

County Council approves donation and flag raising in support of Ukraine

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Dufferin County Council is showing its support for Ukraine after passing motions to raise the nation's flag and provide funding to assist humanitarian aid and relief efforts as attacks by the Russian military continue.

During their meeting on March 10, a motion was brought forward by Warden Wade Mills, to fly the Ukrainian flag at county offices as a visual display of their solidarity with Ukraine and condemning of Russia's aggressions.

"Dufferin County Council condemns the unjustified aggression being waged by Russian military forces against the people of Ukraine," said Mills. "Council signals and affirms the support of our community for the Ukrainian people in defense of their freedom, independence, and autonomy."

Wade also called for the Canadian government to continue efforts with the global community to "unequivocally" oppose the military invasion.

The final motion unanimously supported by council also condemned the racist and xenophobic treatment of Black Africans, Indian nationals, Pakistani nationals, and people of middle eastern descent as they flee the violence in Ukraine, reported by the United Nations (UN).

Dufferin County is joining various municipalities within the community in raising the Ukrainian flag in solidarity including Shelburne, Orangeville, Melancthon, Mono, and Amaranth.

An additional motion was moved during the March 10 meeting by County Coun. Darren White, to make two separate donations to assist in the immediate and emerging needs from the ongoing attacks.

White suggested making two \$10,000 donations with one going to the Red Cross and the other going to Global Medic.

"I know that anything we do is better than nothing, but nothing we do would ever be enough," said White.

This is not the first time that Dufferin County has taken action in providing aid in this manner. Coun. John Creelman noted that at the time of the 9/11 attacks in New York, council made a donation to support the victims.

"We are not in unknown waters here," he said.

Coun. Steve Anderson, brought forward concerns with consistency, pointing to the fact that similar donations were not made in response to refugee crises in Syria, Haiti, and Afghanistan.

"This kind of donation that's being suggested by council was not put onto the table," said Anderson. "My question is, what's the message we are sending to those folks if we go ahead and make this donation?"

The concerns raised by Anderson prompted further discussion among council members including the need for policy surrounding funding contributions to global humanitarian aid and whether taxpayer dollars should be used for foreign relief efforts.

"Should we not have a policy that simply states in cases like this and the ones in the past, we donate so much money instead of giving one disaster X amount of dollars and another disaster another amount," said Coun. Earl Hawkins. "I really think we should

be consistent.?

It was suggested that a policy regarding donations to foreign relief efforts be developed with the county's General Government Services Committee.

Many councillors also noted the time-sensitivity of providing aid for refugees impacted by the attacks in Ukraine and voicing the need to support the cause.

The motion was put to a recorded vote and was carried 16-2, with Coun. Philip Rentsch and Coun. Chris Gerrits voting against. Coun. Sandy Brown was absent from the meeting.

Dufferin County staff will also be creating an information campaign that will direct residents to potential organization if they wish to make a personal donation.