REPORT OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DATED FEBRUARY 3, 1997

On motion of Councillor Steek, the Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration, dated February 3, 1997, was considered clause by clause.

Moved by Councillor Steek,
That the Consent Agenda, Clauses 1,2,3,4,5,6,8 and 9 be adopted.

Councillor Lazarenko requested that Clause 4 be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

The motion to adopt the Consent Agenda, Clauses 1,2,3,5,6,8 and 9 was put and declared carried.

Recommendations for Amusement Tax Exemption File FL-6 (Vol. 14)

387 - 1. The Committee on Finance and Administration has considered recommendations received from the Winnipeg Arts Advisory Council for exemption to the Amusement Tax By-law.

The Committee on Finance and Administration submits draft by-law and recommends:

I. That the following list of exemptions be added to subsection 7(6) of the Amusement Tax By-law No. 3107/81, namely:

Winnipeg S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. for:
"Heritage of Harmony" on May 10, 1997, at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre;

Winnipeg Youth Orchestra Inc. for:
"Island Wedding Concert" from March 22 to 23, 1997, at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre;

Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre for:
"Spring Theatre Production" from May 28 to 30, 1997, at the Warehouse Theatre;

Alliance chorale Manitoba for:
"Le Festival de la Chanson française" on April 26, 1997, at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre;

Popular Theatre Alliance for:
"Marge Szkaluba (Pissy's Wife) from March 5 to 15, 1997 at the Blue Note Cafe.

I. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Adopted by consent.

Soldiers' Taxation Relief Assistance File FL-2.3 (Vol. 7)

388 - 2. The Soldiers' Taxation Relief Act provides for the granting of relief from taxation in certain cases in an amount not exceeding $50.00 in each case. The amount so rebated by a municipality is recoverable in full through the Province of Manitoba.

The City has received applications for relief from taxation for the year 1996 under the provisions of this Act, and the Director of Corporate Finance has satisfied himself as to the bona fide and merit of the applications. The total amount of the applications is $800.00.

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

Council on March 24, 1993, requested the Province of Manitoba to amend The Soldiers' Taxation Relief Act to increase the amount from $50.00 to $100.00, effective in 1994, however, to date, there has been no response.

The Chairperson of the Committee on Finance and Administration has undertaken to again approach the Province of Manitoba to adjust the Soldiers' taxation relief to reflect increases in inflation.

The Committee on Finance and Administration therefore recommends:

I. That Council authorize the partial exemptions from taxation, the cancellation of unpaid taxes or penalties, or the refund of tax or penalties paid, as the case may be, in respect to the properties set forth in the schedule on file in the office of the City Clerk in the amount of $800.00, recoverable from the Province of Manitoba.

II. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Adopted by consent.

Burland Estates - One Time Grant in Lieu of Penalties File AA-3 (Vol. 7)

389 - 3. In 1994, the Burland Estates complex, 1 Burland Avenue was converted from apartment status to 72 condominium properties.

Two things should occur when such a conversion takes place:

- the units are reclassified from apartment status to condominium status (i.e., class code 20 to class code 80) which changes their portioned values;

- the individual units are reassessed.

The reclassifications of the units were done on a timely basis in May of 1994, but the reassessment of the units was overlooked.

The error was realized in late 1995 and a reassessment of the units was conducted. Reassessment notifications were sent to all owners in June 1996, which included the normal provision for appeal. The effective date of the assessment increase was January 1, 1996.

On June 20, 1996, the tax office mailed revised tax statements reflecting the new assessments and providing for payment at par of these newly added taxes until August 1, 1996. Thereafter, any unpaid amounts would be subject to the normal penalty as prescribed by By-law No. 5986/91.

It is the position of the administration that all of the Burland Estates condominium owners have been given the standard notice period which is given to all taxpayers and they have been treated fairly and consistent with normal tax payment and penalty procedures. The unexpected increase in taxes is no different than that which might occur to a large percentage of property owners in a reassessment year. Of the 72 supplementary billings issued, 52 are paid in full and 20 remain totally or partially outstanding. The average penalty to December 31, 1996, on the average increase in the unit taxes only represents approximately $18.00.

Had the reassessment of the individual condominium units occurred on a timely basis (i.e., the date of title registration at Winnipeg Land Titles Office), each of the properties could have seen the tax increases experienced in 1996, as early as June 1994.

Due to the oversite, each of the properties experienced a tax break for a period of approximately 19 months amounting to roughly $678.00.

