EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 679
Councillor Gerbasi noted that some time had passed since the City contracted out 100% of residential solid waste pick up to the private sector and further noted that there was an expectation of annual savings of approximately $3,000,000.00. Councillor Gerbasi asked if His Worship Mayor Katz would provide all members of Council with figures to show whether or not these savings had been achieved, to which His Worship replied that he would take the question under advisement.

Councillor Gerbasi made reference to a question she had raised earlier in the year regarding a timetable for studies of the bus rapid transit portion of the City's rapid transit plan, funding for which was included in the 2007 Capital Budget. She advised that she has yet to receive a timetable for when the studies would occur and requested confirmation of whether this would occur in 2007. His Worship replied that funds were available and that the department was planning to proceed.

Councillor Gerbasi made reference to the Assiniboine Park nominating and governance committees, and questioned if member appointments would be approved by City Council or if the members would be appointed by the committee, to which His Worship replied that the nomination of board members would be ratified by Council.

Councillor Smith asked if there would be a Council seminar to allow Councillors' input at the initial stage of budget preparation to which His Worship replied the process would take place in the very near future and in January at the latest.

Councillor Smith questioned what instructions had been given to City departments regarding budget targets to which His Worship requested the Councillor to clarify what was meant by instructions and targets.

Councillor Smith noted that generally, instructions were given for department to meet certain goals or targets, and that he wanted to know what the instructions were to which His Worship replied that he would communicate with the CAO and get the answer to Councillor Smith.

Councillor Smith noted that last year, the Mayor had appointed a committee to work on the budget and asked if the Mayor had done so again this year, and if so, who were the members.

His Worship advised that last year, there was a Committee consisting of Councillors O'Shaughnessy, Clement and Leipsic and that he was probably looking at something very similar to that again this year.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Pagtakhan stated that cycling was a mode of transportation and a way of commuting for many citizens in Winnipeg. He referenced the millions of dollars spent on redoing Pembina Highway this past summer, a roadway he felt was a prime candidate for creating shared or dedicated bicycle lanes. Councillor Pagtakhan questioned what steps His Worship would be taking to ensure that in 2008, opportunities like this do not fall by the wayside and that shared bicycle lanes and/or dedicated bicycle lanes were created when working on Winnipeg's major roadway systems.

His Worship advised that an Active Transportation Coordinator had been hired and that an Active Transportation Advisory Group had been formed as well. He further advised that the City has invested significant monies to date in its bike trails and that there was a directive that at any time the City was doing significant repairs to roadways, or building new roadways, the opportunity for bike lanes would be considered.

Councillor Vandal made reference to the billion dollar infrastructure deficit and the capital program paralyzed by inflation and noted that while this was occurring, the Federal Government had recently announced a $13 billing dollar surplus. Councillor Vandal questioned if His Worship would share with Council what the plan was to negotiate a better deal from the Federal and Provincial Governments.

His Worship advised that the City was looking for a larger share and would continue to lobby the Federal Government to work out a situation where the City was getting a percentage of growth revenue as opposed to the current situation.

Councillor Vandal questioned if His Worship anticipated anything being announced prior to the Federal election call to which His Worship replied that he did not believe an election was going to take place, but that it was an issue that he would continue to raise.

Councillor Vandal asked if His Worship could share with Council what the business tax reduction goal was for the 2008 budget to which His Worship replied that the budget process had not yet started, but that as soon as there was some definitive information, he would be happy to share it with Council.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned what His Worship intended to do to expedite the process of getting new police officer recruits trained and on the streets to which His Worship noted there are two classes a year for police recruits and that it would probably be very difficult to increase that. He further noted that when it comes to the number of officers per capita, the City of Winnipeg was the highest in Canada.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Gerbasi stated that there were some difficulties in increasing recruit classes because officers were taken off the street to do the recruit class teaching. Councillor Gerbasi asked if consideration could be given to looking at other options for increasing recruit classes such as having retired police officers do the training to which His Worship replied that this issue had been and was continuing to be looked at to ensure all options were considered and the best solutions found.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if there would be an announcement of a Committee to review Plan Winnipeg or a public process timeline to which His Worship replied that there was currently a Plan Winnipeg review in process and that there would be more thorough announcements which addressed this issue in the near future.