EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 381
Councillor Browaty made reference to the Province cancelling several hundred photo radar tickets from construction zones that were under appeal due to a technicality. Meanwhile, he noted, thousands of other Manitobans that paid their tickets promptly were after an apparent flip-flop by the Provincial Government, not receiving a refund, and the Province was blaming the City of Winnipeg. Councillor Browaty questioned if at any time His Worship, or the City of Winnipeg Public Service, had told the Provincial Government that we would not or could not refund their tickets.

His Worship Mayor Katz advised that back in February, he went on record that if there was no construction going on, there should be no photo radar and if there were no issues of safety to the public, there should be no photo radar. His Worship further advised that in a conversation with Minister Chomiak, the Minister stated that he was going to drop the appeal by the Province, and refund approximately 800 plus tickets. His Worship advised that the Minister strongly reiterated that that was the end of the issue. His Worship then stated that as we all know, there has been further dialogue on this topic. He remarked that there were comments made in the legislature, record in Hansard, where it was stated that the Mayor told the Minister that the City would not make refunds. After that took place, the Minister called and apologized to His Worship inasmuch as his words were not accurate. His Worship then gave the specific answer to Councillor Browaty's question, being no, he never ever said, nor would he ever say that the City would not or could not refund tickets.

Councillor Browaty stated that it has been suggested that if a refund were issued, the lost revenue would be taken out of the Winnipeg Police Service. He questioned if there would be a decrease in policing services if the Provincial Government ordered the City to give a refund for photo radar tickets in construction zones.

His Worship responded that there is a line item in the budget that these revenues go specifically to the Winnipeg Police Service, but did not want to conclude what might happen. His Worship did say that Chief McCaskill has said over and over again that he was totally supportive of photo radar and believed it was safer for our citizens.

Councillor Swandel referenced the issue of funding Federal stimulus infrastructure. He noted that hundreds of millions of dollars were being spent in neighbouring Provinces and in neighbouring municipalities around the City of Winnipeg, but yet we've heard of nothing for the City of Winnipeg. He also noted that there was the Building Canada fund in place, but that it was difficult to surmise what were new dollars versus old dollars already in the fund.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued):

Councillor Swandel asked His Worship whether or not stimulus spending would be happening inside the City of Winnipeg for its infrastructure priorities, given that 2009 was slipping away and that a lot of design work needed to be done if projects were going to be implemented in 2010 and 2011.

His Worship noted that with the stimulus dollars that were out there, a very long list of infrastructure projects had been submitted and he hoped to hear something in the very near future. He stated that when it came to the Building Canada fund, he was waiting to have confirmed that there was still $70 or $80 million left, as well as getting an accurate amount on exactly what funds were available to the City of Winnipeg in the stimulus package.

Councillor Swandel stated there was a need for a Provincial contribution to these programs, the stimulus one being new. He assumed that there were ongoing talks with the Province as to whether or not they would make their one-third dollars available or if there were one-third dollars available. Council Swandel asked if His Worship would bring Council up to speed on where those costs were and if that was what was slowing the process.

His Worship responded that he was not certain all of these projects would be the one-third, one-third, one-third. He was able to advise that on some projects, the Province was fully supportive. His Worship stated that he hoped that very shortly this would be brought to fruition and there would be some positive announcements for the City of Winnipeg.

Councillor Swandel stated that the CentrePort Canada Act stipulates that a plan be developed by the planning authorities in the area, those being the City of Winnipeg and the R.M. of Rosser, to state where infrastructure was to be placed. He further stated that there were huge announcements of infrastructure dollars happening in that area and that no planning had been done to date in Winnipeg. Councillor Swandel questioned His Worship if any of the dollars that had been announced were going to come out of the City of Winnipeg's allocation of Building Canada or stimulus dollars.

His Worship noted that it was a concern and that he had asked the same question when the announcement was made. His Worship advised that he was told there was funding from, he believed, the Asian Pacific, and that this would have no negative impact. His Worship stated that on the CentrePort issue, it had been made loud and clear that in order for it to move through, the jurisdictional issue would have to be resolved.

Councillor Gerbasi referred to the motion passed by Council in November 2008 to spend $1.25 million exploring the idea of a corporate utility model for the Water and Waste Department. Councillor Gerbasi questioned if His Worship would commit to adequate time being allowed for the public and non-EPC members to review and have input in to the process and what will the public process look like around this major change to governance of a City Department.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued):

His Worship replied in the affirmative, that there would be public consultation.

Councillor Gerbasi stated that she had received some information from the Administration but wanted His Worship's commitment not to have the usual process where a report comes and a week later it's voted on at a Council meeting. Councillor Gerbasi asked if His Worship would ensure that there was adequate time to allow adequate public input so that if there were misconceptions, there would be the opportunity to clarify them as well as give the public the opportunity to analyze the complex findings that come forward with this type of change in governance structure.

For the record, His Worship read aloud from a communication that had been sent to Councillor Gerbasi from the Administration.

Councillor Gerbasi noted that one of the biggest concerns about the Council motion that was passed was that they were looking at a private partner for the design, building and also the operation of the water treatment facilities. She wanted to confirm that the proponents had been told that that would not be considered.

His Worship stated that they were looking for a "strategic partner" and read from the motion wherein it stated "All interested parties have been told that the City will not consider any private investment or control whatsoever in our drinking water system".

Councillor Nordman referred to a motion being brought forward at the upcoming F.C.M. Conference regarding infrastructure projects in the United States that were not available for Canadian companies to bid on. He advised that U.S. infrastructure promotions requested that the municipalities in the U.S. use U.S. suppliers. Councillor Nordman questioned if the City of Winnipeg had a buy Winnipeg, buy Manitoba, buy Canada First policy.

His Worship replied that he was not aware of such a policy but would be more than happy to investigate it further.