All 72 units received revised tax statements on June 20, 1996, with a due date for 1996 increase to be paid at par by August 1, 1996. The majority of the unit tax increases amounts to $428.71.

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

The Committee on Finance and Administration requested the administration to provide a way to extend the payment without penalties to December 31, 1996. The solutions offered were as follows:

- a one time grant in lieu of penalties
- amend the penalty by-law
- retain status quo

It is the position of the Committee on Finance and Administration that the Burland Estates property owners should be liable for the increased assessment of their property taxes, however, some relief should be allowed insofar as the assessment of penalties which commenced shortly after they received revised tax statements on June 20, 1996. Committee is recommending that a grant be approved to all property owners, in the amount of $1,813.38, which is the collective penalty for all 52 condominium units from August 1, 1996 to February 28, 1997. A credit will be applied to 1997 taxes to the 42 paid accounts and would satisfy the penalty issue in the 10 accounts with outstanding taxes.

The Committee on Finance and Administration therefore recommends:

I. That a one-time grant in the amount of $1,813.38 be approved to Burland Estates, Winnipeg Condominium Corporation No. 276, being the collective penalty for all 52 condominium units from August 1, 1996 to February 28, 1997.

II. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Adopted by consent.

Means and Implications of Providing an Exemption from the Municipal Portion of Property Tax to Veterans Associations of Winnipeg File FL-2.5 (Vol. 10)

390 - 4. Council, at its meeting held on January 24, 1996, ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Committee on Finance and Administration under Rule 16.1 of the Procedure By-law No. 5400/90:

Moved by Councillor Lazarenko,
Seconded by Councillor O'Shaughnessy,

WHEREAS the 50th anniversaries of VE and VJ days have now passed;

AND WHEREAS Veterans Associations hold their lands and buildings for charitable purposes on behalf of their members and the community at large;

AND WHEREAS the lands and buildings of all Veterans Associations are deemed to be exempt from property tax levies in Saskatchewan and Alberta, to the extent that those properties are not licensed under Liquor Control Acts;

AND WHEREAS non-profit cultural organizations have received land, buildings, continuing fiscal support and exemption status from property tax;

AND WHEREAS the Veterans Associations now receive an exemption from the school levy (Sec. 23.1.f of The Municipal Assessment Act) and would and could be exempted from the municipal portion of the property tax;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Winnipeg study the means and the implications of providing to the Veterans Association of Winnipeg an exemption from the municipal portion of the property tax.

Council, on April 24, July 24, November 20, 1996, and January 29, 1997 granted 60-day extensions of time within which to report on the matter.

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

On January 29, 1997, the Committee on Finance and Administration heard in delegation John Petrinka accompanied by Richard Wankling, Veteran, Royal Canadian Legion and Don Baird, Manager, Army, Navy and Airforce Veterans in Canada, Fort Garry Unit No. 60, requesting the provision of an exemption from the Municipal Portion of Property Tax to Veterans' Associations of Winnipeg.

The Committee on Finance and Administration considered an administrative report dated January 24, 1997, however requested additional information to be provided in this regard.

The Committee therefore requests an additional 60 days within which to report back to Council on this matter.

Moved by Councillor Steek,
Adoption of the clause.

In amendment,

Moved by Councillor Lazarenko,
Seconded by Councillor Thomas,

That the clause be amended by striking out the wording "requests an additional 60 days" and replacing it with "be granted a final extension of 28 days" and report back to the next Council meeting on this matter.

The amendment was put and declared carried.

The motion for the adoption of the clause, as amended, was put and declared carried.

Redemption of 561 St. Anne's Road from Tax Sale by Instalments
File FL-2.4 (Vol. 12)

391 - 5. On October 3, 1995, Mr. Ameer Khan, through his solicitor, Alex Cudney from the law firm of McRoberts, Cudney, Friesen, Boyechko, requested to be allowed to redeem his property from Tax Sale by instalments.

The City of Winnipeg Act Section 255(4) states the following:

> Notwithstanding section 245 and subsection (1), but subject to subsection (5), the City, if authorized by by-law, may enter into an agreement in writing with an owner of, or a person who has an interest or estate in, or a charge on, land that has been sold for taxes, for the redemption of the land from the tax sale and the payment of all taxes payable in respect of the land subsequently accrued to the date of the agreement and during the currency of the agreement, by instalments.

