
City Council

MM45.3	ACTION			Ward: All
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Disaster Relief – Haiti - by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Cho

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Executive Committee. A two thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Cho, recommends that:

1. Toronto City Council approve a contribution of one million dollars on behalf of the citizens of Toronto for efforts to rebuild Haiti's infrastructure to acceptable international standards.
2. The City of Toronto establish an online donation tool for residents and visitors of the City's website, www.toronto.ca, to directly contribute to this rebuilding effort.
3. City Council deem this donation to be in the interests of the municipality.
4. City Council distribute a copy of this Notice of Motion to all municipalities with a population greater than 50,000.

Summary

On January 12, 2010, a catastrophic 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti, followed by a series of aftershocks with magnitudes ranging from 5.0 to 5.9. The International Red Cross estimates that approximately three million of the ten million inhabitants were affected by the earthquake with the Haitian Interior Minister reporting upwards of 200,000 dead.

In the nation's capital, Port-au-Prince, most major landmarks were significantly damaged or destroyed, including the buildings of the finance ministry, the ministry of public works, the ministry of communication and culture, the Palace of Justice, the Superior Normal School, the National School of Administration, the Institut Aimé Césaire, Parliament, the Presidential Palace, the National Assembly building, the Port-au-Prince Cathedral, the main jail as well as most hospitals in the area.

The headquarters of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in Port-au-Prince collapsed and the Mission's Chief, Hédi Annabi, his deputy, Luiz Carlos da Costa, and the acting police commissioner have all been confirmed dead. Since the government administrative structures in Haiti have been destroyed, Elisabeth Byrs of the UN is calling this the worst disaster the United Nations had ever experienced.

Scattered reports of looting and violence have escalated the devastation, and the magnitude of this disaster will be amplified by an inevitable public health epidemic due to lack of clean water, food, proper sewage disposal, and health care.

On January 13, 2010, Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Canada's Governor General and a refugee from Haiti, gave the following statement:

"Now more than ever, it is time for us to show our solidarity with the most vulnerable people in the Americas, our brothers and sisters in Haiti, whose courage is once again being so harshly tested...Yesterday, fate once again turned against the people of Haiti, who had only just begun to see a glimmer of hope...Like me, Haitian communities across Canada are heartbroken and overwhelmed by the magnitude of this catastrophe. The images and news reports are unbearable to watch -- so much distress, suffering and loss. I salute the friendship and solidarity being demonstrated all across Canada and throughout the international community."

Canada has a large population of Haitian immigrants, most particularly in Montreal and Toronto. This is an international disaster requiring immediate and aggressive international intervention. Together, the sister nations in the Americas must work together to rebuild this shattered nation to a level of international standards. Ensuring that Haitian citizens and residents have access to clean drinking water, hospitals and schools is of paramount importance if we are to stop the cycle of poverty in a nation that scarcely has resources of its own.

(Submitted to City Council on January 26 and 27, 2010 as MM45.3)