

Friendship Agreement with Vũng Tàu City**Report Purpose**

To seek Council's approval of a draft Friendship Memorandum of Understanding with Vũng Tàu City, Vietnam.

Recommendation

THAT the Friendship Memorandum of Understanding between Strathcona County and Vũng Tàu City, Vietnam, as set out in Enclosure 1 of the November 24, 2020 Intergovernmental Affairs report, be approved.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships

Report

The relationship between Strathcona County and Vũng Tàu City was fostered through a program with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), which partnered Canadian municipalities with a developing nation. The County aided Vũng Tàu City in the development of a municipal census and donated a playground to Vũng Tàu City as part of the FCM program and as such Vũng Tàu City would like to continue a relationship with Strathcona County. The Vietnamese Ambassador to Canada marked the friendship between Vũng Tàu and Strathcona County by visiting in March 2019, and a letter was sent to Vũng Tàu City government from Council initiating a discussion of a sister city pairing.

The government of Vũng Tàu City received Council's letter dated April 30, 2019 and has indicated through conversations with the Mayor's Office areas of interest they wish to pursue in a friendship agreement with Strathcona County. Nguyen Lap, Chairman of the People's Committee of Vũng Tàu City, replied to Mayor Frank in November 2019 agreeing to strengthen the relationship between the two municipalities through a Memorandum of Understanding.

An internal working group was established to understand mutually beneficial initiatives for a partnership agreement. The following departments are involved:

- Intergovernmental Affairs (lead)
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Recreation, Parks and Culture
- Planning and Development Services
- Information Technology Services

Recognizing there is interest from both Council and the Chamber of Commerce, Administration is recommending a short-term and less restrictive Friendship Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Issues include the limited resources to facilitate a formal partnership agreement and the need to ensure economic benefits to the County. The proposed MOU would work on three areas that would best suit the County, allocate strategic resources, and allow for exploration in future twinning discussions between Strathcona County and other municipalities.

The three areas are:

1. Cultural and recreational exchanges – facilitating artistic exchanges, sports team or coaching exchanges, and the possibility of giving time or equipment for another playground development.

2. Tourism – an opportunity for Vũng Tàu City to connect with visitors from the County while the County can take advantage of the tourism knowledge gained by Vũng Tàu City as it has become a tourism hub.
3. Chamber of Commerce/local business – Strathcona County Economic Development and Tourism connects the Chamber of Commerce and appropriate regional businesses to work in Vũng Tàu City.

On March 11, 2020, the recommendations were approved by Executive Team. Administration also recognizes as the two municipalities move forward with facilitating activities described in the three identified areas, Strathcona County will ensure adherence to all appropriate measures relative to the conditions of COVID-19, as necessary. The initial meetings can be held virtually.

On October 19, 2020, the COVID-19 Economic Resilience and Vision Task Force reviewed the proposed MOU and agreed to the three areas.

Therefore, Administration is recommending that Council approve the attached draft Friendship MOU which can be sent electronically to Vũng Tàu City officials for consideration. The draft MOU includes an expiry date of 2023 to mark the 50th anniversary of official diplomatic relationship between Canada and Vietnam. The expiry date will allow for an evaluation of the MOU and ensure there is an opportunity to extend or change the partnership at that time. The MOU is not legally binding and has been reviewed by Legislative and Legal Services. The appropriate departments will move forward on suitable actions in the three identified areas upon agreement by Vũng Tàu City officials.

Council and Committee History

December 10, 2019	THAT the Exploration of Municipal Partnership with Vung Tau City, Vietnam report be brought back to Council on the revised date of April 7, 2020.
April 30, 2019	THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, send a letter to Vũng Tàu City to initiate formal discussions for strengthening the current municipal relationship through a friendship or sister city agreement, and send copies of the letter to the Ambassador of Vietnam to Canada and the Chairman of Ba Ria – Vũng Tàu Province to make them aware of this correspondence; and THAT, subject to receipt of a favourable reply, Administration develop, for Council's consideration, a framework for such an agreement
December 11, 2018	THAT Administration report back to Council in Q1 of 2019 on the advisability of strengthening Strathcona County's existing municipal to municipal relationship and ties with Vũng Tàu City, Vietnam in the context of a formal economic relationship (building on already developed relationships between our respective communities), and that the report contain recommendations on how to proceed

Other Impacts

Policy: Administration could develop a policy or process and recourses for future friendship pairings be developed, led by Intergovernmental Affairs and Economic Development and Tourism.

Legislative/Legal: Legislative and Legal Services has reviewed the agreement.

Interdepartmental: Intergovernmental Affairs will coordinate meetings between the two administrations and signing of the MOU. Economic Development and Tourism will work with the Chamber of Commerce to facilitate business opportunities for local companies. Recreation, Parks and Culture will facilitate cultural exchange and an opportunity to create a new recreational opportunity in Vũng Tàu City. If directed, Intergovernmental Affairs will work with Legislative and Legal Services to provide a draft process or policy for future municipal pairings to Council.

Alternatives Continue to have an informal relationship with Vũng Tàu City and focus on opportunities for cooperation as they arise (no Council motion required).

Communication Plan Communication of the MOU to the public once signed.

Enclosure(s)

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| 1 | Friendship Memorandum of Understanding with Vũng Tàu City |
| 2 | Vũng Tàu City Friendship Agreement - presentation |
| 3 | Letter to Vũng Tàu City |
| 4 | Letter from Vũng Tàu City |