The payment plan negotiated consists of monthly payments in the amount of $2,300.00. The application of such a proposal, which falls within the framework of previous agreements approved by Council, would retire the present indebtedness of $36,997.48 in approximately 26 months.

The Committee on Finance and Administration therefore recommends:

I. That a redemption be granted from Tax Sale of 561 St. Anne's Road by consecutive monthly payments of $2,300.00.

II. That the Legal Services Division be requested to prepare the necessary by-law authorizing the agreement on a one year conditional basis.

III. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Adopted by consent.

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

Redemption of 637 Oakdale Drive from Tax Sale by June 30, 1997
File FL-2.4 (Vol. 12)

392 - 6. On June 24, 1993, Mr. and Mrs. Stock, through their solicitor, requested to be allowed to redeem their property from Tax Sale by installments. The request was granted for a one year term which expired on September 30, 1994. The Stocks' then requested a renewal of the agreement which was granted for a one year term which expired September 30, 1995.

In June of 1993, when Mr. and Mrs. Stock originally negotiated the Agreement with the Finance Department, the proposed monthly payment was to be $540.00 for a period of 34 months, which would have seen the agreement completed in May of 1996. On September 3, 1993, the Stocks appeared before Committee on Finance and Administration and were successful in having the monthly payments reduced to $300.00 for a one year term. Although there were no collection problems during that original Agreement, the payments were too low to cover the annual taxes and interest and pay down the debt. At the end of the one year term, the account balance was slightly higher than it had been to start with.

In September of 1994, a one year extension to the Agreement was negotiated that called for monthly payments of $565.00. This plan would have seen the Agreement completed in 38 months (January of 1998). Together with the 12 month term granted previously, the total repayment schedule would have been 50 months, which is a longer term than has been negotiated for other agreements.

During the tenure of this Agreement, collection of the monthly payments started to become a problem. In September of 1995, after verbal assurances from Mrs. Stock that the situation would improve, a request for a further extension was negotiated at the same monthly payment of $565.00. Problems began immediately, with the first payment being two months late. During the term of this Agreement, five cheques were returned due to insufficient funds and the last payment was not made at all. As well, payment was stopped on the cheque issued to Legal Services for payment of the required legal fees.

On February 3, 1997, Mrs. Stock appeared before the Committee on Finance and Administration and offered to pay all outstanding taxes by the end of June, 1997 in one lump sum, and requested an extension of time to June 30, 1997 within which to pay the balance of taxes owing including arrears and penalties. The Committee is recommending that the owners be permitted to redeem the property from tax sale by June 30, 1997, however Committee will not consider any further extension of time for the redemption of the property after that date.

The Committee on Finance and Administration therefore recommends:

I. That an extension to permit the redemption of 637 Oakdale Drive from tax sale be granted to permit payment of all outstanding taxes.

II. That the City Solicitor/Manager of Legal Services be requested to withhold completion of the City's tax application until after June 30, 1997.

Adopted by consent.

Fixed Date - Assessment Appeals
File AB-2 (Vol. 10)

393 - 7. Council at its meeting held on October 23, 1996, ruled automatic referral of the following motion to your Committee, under Rule 16.1 of the Procedure By-law No. 5400/90:

Moved by Councillor Golden,
Seconded by Councillor Lazarenko,

WHEREAS the deadline for filing assessment appeals to the 1997 assessment roll has been changed to Monday, October 28, 1996 at 4:30 p.m.;

AND WHEREAS the public has been misinformed that the deadline would be set in January of 1997;

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

AND WHEREAS questions have been raised about the legality of the 1996 Secretary of the 1996 Board of Revision advertising a deadline for appeals to the 1997 roll;

AND WHEREAS aside from the question of the legality of setting the deadline for appeals at October 28, 1996 at 4:30 p.m., the public is better served if a fixed date is set annually, rather than some ratepayers being victimized by the setting of a different date annually;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that City Council request the Province of Manitoba to set a fixed date annually as the deadline for filing assessment appeals.

