EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 213
Councillor Fielding requested a status update on the Building Canada Fund.

His Worship Mayor Katz advised that the City of Winnipeg submitted eleven infrastructure projects for the Building Canada Fund, namely, the Pembina Highway underpass at Jubilee, approximately 14 million; Plessis Road twinning with grade separation on the C.N.R. line, approximately 30 million spread over 2011/2012; Polo Park street and intersection improvement, approximately 10 million; Keewatin Street north of Inkster Boulevard, expansion to four lanes, approximately 20 to 25 million; stage two BRT from Jubilee to the University of Manitoba, 220 million; community centre investment fund contribution to replenish what had been used, 10 million; regional street major rehabilitation, 10 million per year for 2011 and 2012; Kenaston Boulevard widening between Taylor and Academy Road, 110 million for 2011 and 2012; Chief Peguis west extension from Main to McPhillips, approximately 60 million; St. Anne's Road twinning from Aldgate to Perimeter, approximately 7 million; Inkster Boulevard road construction from Keewatin to Brookside, approximately 31 million. His Worship concluded that all of the projects were submitted to the provincial and federal governments and noted that all three levels of government need to agree on the projects and that the City hoped to have an answer as soon as possible.

In noting that the Council approved bus rapid transit project from downtown to Jubilee was under construction and an application had been submitted to the Building Communities fund for the second phase of BRT, Councillor Gerbasi questioned what the Mayor's commitment was to the second phase of BRT versus a possible LRT project.

His Worship confirmed that stage one BRT, from downtown to Jubilee, had moved forward and suggested that Winnipeg should move into the future and go to LRT as other major Canadian cities have. He noted that he had the full support of the previous Premier and would like to get a long term commitment so that Winnipeg could be just like every modern city. He also noted that he had requested Premier Selinger to accompany him to Ottawa to lobby the Federal Government for LRT. In the interim, he advised there was approximately 189 million available under the Building Canada Funds and that the previously identified projects were before the province and federal governments and it was now a matter of the parties agreeing on the projects they wanted to proceed with.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if the Mayor had asked the Federal Government for money for the second stage of BRT or for funding for LRT and asked which project he supported.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship stated that he was supportive of all the projects put forward and was very supportive of having the Premier join the Mayor and go to Ottawa to try to get a long-term commitment for LRT.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if the Mayor was committed to finishing the second phase of BRT, why was there a reluctance to put it in the Capital Budget Forecast.

His Worship replied that he was fully supportive of stage one and noted that stage two, from Jubilee to the University, was one of the options but it would also be wonderful if the City could get the Federal and Provincial Governments to be united and move to LRT.

Councillor Pagtakhan asked the Mayor to provide an update on the Winnipeg Police Cadet unit.

His Worship advised that many years ago there was a Police Cadet unit and they provided some phenomenal services and gave police officers the ability to police. He added that, in the end, many of the cadets became police officers. His Worship stated that there was an agreement with the previous Justice Minister and the previous Premier to move forward and announce 50 cadets, with up to 200 cadets agreed to by the Winnipeg Police Association. Mayor Katz indicated that at one point in time, 1.7 million dollars was allocated by the previous Premier and the previous Minister of Justice for this project, but that was no longer the case since the cabinet changed. He concluded that they were still working to see whether a cadet program could become a reality.

Councillor Browaty noted that Dr. David Schindler was in from the University of Alberta, presenting on why 68 scientists said that tackling phosphorus was the most important thing to cleaning up Lake Winnipeg and an expenditure of 350 million to remove nitrogen from the City's Waste Water plant was an erroneous way to spend money. He added that Terry Sargent suggested that perhaps the process to remove ammonia may be sufficient and agreed with the science that phosphorus was more important than nitrogen. Councillor Browaty questioned if the Mayor would go back to the Province to ask them to reconsider the notion that removing nitrogen was a wasteful way to clean up Lake Winnipeg.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship advised that they had the privilege and phenomenal opportunity to have Dr. Schindler, probably the top scientist in North America, if not the world, come to Winnipeg and it was made very clear that removing nitrogen was a complete waste of 350 million dollars in addition to the waste of 9 million dollars annually for the taxpayers of Winnipeg. He added that he hoped that after Dr. Schindler appeared in Winnipeg that everybody would realize that the decision made by the Clean Environment Commission was based on flawed and inaccurate information; noting that he would continue to fight to work something out that made sense and was productive.

Councillor Browaty inquired if the Mayor could share his strategy on how he planned to raise awareness and get buy-in from the public and the Province.

His Worship suggested that politicians should take a back seat when it comes to these kinds of issues and it should be the scientists who were listened to. He added that it was a step in the right direction when the media heard what Dr. Schindler had to say and why the Clean Environment Commission had erred. He stated that he hoped to hear something back in the near future and, if not, would continue to soldier on.