



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: June 28, 2016

SUBJECT: Eabametoong First Nation Partnership
PREPARED BY: Asare Kester-Akrofi, Executive Coordinator, ext. 6090
REVIEWED BY: Meg West, Manager, Strategic Initiatives ext. 3792

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) THAT the report titled “Eabametoong First Nation Partnership” be received;
AND
- 2) THAT the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute a Partnership Agreement between the City and Eabametoong First Nation, in a form satisfactory to the Chief Administrative Officer, to promote community and cultural exchange between the two communities and to encourage activities that will promote collaboration and partnership; AND
- 3) THAT Markham Council support a cultural and economic collaboration with Eabametoong First Nation as part of Markham’s Canada 150 Celebration in 2017; AND
- 4) THAT Council endorse providing strategic support for Eabametoong First Nation Legacy Projects subject to finalization of the project list and determination of project feasibility; AND
- 5) THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

To endorse the proposed partnership between the City of Markham and Eabametoong First Nation (EFN). This is an opportunity to establish an accord which will enhance our two communities through collaboration, interaction and exchange. The City of Markham has an opportunity to provide guidance, training and strategic support on technological, economic, healthy community building and environmental sustainability issues impacting EFN’s community. EFN has an opportunity to facilitate the expansion of the City of Markham’s understanding and representation of First Nation culture and practices.

By endorsing this initiative, Markham will embrace a leadership role as one of the first municipalities in Ontario to engage directly with a First Nation community in economic capacity building and cultural enrichment. This undertaking would be a community-to-community partnership which will require the involvement of local business sponsorship, leveraging of resources and external relationships.

BACKGROUND:

Ken Caplan is a marketing expert and brand innovator who has managed projects and enterprise strategies for businesses and public sector organizations in Canada and

internationally. Mr. Caplan has coordinated investment attraction for urban, rural and indigenous communities. He is well known within the City of Markham business community and has been a catalyst for innovative problem solving, economic renewal and capacity building.

On Wednesday, January 6th, 2016, Ken Caplan brought forward a presentation to the Executive Leadership Team detailing his involvement with Eabametoong First Nation, a community with the aspirations of building a healthy community economically, socially and culturally. Through ongoing communication and engagement, City Staff came to learn of the many challenges facing this community.

Eabametoong First Nation, also known as Fort Hope, is an Ojibway First Nation in the Kenora District, Ontario, Canada. Located on the shore of Eabamet Lake in the Albany River system, the community is located approximately 300 kilometers northeast of Thunder Bay and is accessible by airplane, water, or by ice roads in the winter. EFN has a population of approximately 1,500 people and is mainly a cash economy with limited employment opportunities.

EFN was established during the fur trade era when Hudson's Bay Company set up a trading post by Eabamet Lake in 1890. James Bay Treaty No.9 was signed in 1905, officially establishing the EFN Band and EFN First Nation Reserve at this location. At that time, about 500 people signed on to join the Band. A new community was built in 1982 across the lake, and the official name Eabametoong First Nation was adopted in 1985.

Eabametoong First Nation Band Council consists of Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, who was elected as Band Chief in 2014 along with Councillors Charlie Okeese, Louie Sugarhead, Clara Wabano, Ralph Shawinimash and Steven Atlookan.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

On Tuesday, May 10th, 2016, an EFN delegation consisting of Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, Former Grand Chief Andy Yesno, Councillor Louie Sugarhead, Dr. Jennifer Dockstator of Trent University and Ken Caplan visited the City of Markham. The delegation was provided with an extensive City tour and a collective discussion to understand the challenges faced by EFN and the possibility of partnership with Markham in providing strategic advice on how to meet some of those challenges.

Dr. Jennifer Dockstator has been working at the interface of First Nations communities and Western society, primarily with remote communities in northern Ontario, an area slated for resource development. The national project of which she is a part, Poverty Action Research Project, is community-driven and involves five First Nations across Canada. Jennifer has spent time in northern Ontario, developing a relationship with the people of Eabametoong First Nation, Chief and Council, and Band staff. The six-year research project is funded through a grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute on Population and Public Health, and Institute of Aboriginal Peoples Health. Its overall aim has been to work with First Nations communities to build upon their many strengths, seeking ways to implement a strategy to address challenges, create

a sustainable economic base, adhere to principles of environmental stewardship, and provide a foundation for community health and well-being.