The Committee on Finance and Administration has been advised that the date of the closing of the Assessment Roll is determined by the City Assessor, in accordance with Subsection 9(3) of The Municipal Assessment Act. Historically the City Assessor has delivered the assessment roll on or about December 31. In the "City of Winnipeg Property Tax Assessment Inquiry" report, John M. Scurfield notes that:

> *"The British Columbia model is more efficient and should be followed. Draft notices, or preview assessments, should be delivered to property owners by June, together with their tax notices from the current year. Between June and September 30, informal meetings can be held with concerned property owners to confirm the assessments with them.....The assessment roll would then be delivered by September 30, with a thirty day appeal period thereafter. Hearing of the high value appeals should take place prior to the current budget deadline of December 31. If there remains a significant amount of the assessment roll at risk, Council can postpone its budget as late as March 31 and still comply with the legislation. The goal is to establish a stable assessment roll prior to the setting of the mill rate and, in any event, prior to the actual payment of taxes by property owners."*

In accordance with the cost saving concept of expediting the assessment appeal process so as to hear appeals prior to the budget process, the City Administration, specifically the Acting City Assessor, delivered the 1997 Assessment Roll on October 9, 1996. In a seminar to Council on November 19, 1996 the City Assessor noted:

> *"One strategy for limiting the City's exposure to losses due to tax refunds on appeal is to allow extra time for appeals to be heard prior to the issuance of tax bills. This strategy has the added advantage of enhancing the City's financial predictability and stability in that it provides for greater certainty regarding the actual size of the assessment base at the time when the mill rate is struck.*
>
> *With these advantages in mind a plan was developed to produce the 1997 "Maintenance" Roll by August 30, 1996. This plan was successfully implemented and the 1997 Roll and approximately 13,000 accompanying notices were produced by August 30, 1996. However, the legislation then in effect required that a full general assessment (involving the moving of the reference year to 1995 from 1991) be completed for 1997. Consequently the 1997 "Maintenance" Roll was technically illegal. The City Assessor had to delay delivery of the Roll until assurance was received from the Province of Manitoba on October 10, 1996 that validating legislation was about to be passed."*

Subsection 41(2) of The Municipal Assessment Act directs that "the Secretary shall, at least 30 days before the scheduled date of commencement of a sitting of the board, give public notice of the sitting", and Subsection 43(1) of The Municipal Assessment Act specifies that "an application for revision must [be made] at least 15 days before the scheduled sitting date of the board as indicated in the public notice".

Subsequently, upon receiving the Assessment Roll on October 9, 1996, public notice appeared in the local newspapers on October 12 and October 19, advising that applications for assessment revision must be submitted by October 28, 1996, and identified the first sitting of the Board of Revision on November 12, 1996.

In accordance with the concept of increasing the time for hearings prior to setting the budget, the Acting City Assessor is proposing to deliver the 1998 reassessment roll by June 30, 1997. The intent is to provide the longest possible period [between July 29, 1997 to March 13, 1998] in which to hear any appeals filed. The goal is to have all Board of revision-level appeals heard prior to tax bill production in 1998. Probably with the exception of Municipal Board Appeals, the 1998 tax roll would be "clean".

In compliance with this cost saving direction, the Board of Revision is planning on placing the public notice in local newspapers on June 28, 1997 and commencing the hearing of appeals on July 29, 1997.

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In reference to the possibility of legislated deadlines for the hearing of appeals, John M. Scurfield, in the "City of Winnipeg Property Tax Assessment Inquiry" report, notes that:

> *"Legislative deadlines for the hearing of appeals should be imposed to ensure that all appeals are heard, ideally, prior to the setting of the mill rate. Under the proposed system, the deadline for resolution of appeals by the Board of Revision should be February 28 of the budget year. The manner of hearing those appeals should be left to the Board of Revision but it is logical to allow unlimited written presentations to be made in advance and to limit oral presentations."*

The assessment appeal process implemented for the 1997 Assessment and that being proposed for the 1998 Assessment fully accords the principle of hearing the appeals prior to the setting of the mill rate.

On February 3, 1997, the Committee on Finance and Administration considered a motion to concur in the administrative recommendation, namely that a specific date is not mandatory or necessary inasmuch as it is the intention to have all assessment appeals heard prior to production of the tax bill, and Committee also considered a motion to request the Province of Manitoba to establish a filing date of June 30 in each taxation year, however, inasmuch as both motions resulted in a tie vote, the matter is submitted to Council without recommendation.

The Executive Policy Committee recommends that the Province of Manitoba be requested to establish a filing date of June 30 in each taxation year.

Moved by Councillor Steek,
That the clause be considered.

Carried.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Eadie,
That the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee be adopted.

The recommendation proposed by the Executive Policy Committee was put and declared carried.

