EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 49
Councillor Gerbasi asked His Worship Mayor Katz if he intended to commit to finishing Phase 2 of the Southwest Transit Corridor within the next term of Council.

His Worship Mayor Katz replied that approval of all projects were the responsibility of City Council. He further stated that he had, along with the former Premier, put forward funds to finish and complete the first phase of Rapid Transit, which was currently in process. He added that there was no commitment from any level of government to fund the project Councillor Gerbasi referred to, and stated that he was prepared to meet with the Premier and Ottawa to talk about the project.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if there would be a commitment from Council for funding Rapid Transit in the upcoming draft Capital Budget and Five-Year Forecast. Councillor Gerbasi further inquired if the Mayor would commit to lobby the other levels of government to complete the project or had a decision been made to abandon the second phase of the Southwest Corridor.

Mayor Katz confirmed that he was not only prepared to make a commitment, but was prepared to lead and confirmed that he had already had conversation with the Federal Government about Rapid Transit. He added that monies would be available, but that the Premier needed to get on board, as in order to get something done all three levels of government needed to work together.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the Veolia contract had been signed and asked the Mayor to share the details of what the City of Winnipeg agreed to in a transparent manner.

Mayor Katz stated that no level of government was more open, honest and transparent than the City of Winnipeg. He added that no contract with Veolia had been signed and that he had already said on the record that he would share whatever information he had when the contract was signed.

Councillor Wyatt referred to a very serious allegation involving the Winnipeg Police Service that was publicly made by an aboriginal man, Evan Maud, and questioned what steps had been taken to follow up to ensure that it would be investigated properly.

Mayor Katz stated that there had been an allegation and that he would never make comments on something that was being investigated. He added that there was a process through Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA) and, in addition to that, the Chief of Police had also stated that they would be investigating.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Swandel noted that funding for active transportation projects that were to be funded under the Federal Stimulus Program would be approximately 4 million rather than 7 million and questioned if the Federal Government had given any indication as to whether or not the City would have access to the 3 million that did not meet criteria in that package to do other projects within the new deadline of October 31, 2011.

Mayor Katz stated that what had to be done at this stage of the game was make sure that when an agreement was entered into with the other levels of government that it actually ended up being one-third, one third, one third and advised that he had spoken to the Acting Chief Administrative Officer and the Department to make sure the agreements were signed and that the City was covered.

Councillor Swandel asked the Mayor to give an indication on a per capita basis, how much stimulus funding was being spent in the City of Winnipeg and how that compared to other cities across the country.

Mayor Katz stated that he would get that information and advised that the $4 million was a subset of total stimulus funding for government projects and that there were many other stimulus projects funded in Winnipeg such as the MTS Iceplex and the United Way Building on Main Street.

Councillor Eadie noted that the Mayor recently campaigned on a commitment for 58 new police officers and questioned how these new officers would be funded and when they would be on line.

Mayor Katz stated that crime and safety was one of his top priorities long before the election. He confirmed that there was a commitment for 58 additional officers; 20 to walk the beat in areas the Winnipeg Police believe they are needed, an additional 20 to go into the gang unit and another 18 to man an additional patrol car. Mayor Katz added that the funding would go through the Operating Budget and that the officers would appear over a period of time and that this could probably be accomplished within a two to three year period. Mayor Katz also noted that other safety projects were being undertaken, for example, in conjunction with the Province, a police helicopter was acquired and that training was taking place. He added that it was one major tool that would serve the citizens of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Police Service very well and have a positive impact. He further noted that the Cadet program was recreated and the cadets were recently sworn in and were out on the streets.

Councillor Eadie questioned how, without raising taxes, the money for 58 new police officers would be found. Mayor Katz replied that it would be up to Council to do that during the Operating Budget. He also stated that funding would come also come from raising safety issues with the Provincial and Federal Governments.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Eadie inquired how they would be able to utilize federal funding as he understood it to be one time money and not on-going support, which was needed for police officers.

Mayor Katz stated that there was an initiative from the Federal Government that was one-time money, a significant amount of money for the entire Province, spread out between rural Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg, which has already flowed to the Provincial Government.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the comprehensive parking strategy would be released to all Members of Council; to which the Mayor advised that a copy should have been provided by the former Director of the Winnipeg Parking Authority but he had not seen it.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired if the Mayor would make a commitment that the full 24 million be invested back into downtown revitalization through a comprehensive parking strategy.

Mayor Katz stated it would be impossible to make such a commitment as all 16 elected officials would have to make the commitment and noted that he believed the money should be re-invested in the downtown.

Councillor Wyatt inquired about the status of the infrastructure program for roads and bridges. Mayor Katz acknowledged that there was hope that there would be some quality infrastructure projects amongst the three levels of government, which would make major improvements in the city that were overdue.

Councillor Wyatt questioned when there would be an agreement for consideration for the Building Stimulus. Mayor Katz advised that Building Canada funds were invested by the three levels of government and no one had to pay it back. He further advised that the money was available until 2014 and hoped something would be done very soon.

Councillor Wyatt asked the Mayor to elaborate about the disagreement between the Mayor and the Premier / the City and the Province, and why an agreement was not brought forward to be voted on before 2010 year end.

Mayor Katz stated that all three levels of government have to agree on the projects when you have Building Canada funds, which was not the case at the current time but that they were working towards that goal.

Councillor Smith requested an update on negotiations to transfer health inspections to the Province. Mayor Katz acknowledged that, for some unknown reason, the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba duplicate services, health inspection being one of them. He advised that the department had discussed the issue, were making headway, and the Province was doing its due diligence reviewing costs, but that he believed headway was being made.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Smith asked what was holding up an agreement with the province to have health inspections done completely by the Provincial Government. His Worship replied that nothing specific was holding it up and it was at the political level for discussion.