EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 414
Councillor Wyatt referenced the City's smoking ban by-law and questioned if the Province would be banning smoking in casinos, to which His Worship Mayor Murray replied that in his discussions with the Premier, he was led to the conclusion, that the Premier would respect the law of City Council.

Councillor Wyatt stated that there was the suggestion that the Provincial Government was looking at imposing a smoking ban Province-wide and questioned if there was a possibility of tying into the Province's efforts and possibly seeing something at the June Council meeting whereby the City would hold off implementing the July 1 implementation date for the smoking ban.

His Worship responded that it was doubtful that the possible Provincial ban deliberations were very far advanced but noted that if the City received a request from the Province, then partnership could be possible, but noted that July 1 was fast approaching, and that the City's advertising campaign would be imminent.

Councillor Steek noted that City hotels, through appeals, had seen assessment reductions of $56 million, which, between property and business taxes, translated to a loss to the City of $3.3 million, and questioned the effect that this would have on the business community as a whole.

His Worship replied that this was an area of concern and noted that the City had established an Assessment Task Force chaired by Councillor O'Shaughnessy. He stated that he fully endorsed the Task Force recommendations and that they were looking at implementation. He also noted that elected officials must maintain arms length distance from the Assessment Department and not interfere in the assessment procedure. His Worship further stated that once the final rulings were made through the appeal process, that a review of the assessment process for the properties would be conducted.

Councillor Steek questioned if the Mayor agreed that the significant reductions, in most instances from 1/3 to 50% of the assessed value, were a major deterrent to attracting investment within the community, to which His Worship responded that he did not and noted that there had been significant hotel investment, including a new hotel recently constructed in the downtown area, a second under reconstruction, and a number that had been rehabilitated.

Councillor Steek referred to the motion which granted an extension of time of 60 days for the Executive Policy Committee to report back to Council with their recommendation relative to the re-establishment of the Winnipeg Police Commission, and questioned if the report would be brought forward to Council before the August prorogue period.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

His Worship stated that it was likely and noted that he had had discussions with the Chief of Police on the issue for over a year. He further stated that the issue was not whether or not to have a police commission, but whether or not there was effective oversight of the Police Department. His Worship advised that there was a comparative survey currently being undertaken by the Police Service and CAO on the various models of police commissions and that responses received were dramatically different. He further advised that the matter was becoming extremely important, with increasing priority, and that he hoped by year-end to find resolution.