STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND PUBLIC WORKS

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 514
In reference to recent newspaper reports regarding problems with gravel backlanes, Councillor Swandel noted that there was a capital renewal program for paved backlanes and questioned why the City did not have a capital improvement program for gravel backlanes.

Councillor Clement replied that, as per Council's policy, gravel backlanes could be upgraded by residents choosing to have them funded as a local improvement, and as such, there was not a capital program for gravel backlanes.

Councillor Swandel acknowledged that the upgrade of a gravel backlane to a concrete backlane or an oil/asphalt service could be considered a local improvement, but stated that he failed to see how the addition of materials as the capital renewal of that backlane would benefit only the local property owners and asked for clarification.

Councillor Clement stated the answer remained the same. Under the current budget, monies were spent on grading of backlanes as required, but that other improvements were dealt with through the local improvement process.

Councillor Swandel questioned why the City pays for new pavement on paved backlanes but does not pay for new gravel on gravel backlanes.

Councillor Clement stated that since unicity, streets had been improved / constructed by developers and maintained by the City to whatever standard was initially constructed. He further stated that paved, type two oiled, asphalt and gravel surfaces were all maintained by the City up to the same standard at which they were originally constructed, as this was the level paid for by the homeowners when purchasing from the developer, with any improvement up to a new type of surface being done through a local improvement.

Councillor Smith inquired why the City waits for complaints before fixing potholes and asked why there was not a procedure in place for a Public Works employee to drive up and down streets noting potholes to be fixed.

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Councillor Clement advised that the Department was proactive and that five or six machines were being used by The City of Winnipeg all day long. He also acknowledged that there were a lot of potholes and ninety percent of the machine time was spent in the central core of the City refilling potholes as that area was the priority.

In reference to a newspaper article which reported that gravel backlanes were graded once a year, or as warranted, or filled in if there were soft or low spots, Councillor Browaty noted that he had had very limited success in getting small amounts of gravel added to backlanes and questioned why small amounts of gravel were not added when needed.

Councillor Clement advised that it was his understanding that the lanes were graded to a drivable state and the holes were filled in as part of regular maintenance, and decisions regarding these matters were left to the discretion of the supervisor.

Councillor Swandel noted that there are five or six projects being funded for the reconstruction of concrete backlanes in the capital budget and asked why those concrete backlanes were being reconstructed but gravel backlanes could not be unless it was done through the local improvement process.

Councillor Clement replied that a decision was made to try to improve the state of backlanes in the Inner City by rebuilding those backlanes that had disintegrated beyond the point of regular maintenance.

Councillor Swandel inquired if there would be a commitment to ask the administration to explore the inclusion of gravel backlanes as capital projects and prioritize some of the worst ones for the 2008 budget. Councillor Clement replied that he had no problem with the suggestion, but clarified that it would likely be the current not capital budget, as capital items were usually 100,000 dollars or more.