



Municipality of Port Hope

Staff Report

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Report Title: Twinning Agreement with Nadvirna, Ukraine.

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: April 23, 2024

Report Author:

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Department responsible:

Corporate Services

Report Number: CS-08-24

Recommended Action:

That Council authorize the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and enter into a twinning agreement between the Municipality of Port Hope, and the City of Nadvirna, Ukraine.

Highlights:

- The Municipality of Port Hope currently has no twin city (aka sister city).
- Twinning with Ukrainian municipalities has been promoted by Members of Parliament throughout Canada as a means to demonstrate support for Ukraine.
- In January, Council directed staff to bring back a report on next steps related to participating in the twin cities initiative with Ukraine.

Background:

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has resulted in thousands of casualties and a humanitarian crisis, with millions displaced. International condemnation of Russia's aggression and invasion has led to sanctions, while diplomatic efforts for peace continue. The conflict remains a significant geopolitical issue, impacting Ukraine's stability and global relations.

Over the past few years, various Members of Parliament have encouraged municipalities to consider twinning (or sister city) agreements with similar sized Ukrainian municipalities in an effort to demonstrate support and promote cooperation throughout the ongoing conflict. The Municipality of Port Hope was approached by MP Philip Lawrence, Northumberland-Peterborough South, with a recommendation that the Municipality consider a twinning agreement with Nadvirna, Ukraine. Council considered correspondence regarding this matter in January 2024 and subsequently directed staff (through Resolution 02-24) to bring back a report on the next steps related to participating in the twin city initiative including resource implications and benefits.

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Discussion:

Twin city (often used interchangeably with 'sister city') initiatives can play a vital role in fostering international relations and cultural exchange between municipalities sharing similar characteristics. These partnerships, established between Canadian municipalities and counterparts abroad, promote mutual understanding, cooperation, and friendship. They often involve symbolic exchanges in various fields such as culture, education, tourism, and economic development.

Through twin city relationships, Canadians gain opportunities to learn about different cultures, traditions, and ways of life, enriching their own communities in the process. These initiatives serve as bridges connecting people across borders, facilitating dialogue, collaboration, and lasting connections that contribute to global harmony and prosperity. The Municipality of Port Hope has never entered into a twin city agreement.

The following Ontario municipalities have taken part in this initiative and have entered into twinning agreements with their willing Ukrainian counterparts:

- Brockville, ON - Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
- North Grenville, ON - Sokal, Ukraine
- Sioux Lookout, ON - Vashkivtsi, Ukraine
- Brantford, ON - Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine

Other municipalities with pre-existing relationships with Ukraine have strengthened their ties through revised agreements or rededication ceremonies. Federal government staff supporting the promotion of this initiative have identified Nadvirna, Ukraine as the proposed twin city for the Municipality of Port Hope considering its shared similarities and characteristics.

Nadvirna, situated in the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, is a historic city with a rich cultural heritage. Nestled in the picturesque foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, it boasts stunning natural landscapes and outdoor recreational opportunities. With a population of approximately 25,000, Nadvirna is known for its traditional Ukrainian architecture, including churches and wooden homes adorned with intricate carvings. The city's economy is driven by agriculture, forestry, and light industry. Nadvirna also serves as a transportation hub, with a railway station connecting it to major cities like Lviv and Kyiv. Its vibrant culture, scenic beauty, and historical charm make it a notable destination in western Ukraine.

The ongoing conflict has significantly impacted Nadvirna. Economic instability affects businesses and employment opportunities. While not a direct battleground, the city has seen an influx of internally displaced persons. Humanitarian efforts supporting Nadvirna have included providing shelter, food, and medical aid.

Officials in Nadvirna have shown interest in a proposed twinning with the Municipality of Port Hope. A simple twinning agreement can be negotiated easily upon support of Council and further establishing discussions with counterparts in Nadvirna.

As an example, and a potential basis for a future agreement, the City of Brantford recently entered into a simple twinning agreement with Kamianets-Podilsky, Ukraine "for the development of cooperation between the cities in the field of:

- Development of tourism,
- Culture,
- Youth cooperation,
- Sports,
- Science and education,
- Mutual assistance,
- Protection of the environment and cultural monuments,
- Exchange of experience in various fields”.

If Council is supportive, providing authorization for the Mayor and CAO to negotiate and execute the agreement is the simplest path forward. This would lay a foundation for future cooperation at levels to be determined over time and subject to the support of Council.

Upon the agreement being formalized and signed, a presentation to Council would follow and could involve Ukrainian representation who would be invited to attend and participate in the celebration of the same.

If Council does not wish to advance towards an agreement with Nadvirna, Report CS-08-24 can simply be received for information. In this case, revisiting the opportunity at a later date would be subject to a future decision of Council.

Financial Considerations:

There are no immediate identifiable costs specifically related to negotiating and participating in a twin city initiative with Nadvirna, Ukraine. Resource implications are entirely dependent upon the language included in the twinning agreement; however, it would be rare for such an agreement to include any specific financial and/or resource contributions whatsoever. Any financial contributions whether in kind, or otherwise, would be subject to annual budget approval. Expectations surrounding staff time required to support the ongoing relationship with the proposed twin city are difficult to identify but would be subject to regular competing priorities.

Given the primarily symbolic nature of twin city agreements, municipalities face some uncertainty about the specific economic returns from participating. Potential future investments in cultural exchanges or future economic partnerships may not always yield immediate or tangible economic benefits.

Like many of the symbolic actions local governments have taken, the Municipality of Port Hope must always balance the economic priorities associated with twin city agreements against other pressing needs, such as infrastructure maintenance, and regular public services. Competing demands for limited financial resources can make it difficult to allocate any specific funding to financial support relative to twin city initiatives.

Communication and Public Engagement:

Following the negotiation and signing of a twin city agreement, the Municipality could potentially hold a celebration of the event in order to mark the occasion. The agreement itself would be communicated to the public and the Municipality's website updated accordingly. Celebration of the signing of the proposed agreement would be planned following consideration of support by Council. Future updates on the relationship

established between the two municipalities could be provided over time at regular intervals.

Conclusion:

Despite their geographical and cultural differences, Nadvirna and Port Hope share similarities in their scenic beauty, historic charm, community spirit, cultural significance, and economic diversity, contributing to the unique character of each municipality. There has been strong local support for the people of Ukraine throughout the ongoing conflict that has been demonstrated both through financial assistance and support for settling those displaced by the conflict. A twin city agreement between the two municipalities would further recognize and strengthen support at a local level.

Attachments:

None.