed, it is more people to people ties with China: by trade unions, student groups and so on.
One significant fact about China not mentioned in Councillor Wyatt’s resolution is China’s rapid economic development in recent decades.
This development should not be a cause of war, but I believe its absence from the resolution’s long list of whereas-es is worth mentioning because it is the most important fact that has prompted the most dangerous rivalry with China.

Severing people to people ties only intensifies the rivalry governments understand exists between China and the other wealthy and powerful countries like Canada and the U.S.
The rivalry is more than a perception.
Free trade competition was the main and peaceful form of U.S.-led world capitalist development following the Second World War. Conditions of free trade accelerated the development of capitalism, more-so in the decades immediately after the War, giving rise not just to competition between the smallest capitalists but also to competition in modern times between national capitalist classes and between the biggest transnational corporations.
Free trade and the absence of apparent serious rivalry between the world's wealthiest capitalist powers contributed to the illusion there would be a global peace dividend following the setbacks to socialism in 1991. It was an illusion shattered in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, and with the growing menace of permanent war, at that time mainly against smaller countries.
Now world capitalist development is turning more towards sanctions, trade and currency wars, arms races and proxy wars involving its wealthiest nuclear powers. This is consistent with the overall laws of capitalist development and describes today's intensifying rivalries.
It is irresponsible and exceptionally dangerous for Canada or Winnipeg to adopt the policy that international relations have only winners or losers, which is where rivalry inexorably leads.
However, that seems to be Canada's approach, which councillor Wyatt's resolution would reinforce.
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland in her Budget 2022 address to the House of Commons said about Russia:
quote "Putin and his henchmen are war criminals. The world's democracies—including our own—can be safe only once the Russian tyrant and his armies are entirely vanquished." unquote
Freeland's approach seems to encompass regime change, but it is obvious she will be satisfied only with total military victory over Russia.
We need to ask what kind of world would be created if the world's greatest powers could only think in terms of vanquishing each other?
Several authoritative media reports say there is a desire in Washington to name minister Freeland the NATO military alliance's new Secretary General.
This makes it important to note another significant fact absent from councillor Wyatt's whereas-es, namely, that NATO and its leading member states ripped up the United Nation's charter 24 years ago in Yugoslavia, well in advance of Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, all the while adding new member states closer and closer to Russia, half-way around the world.
It is pro-war and hypocritical for councillor Wyatt to portray only China as a source of the war danger.
Some commentators like Emmanuel Todd express the view that the Third World War has started already in all but name between NATO and Russia in Ukraine.
It is a significant fact that Russia has extensive relations of friendship and cooperation with China.
Outbursts of diplomatic hostilities like Councillor Wyatt's resolution only serve to push China closer to Russia, just as sanctions and endless armaments used in Ukraine against Russia push Russia closer to China.
In this increasingly heated and dire situation, only an approach that supports the growth of people to people ties of friendship in all its forms and recognizes that peace is everybody's business will prevent a further drift towards world war.
I am sure such an approach will lead to a democratic peace respecting the wishes of nations and national minorities, at home and abroad. Approval of this resolution would deal a blow to this vital goal. Winnipeg must reject the pro-war bandwagon.

Darrell Rankin