EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 487
Councillor Smith asked His Worship Mayor Katz why Winnipeg was not joining the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against racism and discrimination, along with other cities, even when urged to do so by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. His Worship replied that he was not aware of the request but would look into it.

In reference to the expenditure of 943,000 dollars on new way finding signs, Councillor Smith inquired why the information in front of the MTS Centre inaccurately listed the Millennium Library as being under construction, when the library was officially opened in November 2005.

His Worship replied that the situation would be rectified as all way finding signage should be accurate, noting that the way finding signage was delayed by a few years and that this was likely the reason for the error.

In noting that the business tax elimination report would be shared with Members of Council on Friday, June 22nd and, inasmuch as there was not a multi-year budget for discussion in last year's budget deliberations, Councillor Vandal asked how much business tax was scheduled to be eliminated for 2008.

His Worship advised that the City made a commitment to reduce the business tax in the downtown area, from 9.75 to 7.75, in the first year and the same amount for the remainder of the City in the following year. The goal was to phase out the business tax and the Economic Opportunity Commission was set-up to provide a menu of options that could offset the revenue through the elimination of the City's business tax.

Councillor Vandal restated and asked for confirmation that there was no set goal for any business tax reduction in 2008 to which His Worship agreed. His Worship reiterated that the objective was to phase out the balance of the 7.75 percent tax and that it would be up to the Economic Opportunity Commission to determine what was realistic and to provide a menu of options.

Councillor Swandel referenced the media reports regarding the Devils Lake and the Devils Lake outlet and its potential impact on the Red River, noting that the province was taking the issue to court, and inquired what the City was doing to address this concern that could have a devastating impact on the Red River and the City.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period

His Worship noted that he had met with a delegation from Devils Lake shortly after being elected in 2004 and that he had stressed to the delegation Winnipeg's concern regarding water quality and how the City intends to protect its water quality. He suggested that the problem that exists was that the standards that were in place were being lowered by our neighbours south of the border, which was a real concern. He further stated that both the provincial and federal government were doing everything they could, whether through legal or diplomatic channels.

Councillor Vandal asked for an update on the initiative to build condos in Assiniboine Park. His Worship advised that while no progress or action had occurred regarding the condo initiative, the issues of infrastructure falling apart and a shortage of funds required for the zoo still existed. He further indicated that Council would be dealing with the overall governance issue for Assiniboine Park, and that it would be that group that would deal with issues surrounding Assiniboine Park.