STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 482
Councillor Steek referred to recent media coverage about the Aboriginal Policy, to be brought forward in due course, and questioned if the Chairperson would speak to the perceived benefits of an Aboriginal Reserve.

Councillor Vandal noted that treaty land entitlements are enshrined in a legal process with the Federal Government and indicated that he would circulate a discussion paper to all Members of Council on the legalistic procedure, and the benefits and the drawbacks of a treaty land entitlement.

His Worship Mayor Murray added that treaty land entitlements are the exercising of the treaty rights of First Nations and the decision to respect that authority was not discretionary. It was also noted that he anticipated that the First Nations would exercise imminently some of those rights to establish what is technically called an urban reserve, as they have done in other Canadian cities, and indicated that the office building built by the Saskatoon First Nations in downtown Saskatoon was an effective model to consider. He further stated that the First Nations signed an agreement with the City of Saskatoon on the principle of equality, i.e. same property rights, same responsibilities; noting that they paid full municipal services and the equivalent of property taxes based on the assessment of the property.

His Worship advised that the matter would be considered at a Council Seminar, stating that it was an extraordinarily positive step forward as urbanization of Aboriginal persons would bring welcome investments, but cautioned that Council would need to have a very clear understanding of the law and the City's responsibilities and rights in those agreements.

In noting the importance of property transactions with the business community, Councillor Steek questioned if the Chairperson supported a formal policy whereby the Administration would respond in a definitive period of time on their intentions regarding a land purchase, to which Councillor Vandal replied in the affirmative.