EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 464
Councillor Nordman inquired about the status of negotiations for an inland port in the City of Winnipeg.

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that the City had been very supportive of an inland port and that definitive action was occurring. He advised that he had met with all of the stakeholders, and that there was constant communication with Minister Toews and Premier Doer. He stated that he believed something very wonderful and special could happen in the City in the very near future, that would not only create an economic boom in terms of construction and quality jobs, but could also solve many of the City's transportation issues as well.

Councillor Gerbasi asked if the Mayor was prepared to make a public commitment to support public art funding for 2009, noting that there was a lot of concern in the community since funding was cancelled in 2008.

His Worship clarified that funding for one specific item was deferred for one year, but that arts funding was not cancelled in 2008 and had doubled to approximately 4.2 million dollars. His Worship noted that funding was tied to the budget process, which would be starting shortly, and stated that he believed that the commitment from the City was there. His Worship also stated that the City had made major strides with the arts community and not-for-profit organizations and that this Council had eliminated the entertainment tax.

Councillor Gerbasi indicated that she was specifically referring to the cut to the public arts program and asked for a commitment to keep that program going in 2009 as a lot of community projects were on the back burner for a year and were delayed because of that decision in the Operating budget. His Worship advised that when the cut was made to public art it was stated very specifically and very accurately reported in the media that it was just for that year.

Councillor Smith inquired about the status of cladding the Public Safety Building versus the idea of a new building. Mayor Katz advised that the costs of cladding had increased dramatically and that other options, whether it be a new building, or another location, or something else, were being explored.

Councillor Smith asked what the time line would be for more concrete information on the status of the Public Safety Building. His Worship advised that he believed there should be some recommendations before the year was over and agreed to follow up with the Department.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

In noting that three and a half years ago Council committed to provide six million dollars to a recreational user facility in northwest Winnipeg, to be located at the Old Exhibition grounds across from McPhillips Street Casino, Councillor Pagtakhan inquired about the status of that project.

His Worship acknowledged that there was a significant need in that area and that it was time to build and have a facility for the children and the community. He added that the department had been communicating with the other stakeholders and as a lot of other activities and facilities are on that location, the department wanted to ensure that any facility was located and connected properly, but further noted that an announcement should be made in the very near future.

Councillor Pagtakhan noted that in the spring of 2006, Council authorized up to $45,000 dollars to establish a Poverty Reduction Council by the United Way and asked for an update on some of the activities that had happened to date.

His Worship indicated that the new Chief Administrative Officer, Glen Laubenstein, was the committee representative and agreed to obtain an update from the Chief Administrative Officer for report back

Councillor Vandal noted that the Friends of Upper Fort Garry met every condition, as per the City of Winnipeg criteria, but had not been transferred title to 100 Main Street and questioned when the title transfer would occur.

His Worship stated that he had met with the lead on the project, Mr. Cunningham, and informed him that the City needed specific information to validate that the terms and conditions had been met. He added that a letter was recently received and that the Chief Financial Officer, together with Legal Services, would go through the documentation to ensure that all conditions were met and, if not, would communicate with the Friends of Upper Fort Garry to advise what was missing.

Councillor Vandal questioned if the Mayor could give Council an idea of what information was missing from the Friends of Upper Fort Garry.

His Worship stated that there was a financial commitment that they had to raise 10 of the 12 million dollars, which had not yet been validated and that an audit by the Chief Financial Officer would have to be done. His Worship added that the other key criteria was that they had to conclude a transaction regarding the Grain Exchange Curling Club and that Legal Services would go through the documentation received to determine if a signed offer to purchase and a signed offer to accept was received.