During the afternoon discussion on May 10th, 2016, EFN identified a number of Legacy Projects for the City of Markham's consideration. Over the coming months, City Staff will develop a plan with considerations for community funding, corporate and individual sponsorship. These areas of community needs include:

1. Education

The John C. Yesno Education Centre in EFN provides education for children from junior kindergarten to grade nine. The school lacks the physical capacity for additional grade levels. Upon completion of grade nine, students must leave EFN to attend high school in Thunder Bay. This transition has often proved difficult based on separation from family and community, social isolation and difficulties integrating into the new school and living situation. There are approximately 25 teachers at the local school; 12 are from southern Ontario.

2. Healthcare

Eabametoong First Nation has a nursing station where first aid is provided through Health Canada. More serious medical treatment requires fly-out to Thunder Bay or Sioux Lookout. Healthcare and wellbeing are ongoing challenges for residents of EFN. For example, the lack of availability of standard equipment supplies including oxygen for those with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), or asthma has created life threatening situations in the community.

As part of the discussion on May 10th, two projects were identified and discussed in detail. The opportunity for medical groups to fly in and provide medical/dental support and service every six months which to date, the Band has been unsuccessful in achieving. The second project involves the acquisition of a Cylinder Filling Plant (CFP) Emergency Oxygen System using technology that provides continuous emergency oxygen for remote medical stations. This is an advanced technological solution capable of filling high pressure oxygen cylinders from traditional oxygen sources.

3. Youth Engagement and Skill Development

There is a need to provide meaningful opportunities to engage and enhance the lives of youth. The number of teen suicides in many Aboriginal communities, including EFN is a national concern which requires multidisciplinary approaches and action. Collaboration can create opportunities to foster optimism for the future through youth engagement in skill development, volunteerism, sport, and community leadership. There are opportunities to encourage youth to help remediate community issues by providing them opportunities to gain much needed skills in the trades and with community mentors. These skills can be deployed for example, to help build local housing and infrastructure.

4. Banking

Eabametoong First Nation has a cash economy that is supplied by fly-in products and currency from Thunder Bay. Municipal employees represent the largest employment group in the community and are paid by cheque, as are social assistance recipients. Band

members take their cheques to Corny's, a retail business that has a contract with the Band to cash cheques, for a fee. There is an ATM at Corny's that dispenses cash but it often runs out before month's end. This is a serious problem for individuals and the Band as a whole.

5. Sustainability

Eabametoong First Nation intends to apply for the Aboriginal Community Energy Plan (ACEP) through the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) with the goal of becoming a net-zero community. This program facilitates the implementation of a comprehensive long-term plan to improve energy efficiency, reduce electricity consumption and assess opportunities for renewable energy solutions. EFN is currently engaging consultants to review ACEP eligibility and City Staff are prepared to support and assist this initiative for success in the grant writing application phase.

6. Energy

Most energy in EFN is provided by diesel-fueled generators. The diesel fuel is brought in by trucks during the winter months on the ice roads. The federal government provides diesel fuel under treaty agreements and although the Band has looked into hydro and solar, the costs and supply agreement requirements have proven to be prohibitive. The generators are generally old and in need of frequent repair, and they are unable to support any additional needed electricity capacity. Homes are primarily heated by wood burning stoves. There is hydro potential nearby but the community has not found the right partner for development.

7. Water

EFN has been under a boil-water advisory for the last 15 years. When the filtration tanks were initially installed, the population was approximately 800. Since then the population has grown to approximately 1,500 but no change has been made to filtration capacity including wastewater treatment.

8. Food Security

Since EFN is a fly-in community many food products including, milk, fruit and vegetables come in by air transport for most months of the year except for 3-4 winter months when ice roads are in operation. The cost is exorbitant. The Band is planning a community garden for the first time this spring and there is discussion around the need for a commercial community green house.

9. Connectivity

Eabametoong First Nation internet operates at different capacities within the community. The municipal offices and most residences have low bandwidth. The school has higher capacity and the home of the school director has somewhat higher bandwidth. All internet is provided by satellite service which is slow. Cell phone and landline service is available. Current planning is for full broadband service with fibre optics to be available in EFN by 2019-2020.

Eabametoong First Nation is completing a new communications facility. EFN has taken a bank loan for the project as repeated requests for government funding have been unsuccessful. Communications equipment is still required.

