



REPORT TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

TO: Mayor and Members of Council

FROM: John Livey, CAO

PREPARED BY: Don Taylor, Manager, Executive Operations

DATE OF MEETING: Sept. 13, 2005

SUBJECT: New Orleans disaster – assistance from Markham

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the report on the subject “New Orleans disaster – assistance from Markham” be received.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present to Committee of the Whole background information on New Orleans disaster assistance initiatives underway in other municipalities, and to outline plans for a Markham-specific initiative.

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting on September 1, 2005, Committee of the Whole directed that the Chief Administrative Officer be requested to investigate opportunities for Markham to assist with the New Orleans disaster.

In a letter dated September 2, 2005, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) issued a Member’s Advisory, which included suggestions to Canadian municipalities offering support. The key message is that, due to the enormous scale of the disaster, any assistance in the form of deploying human resources to the area should be coordinated through the Canadian Red Cross (CRC). Offers of financial support can be directed to local offices of the CRC.

Julian Fantino, Ontario Commissioner of Emergency Management, in a letter dated September 9, 2005 to Heads of Councils, asks to be contacted before self-deploying staff.

The Region of York and the City of Toronto, through their websites, invite citizens interested in helping to make direct contact with Canadian and/or American organizations such as Canadian/American Red Cross, and Canadian/American Salvation Army.

Within York Region, the Town of Richmond Hill is the only municipality with a corporate initiative – a “dress down week” where staff voluntarily pay \$5.00 for this opportunity.

Historically, Markham’s support for disaster relief has mostly been in the form of cash allocations, usually in the \$1000-\$1,500 range. A recent exception was the \$50/plate benefit dinner for Tsunami relief.

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

The New Orleans disaster area has two urgent needs – skilled human resources, and money. The deployment of skilled human resources is being coordinated by the Canadian Red Cross and the Ontario Commissioner of Emergency Management.

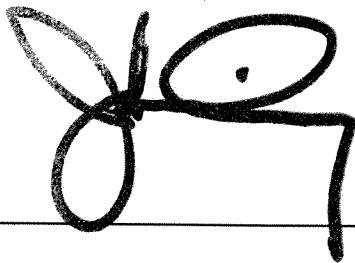
The Region of York and the City of Toronto have opted to invite their citizens to volunteer their services through national associations. The current and future take-up on these invitations is unknown at this point, but it is known that a municipally-driven effort to deploy staff would be complex and expensive. Staff would; be required to undergo detailed briefings by CRC, be absent from their regular jobs for days/weeks, and receive their regular salaries and benefits while absent.

Financial support to the New Orleans disaster would be in keeping with our historical practice. It also avoids the complexity and cost of deploying human resources that may not be needed. Finally, it fits with the York region and Toronto initiatives of inviting citizens to volunteer their time and skills.

A voluntary \$5.00 “dress down week” would likely be well received by staff, and should generate the \$1,000 or so that we normally allocate to major disaster relief efforts.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

None



John Livey
Chief Administrative Officer