To: City Manager  
From: General Manager, Community Services  
Subject: Asia Pacific Twinning Grant

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council regarding the Provincial Trade Mission to Japan and Korea and to seek direction from Council regarding the use of the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant.

SUMMARY

- In March 2008 the City received a $25,000 grant from the Province to ‘accomplish deliverables that lead towards establishing economically-robust twinning relationships with Asia Pacific local government’.
- The grant has been extended numerous times and is now set to expire July 31, 2012. The balance of funds remaining is $23,700.
- At its March 5, 2012 meeting Council passed a resolution supporting in principle participating in a planned Provincial Economic Trade Mission to Japan and Korea.
- The City of Quesnel committed to visit its Sister City, Shiraoi Japan, in 2011 to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Twinning relationship. The March 5, 2012 Council resolution specifically noted that visiting Shiraoi, Japan would be included as part of the spring trade mission.
- The Council resolution passed at the March 5, 2012 meeting also established that the trade mission delegation would consist of the Mayor, two City Councillors, and one Economic Development Corporation representative.
- Council was asked to submit an expression of interest so that it was clear how many members of Council were interested in participating. Three Councillors indicated an interest in participating in the trip, in addition to the Mayor.
- Since the March 5, 2012 meeting, we have received some information regarding the Provincial Trade Mission to Japan, Korea and the Philippines including dates (May 12 - 20) and an estimated cost which is expected to be ‘at least $10,000’ per person.
- In light of the excessive cost of this trip, Council may wish to consider not participating and instead plan a separate trade mission to Japan in June 2012.
- The Asia Pacific Twinning Grant is sufficient to cover 100% of the cost for the Mayor, two City Councillors, and an Economic Development staff representative to participate in a trade mission to Japan for approximately one week. The cost of the mission includes translation services while the delegation is in Japan.
STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS
Not applicable.

COUNCIL POLICY
The City of Quesnel Travel Policy applies to all travel that Council engages in.

At its March 5, 2012 meeting Council passed the following resolution:

THAT COUNCIL approve in principle its participation in the Provincial Trade Mission to Japan and Korea in 2012, AND THAT a delegation to Shiraoi, Japan be incorporated into the trade mission, AND THAT all costs associated with the trade mission be funded from the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant, AND THAT the trade mission delegation consist of the Mayor of the City of Quesnel, two members of Quesnel City Council, and one staff member from the Quesnel and District Economic Development Corporation, AND FINALLY THAT any member of Council who wishes to participate as a member of the trade mission delegation submit a written expression of interest to the Executive Assistant by March 19, 2012 indicating such.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
Not applicable. The Asia Pacific Twinning Grant provides 100% funding.

BACKGROUND
In March 2008, the City entered into an agreement with the Province under the Local Government Twinning Relationships program. The Province, through the Ministry of Community Development (at the time), provided a one-time grant of $25,000 to the City. The City was to use the funds to ‘accomplish deliverables that lead towards establishing economically-robust twinning relationships with Asia Pacific local government’. The grant was originally set to expire on March 31, 2009, however the Province has approved multiple extensions and the grant is now scheduled to expire on July 31, 2012.

In January 2011 Council passed a resolution supporting an economic development trade mission to Japan in July 2011. 2011 was the 30th anniversary of the Twinning relationship between Quesnel and its sister city Shiraoi, Japan and the July date was selected to coincide with the Twinning Societies delegation and the 30th Anniversary celebration planned. The delegation was to include the Mayor, one City Councillor, one City staff representative and one Economic Development Corporation staff representative.

A devastating earthquake and tsunami however struck Japan in March 2011 and the trip was subsequently cancelled. The City requested an extension of the Twinning Grant as a result of the cancelled trip and the province approved an extension to July 31, 2012. $1,300 was expended in 2011 to provide translation of the website, leaving a balance of $23,700 to fund an economic trade mission in 2012.

The Premier’s Economic Trade Mission to Japan, Korea and the Philippines has been set for May 12 – 20, 2012. The estimated cost to participate in the trade mission is at least $10,000 per person. The City would only be able to have two delegates participate and it may be necessary to support the trip with additional funding from other sources, particularly if a supplemental visit from Tokyo to Shiraoi is arranged.

The City could plan its own trade mission to Japan in 2012. It would be possible to cover the cost of a delegation of four, plus translation services, for a one week trade mission that would include a visit to Shiraoi, Japan with the funds available from the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant. It is anticipated that the trade mission would be held during the third week of June 2012, with the exact dates to be determined. In addition to participating in 30th anniversary events in Shiraoi it is anticipated that the trade mission will include meetings and visits to sites with potential economic development benefits for Quesnel.
Council was asked to submit an expression of interest if they were interested in being part of the trade mission delegation. Three Councillors indicated an interest; Councillor Roodenburg, Councillor Cave, and Councillor Elliot. The grant funding is expected to only be able to cover the costs for two Councillors to participate. Staff are seeking direction from Council regarding how they would like to determine which two Councillors’ participate. Council may wish to consider factors such as the portfolio of each Councillor or Council seniority; giving priority to those Councillor’s whose committee work is most closely aligned with twinning relations and economic development or providing consideration to those have served the longest on Council. Council, on the other hand, may prefer to use a different means of selection such as random draw.

ATTACHMENTS

None

CONCURRENCE

Economic Development Officer, QCEDC

OPTIONS

Council may wish to consider the following options as it relates to the use of the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant:

1. That the City not participate in the Premier’s Mission to Japan, Korea, and the Philippines in the spring of 2012 and instead that the City use the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant to pay for all costs, including translation services, associated with a trade mission to Japan in 2012 and further that the delegation for the trade mission consist of the Mayor, two City Councillors and an Economic Development Corporation staff representative.
2. Any other option deemed appropriate by Council.

Additionally Council may wish to pass a resolution specifically identifying which Councillors will make up the delegation or provide direction to staff regarding a selection process to determine which Council members will participate.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT THE CITY not participate in the Premier’s Trade Mission to Japan, Korea and the Philippines in spring 2012, AND THAT COUNCIL instead approve the use of the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant funds for an Economic Development Trade Mission to Japan in 2012, AND THAT all costs associated with the trade mission, including translation services, be funded from the Asia Pacific Twinning Grant, AND THAT the trade mission delegation consist of the Mayor, two members of Quesnel City Council, and one staff member from the Quesnel and District Economic Development Corporation.