Leave and License Agreement - Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre Inc. - Underground Tunnel Encroachment within the William Avenue Right-of-Way East of Tecumseh Street
File ED(34) (Vol. 1)

394 - 8. The City has received a request from the Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre Inc. to construct an underground tunnel within the William Avenue right-of-way, as shown on Misc. Plan No. LSWK 9899/1, to connect the proposed Blood Transfusion Centre with existing tunnels contained within the Health Sciences Centre property on the south side of William Avenue. An agreement between the Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre Inc. and the Health Sciences Centre was formalized in May 1996 to permit the construction and operation of the tunnel within Health Sciences Centre property.

The application was circulated for comments from various City departments and public utilities with no objections being received, subject to certain conditions which have been incorporated into the proposed terms and conditions of agreement outlined in Schedule "A".

Briefly, the proposed terms and conditions of the agreement provide for the construction and maintenance of an underground tunnel at the expense of Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre Inc., for a term of 40 years with an automatic 10 year renewal if notice is not given at least 12 months prior to the expiration of the term. Rental of $300.00 per annum is computed on the basis of the fees outlined in the City of Winnipeg Encroachment By-law and shall be adjusted accordingly should the fees be amended from time to time under this by-law.

Over the years, Council has granted Leave and License to various organization to formalize this type of encroachment throughout the City. A similar agreement between the City of Winnipeg and the Health Sciences Centre to permit a tunnel under Emily Street was adopted by Council on July 11, 1990.

Report of the Committee on Finance and Administration dated February 3, 1997

The Committee on Finance and Administration recommends:

I. That a Leave and License be granted to the Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre Inc., to accommodate an underground tunnel within the William Avenue right-of-way as shown on Misc. Plan No. LSWK 9899/1, in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in Schedule "A", and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor/Manager of Legal Services.

II. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Copies of Misc. Plan No. LSWK 9899/1 and Schedule "A" are on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

Adopted by consent.

Proposed Acquisition of Lands 4.0m x 5.0m for Lane Corner Cut - 1003 Dumas Avenue File FI-2(35) (Vol. 4)

395 - 9. By memorandum dated May 10, 1996, the Solid Waste Division of the Water and Waste Department advised that it had evaluated the need for and wanted to proceed with the acquisition of the referenced corner cut identified as "proposed lane opening" on Misc. Plan No. ASBA 9725.

The owner's intention was to fence this property as he had in the past experienced problems with City and public vehicles trespassing over the property. The acquisition of the property at this time would minimize acquisition costs because it would not involve relocating a proposed fence.

On November 21, 1996, the Board of Commissioners formally authorized that negotiations be undertaken. Ongoing negotiations with the owner have resulted in the proposed settlement as outlined on Schedule "A".

The Land and Development Services Department supports acquisition of the property for the following reasons:

- the proposed settlement is fair, reasonable and consistent with other similar acquisitions,
- the proposed purchase price is within the estimated value range contained within the City's in-house appraisal,
- acquisition of the property will mitigate against future trespass and damage claims,
- the proposed lane radius modification will improve safety and facilitate movement of vehicular traffic in the lane.

The location of the proposed corner cut was not identified in any previous Council approved program and as such will require City Council approval.

Adequate funding for the proposed acquisition is committed in Certificate No. FT96-09 against the Land Acquisition for Future Transportation Account.

The Committee on Finance and Administration recommends:

I. That the acquisition of the property identified as "PROPOSED LANE OPENING" on Misc. Plan No. ASBA 9725 be approved at a purchase price of $714.00, in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined on Schedule "A".

II. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing, including the execution of any documents related thereto.

Adopted by consent.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

MOTIONS

Moved by Councillor Steek,
Seconded by Councillor Lazarenko,

396 - WHEREAS the City and the Province jointly funded a study with the KGS Group to review riverbank stability on lands commonly known as the Elmwood Cemetery;

AND WHEREAS the KGS Group have confirmed the need to relocate twenty-four graves within the Elmwood Cemetery due to the erosion of the riverbank and that there is an urgency to move the graves while the ground is still frozen this month;

AND WHEREAS Elmwood Cemetery wishes to move the graves with dignity and care and is prepared to provide at no cost, alternate grave sites within the cemetery for the twenty-four graves;

AND WHEREAS the cost to move the twenty-four graves is estimated to be approximately $70,000.00;

AND WHEREAS the Honourable Jack Reimer, Minister of Urban Affairs, has advised that the Province of Manitoba has agreed to finance one half of the estimated costs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a one-time grant from the 1997 Current Budget be approved to the Elmwood Cemetery Company, equivalent to one-half of the actual cost to relocate twenty-four graves and not exceeding $35,000.00, said funding to be placed in the 1997 Current Estimates with payment to be made subject to submission for the approval of the Director of Corporate Finance, itemized invoices together with such supporting documentation as he may require.

