

Media Release

January 6, 2005

Near-Majority of Councillors Continue To Advance Tsunami Financial Aid Proposal

On December 29, 2004, three days after the disastrous South Asian earthquake and tsunami, I wrote Mayor Miller requesting that he convene a special meeting of City Council. The purpose of the meeting was to debate a Notice of Motion of mine, (attached) seconded by Councillor Jenkins, and calling for a donation by the City of Toronto to established relief agencies in the order of one million dollars. On December 31, 2004, having had no response, I wrote the Mayor again.

To date, I have had no formal reply from Mayor Miller, although he has made plain to the media his opposition to direct financial aid to the thousands of people affected, and to the several hundred thousand Torontonians with family in the affected countries. Over the past few days, while Torontonians have given generously in the form personal and corporate financial donations, their Council has not; nor has it demonstrated the leadership to simply meet and debate the matter.

The City of Toronto Municipal Code requires that 50 per cent (23) of Councillors may, by petition, compel the holding of a special meeting of Council. Since December 30, 2004, I have been petitioning Councillors to do so in order to debate the Notice of Motion.

To their credit, some 25 Councillors have signed or committed to sign the petition. On this basis, the petition would succeed and the special meeting be held. To the discredit of the Mayor, his direct and active lobbying in recent days has now resulted in 4 Councillors requesting that their signatures/support be withdrawn from the petition and the cause they had earlier supported. One of the withdrawing Councillors made plain to me the heavy-handed insistence of the Mayor in his reversal, the consequence of which is a stifling of public debate and a failure to engage the city in a debate of enormous consequence to it.

As of today, a near majority of Councillors (20) has signed this petition. In their interest, the petition has today been forwarded to Mayor Miller with another request that he respect the wishes of Councillors and convene a special meeting of Council to discuss the Notice of Motion and the role that the City of Toronto should play in providing immediate financial assistance to the victims of the tsunami disaster.

The current list of petitioning Councillors is attached.

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