10. Housing and Innovative Community Planning

There is a housing shortage in EFN. Overcrowding is common and many homes are in need of repair. There are currently 26 serviced lots ready for development however funds are unavailable for construction, and as noted above, there is insufficient electricity generation capacity to service these homes. EFN also has a draft plan for a much needed Youth Recreation Centre with a price tag of \$3.5 million. Innovative development and financing concepts are required for facilities that could be built in the community.

11. Economic Development and Business

Eabametoong First Nation Council has authorized the creation of an economic development corporation with the goal of attracting outside investment. Mark Dockstator, President of First Nations University in Regina, Saskatchewan is guiding the process. There is a need for sound business development, and a hope for cultural tourism to become a primary economic source.

Canada 150 Celebration

Collaboration between EFN and Markham during the sesquicentennial and beyond would provide a unique opportunity for our community to learn about the values of indigenous culture and EFN in particular. The most important mutual benefit of this partnership is the enriching of lives in both communities through partnership, communication and awareness. This is an example of effective community-to-community collaboration.

Conclusion

The Eabametoong First Nation community faces considerable economic, social and environmental challenges. Markham's long history of successful and innovative partnerships and its ability to mobilize demonstrates the skills necessary to incite positive change in EFN, while strengthening our own multicultural vibrancy. A partnership agreement between the two communities could serve as a model for other municipalities and First Nations communities in the promotion of "Nation building".

Next Steps

City Staff requires Council approval to enter into a Partnership Agreement between the City of Markham and Eabametoong to promote community and cultural collaboration. Staff will continue to investigate opportunities to work in partnership with EFN on Legacy Projects. This is subject to finalization of the EFN project list and relative project feasibility.

Since January 2016, Ken Caplan has consistently provided strategic guidance and support to City Staff in response to questions regarding the challenges EFN faces. Mr. Caplan has been integral to the effective communication and cultural bridging of the two communities and has effectively positioned relations for success. Staff relied on Mr. Caplan's expertise and intimate knowledge of EFN culture and personnel in preparation for the delegation's visit of the City of Markham on May 10th, 2016. Mr. Caplan

continues to be an invaluable resource to both communities and will continue to help strengthen governmental relations and the coordination of Legacy Projects.

The City will retain Ken Caplan in a consulting capacity in order to continue building the relationship between Markham and EFN. Staff will work with Mr. Caplan to scope potential opportunities and will develop a proposed action plan with deliverables and outcomes to the satisfaction of the Chief Administrative Officer.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

City Staff will retain the professional services of consultant Ken Caplan of Kenneth Caplan and Associates Limited. Mr. Caplan will provide a workplan outlining his services toward achieving a partnership. The total cost of services received will not exceed \$60,000, plus applicable taxes for a commitment of 12 months.

Additional financial considerations related to Markham undertaking the support of the EFN Legacy Projects is to be determined, and will be the subject of future reports to Council.

It is important to note that the City's primary role will be to leverage our local community leaders. By strategically utilizing resources and bringing awareness to the challenges facing EFN, we intend to leverage the necessary support to strengthen their community.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable

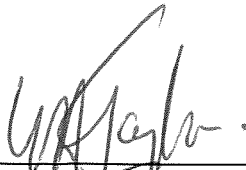
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This partnership has the potential to align with all Building Markham's Future Together goals: Engaged, Diverse and Thriving City, Exceptional Services by Exceptional People, Safe and Sustainable Community and Stewardship of Money and Resources.


BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The undertaking of this partnership will require cross-commission, organization wide support.

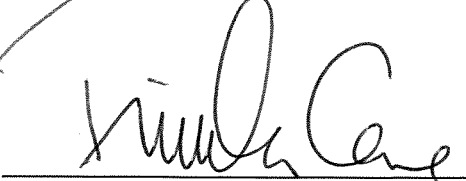
RECOMMENDED BY:



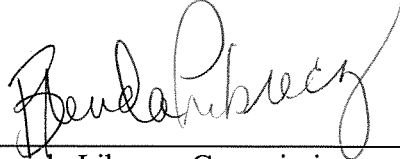
Andy Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer




Jim Baird, Commissioner,
Development Services



Trinela Cane, Commissioner,
Corporate Services



Brenda Librecz, Commissioner,
Community & Fire Services



Catherine Conrad, City Solicitor &
Acting Director, Human Resources

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Letter from Chief Elizabeth Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation

Attachment 2 - Location Map of Eabametoong First Nation