The Speaker ruled automatic referral to the Committee on Finance and Administration in accordance with Rule 16.1 of the Procedure By-law.

Moved by Councillor Steek,

That the rule be suspended to allow consideration of the motion at this time.

Carried.

The motion was put and declared carried.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

CONSIDERATION OF BY-LAWS

397 - On motion of Councillor Steek, By-law No. 6992/97, a By-law of The City of Winnipeg to amend the Amusement Tax By-law No. 3107/81, was read a first, second and third time, the rule being suspended for the third reading, and was passed and ordered to be signed and sealed. File FL-6 (Vol. 14)

On motion of Councillor Steek, the rule was suspended and the following by-laws were read a first, second and third time, the rule being suspended for the third reading of each by-law, and were passed and ordered to be signed and sealed, namely:

By-law No. 6995/97, a by-law of The City of Winnipeg to amend By-law No. 5796/91, being a by-law to fix the date on which realty and business taxes shall be due and payable and to establish a rate of penalties to be added to taxes in arrears. File FL-2 (Vol. 13)

By-law No. 6996/97, a by-law of the City of Winnipeg to widen the south side of Nairn Avenue, west of Panet Road. File FI-2.3 (33) (Vol. 1)

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

QUESTION PERIOD

398 - Councillor Murray noted that he was aware of numerous commercial properties in his ward that were under-assessed and questioned when this would be corrected.

Councillor Steek noted that there were three advisory committees currently reviewing assessment issues and further noted that to assist in resolving this problem Councillor Murray should specifically identify the examples of under-assessment.

Councillor Murray responded that he had reported to the Acting City Assessor on properties that were built four years ago and still do not appear on the City's assessment roll. He noted that for seven years, he has requested that the Assessment Department hire sufficient staff to go out and correct the roll and questioned whether staff was now in place and out inspecting these commercial properties.

Councillor Steek stated that he would be pleased to meet with Councillor Murray and the Acting City Assessor to review and address this matter.

Councillor Murray questioned what percentage of commercial properties had been reviewed by the Assessment Department to date.

Councillor Steek noted that the 1997 roll was a maintenance roll and that the 1998 roll represented the general assessment based on 1995 values, but further noted that he was not aware of the percentage of commercial properties that had been reviewed by the Assessment Department to date.

Councillor Golden noted prior to the last roll closing, that he had brought to the attention of the Assessment Department a number of properties which were under-assessed and questioned if Councillor Steek was aware of the fact that the Assessment Department had ignored the information and left the properties at their previously under-assessed values for this year's tax roll.

Councillor Steek noted that he would be pleased to review this matter with Councillor Golden.

Councillor Timm-Rudolph referred to the provisions of The Municipal Assessment Act which placed the onus on the City to ensure that its assessments were correct and questioned if Assessors would be visiting properties being appealed prior to Board of Revision hearings or Municipal Board hearings being held, in view of the fact that this had not transpired to date.

Councillor Steek stated that he believed that this was not practised in the past because of limited manpower and indicated that he would take the question under advisement to discuss it with the Acting City Assessor.

Councillor Murray referred to gross inaccuracies in commercial assessments and the lack of identification of revenue producing rooming houses and in noting the millions of dollars of lost revenue to the City, questioned what additional resources were in place and what was being done in the short term, over the next 12 to 24 months, to correct this.

Councillor Steek noted that there were three assessment review committees which had been set up and advised that at one of the meetings he attended last week, the members of the residential panel were addressing the very issues brought up by Councillor Golden on the floor of Council. Councillor Steek advised he would take the rooming house matter under advisement.

Councillor Murray noted that he had received a telephone call asking what improvements had been made to his condominium and questioned the effectiveness of having City staff phoning property owners blindly questioning what improvements had been made in their buildings, rather than have someone go out and do an assessment and questioned what plans where in place to begin conducting physical assessments of properties in this City.

Councillor Steek took the questions under advisement and stated that there were indications that the assessment roll base this year could be anywhere from $3 million to $3.5 million higher and suggested that the City must be doing something right in order to have that gain.

Committee on Finance and Administration - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Murray noted that the telephone call methodology was superior to past practise. He questioned when there would be additional resources in place prior to the passing of the new budget to make an adequate working system.

Councillor Steek noted he would take the questions under advisement.