EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 111
In noting that there has been no public roll out of Plan Winnipeg, Councillor Gerbasi inquired about the status of Plan Winnipeg.

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that parts of Plan Winnipeg had commenced. He added that negotiations had to be finalized with the Province and that recently, the Premier stated publicly that the Province was coming to the table with fifty percent of the funding. With the funding in place, it was possible to move forward and things would start to move along more quickly.

Councillor Gerbasi requested His Worship to outline what the public process on Plan Winnipeg would be and when it would occur.

His Worship confirmed that public input was part of the process and that nothing would change from the way things had been done with Plan Winnipeg in the past.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned when more information would be rolled out to the public; noting that when the former Plan Winnipeg process was done, there were publicly named Chairs of the process, three or four Councillors, and a meeting schedule with timelines was released.

His Worship reiterated that the City just recently received confirmation that funding was available from the Province to do a thorough Plan Winnipeg and that the exact strategy of naming Chairs, et cetera would begin imminently.

In reference to the recent appointment of Councillor Wyatt as the Secretary of Strategic Infrastructure Renewal, Councillor Smith questioned if resources were also provided to do the job.

His Worship advised that it was time to address the issue of the crumbling infrastructure with a long-term plan and Councillor Wyatt had already started working on the project by contacting each department to schedule meetings; His Worship further confirmed that Councillor Wyatt knew that the resources of the public service were behind him.

Councillor Smith asked if a budget would be allocated for the position; to which His Worship replied in the affirmative.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

In noting that residents of northeast Winnipeg, including Premier Doer, continue to express concerns about the traffic gridlock that would be created during the sixteen months of the Disraeli Bridges rehabilitation / reconstruction and inasmuch as the 2009 capital budget included funds to start work to replace the Louise Bridge in 2012 with a four lane structure, Councillor Browaty questioned if it would be more feasible to replace the two lane Louise Bridge first and keep the Disraeli Bridges open until the extra capacity on the Louise Bridge was available.

His Worship stated that there had been many discussions regarding the Disraeli Bridges and the department was looking into the method that would be used to address the Disraeli and would report back. He added that he publicly stated that, in his opinion, a sixteen month delay was definitely too long and one of the goals and objectives was to make that time shorter or see if there was an opportunity to do the work while having part of the bridge open. In response to the question pertaining to doing the work on the Louise Bridge first, His Worship agreed that he would be happy to have that option explored, especially if it could create an opportunity to decrease the inconvenience to the citizens.

Councillor Browaty noted that it had been suggested that there would be costs involved to keep the Disraeli Bridges open and that those costs would be completely lost and thrown away once the deck was replaced. He asked if His Worship would request the department to quantify what those costs would be and what kind of unplanned closures would result.

His Worship replied that there was a lot of speculation and it was not known what would happen until responses were received from the private sector on ways that the work could be done and what the costs would be. He stated that the process had just started and stated that he would keep the Councillor aware of creative solutions that come forward.

In noting that the City had done an employment land study and an industrial policy land study, Councillor Vandal questioned why the City would wait for the Province to provide money for a Plan Winnipeg review instead of starting the process now.

His Worship stated that Winnipeg is over two-thirds of the province of Manitoba and quite often you do not qualify for money once a project is started. He added that the project would be all encompassing and now that funding was secured the process would start.

Councillor Vandal questioned how much funding the province would provide and asked what it was for. His Worship replied that the figure was approximately 3.5 million dollars and the province offered fifty percent of the funding for Plan Winnipeg.