EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

512 - Councillor Vandal requested an update on the Federal Infrastructure Program.

Councillor Clement noted that the Federal and Provincial direction was still unclear, despite a recent press conference. He further advised that the Province was looking at a $15 million street construction program while the Federal Government was exploring something strategically larger, and that the City was awaiting written confirmation. He also noted that the Administration was developing a list of the most needed repair projects totalling $15 million and that approximately $4 million would be a welfare work program.

Councillor Vandal questioned if the $14 million City of Winnipeg contribution would include the $5 million that had previously been budgeted for street repair and inquired if the money for the baseball stadium would come from the strategic portion of the infrastructure dollars and not the City of Winnipeg portion.

Councillor Clement confirmed that the $5 million for street construction would be used from the 1996 Capital Program. In addition, he noted that $1 million each from both the Provincial and Federal Governments for the baseball facility, along with an additional $300,000 upon erection of the recreation building, would be taken from the former infrastructure program money originally meant for the Kenaston Underpass.

Councillor Murray referred to the Centre Plan Committee, its large composition of volunteers from the business sector and questioned the amount of Council's participation through its appointed members, requesting that the Mayor discuss the matter with the members and consider appointing Councillor Timm-Rudolph to the Committee.

Councillor Clement agreed to refer the question to Her Worship.

Councillor Murray referred to the proposed Community Investment Model, a project to address urban infrastructure and unemployment, and questioned what progress had been made to date in this regard.

Councillor Clement stated that the Mayor and other Ministers may have had discussions about programs of that nature but advised that he didn't recall any recent consideration at the Executive Policy Committee level but noted that focus had been on the budget and that the matter could be brought up at the Executive Policy Committee Shoal Lake retreat in the last week of April.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Steek referred to the Infrastructure Program and questioned if there was any indication that the program would be ongoing after the 1997 spring and summer.

Councillor Clement stated that the concept of using the general reserve was approved in the two year budget and noted that there was at least $10 million, through general reserve funding for 1998 Capital that could be utilized for this purpose. In noting the City's good financial position to seek program continuation he suggested that the City should continue to set aside a budgeted amount each year.

Councillor Thomas referred to the Federal Governments' announcements that all infrastructure monies be dedicated toward street renewal, sewer renewal and watermain renewal and asked Councillor Clement to clarify as to where Provincial and Federal funding for the baseball stadium would come from.

Councillor Clement referred to the infrastructure program that had been announced by the Federal and Provincial Governments and stated that the money for the baseball stadium would come from the old infrastructure monies probably targeted at the Kenaston Underpass Project.

The Speaker called the Acting Deputy Speaker, Councillor Lazarenko, to the Chair and left the Chamber.

Councillor Murray noted that the infrastructure program in 1994 was one of the contributing factors to the City of Winnipeg's record debt year of $250 million and in further noting that the Community Investment Model, proposed in 1992 was to deal with the problem of debt financing and raising property taxes to participate in infrastructure programs, questioned whether Executive Policy Committee had explored similar alternatives to debt and tax financing for the projects in question.

Councillor Clement noted that he was not aware of discussions with the Provincial or Federal Governments regarding the Community Investment Model and referred the question to Councillor Silva.

Councillor Silva noted that administrative persons from the Social Services Department were continuously involved in discussions with the Provincial and Federal Government regarding infrastructure programs and tri-lateral and bi-lateral agreements. Councillor Silva further noted that all negotiations focussed on cost benefit and sought to consider innovative projects which contained the principles of community investment, but noted that the Province was reluctant to move decisively in the area of innovative programming.

Councillor Murray noted that documentation on the Community Investment Model had not yet reached the Minister of Urban Affairs' office and requested assurance that one of the Committee Chairpersons would raise the issue with the Minister and report back at the next meeting of Council.

Councillor Silva advised that the Minister of Family Services had indeed seen and been briefed on the policy and noted that the City of Winnipeg would continue to put forward pilot projects to get people on Social Assistance into the workforce and training programs.

Councillor Timm-Rudolph, as Chairperson of the Committee on Planning and Community Services, noted that she would raise the issue with the Minister of Urban Affairs and again noted that the matter would be raised at the imminent Executive Policy Committee retreat.