EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 200
Councillor Gerbasi requested His Worship Mayor Bowman to provide an update on discussions of Building Canada Fund priorities / application for the funding.

His Worship Mayor Bowman advised that the previous Council voted on six tasks for the Build Canada Fund, four of which were submitted. He advised that correspondence was recently received from the Province of Manitoba asking Council to consider and prioritize the current applications for Build Canada. The public service was subsequently asked to provide additional information to Council on the cost benefit analysis of the four current applications for Building Canada in order to provide a prioritization list to the Province to move the applications forward.

In reference to the recent boil water advisory for the City of Winnipeg, Councillor Pagtakhan requested an update on what was being done relative to testing of the City's water distribution system.

His Worship advised that Council would look at the findings from an independent review of the City's water testing, which is expected in March, and indicated that the Province was also taking actions to ensure the quality and safety of the drinking water.

Councillor Pagtakhan requested His Worship to provide an update of what he has heard relative to the 1Winnipeg website on racism.

His Worship thanked Winnipeggers and Members of Council for their show of solidarity in the face of the Maclean's article. He added that the 1Winnipeg.ca website was one small first step in the action plan that he would be rolling out to help break down barriers and increase tolerance and understanding within the community.

Councillor Mayes noted that he was pleased the Mayor mentioned in his opening remarks at Council that Winnipeg was hosting the 2017 Canada Games and asked the Mayor to make a commitment to have a Council seminar to speak to the plans for the 2017 Canada Games. Councillor Mayes added that for a three million capital cost Winnipeg should get an economic impact of about 160 million.

His Worship replied that they would work with the organizing committee to get all relevant information to City Council in due course. He also encouraged all members of Council to raise awareness about Winnipeg hosting this important event on social media, by word of mouth and by supporting the volunteers who were working hard to put on what was expected to be outstanding Games here in Winnipeg.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Mayes noted that it was the first time there was a host Aboriginal nation recognized at the recent Canada Winter Games and asked the Mayor to work with the Aboriginal, Metis and Francophone communities so that Winnipeg does not miss out on a good opportunity to respond to the Maclean's article, among other Winnipeg issues.

His Worship Mayor Bowman agreed to relay that suggestion to the organizers to determine if anything could be done to celebrate and highlight the strength of the Aboriginal and Indigenous community, which includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit, here in Winnipeg during the Games. On a broader level it was something that Winnipeg was trying to do to the greatest extent possible to celebrate the growing Indigenous community.

Councillor Eadie referenced a motion that was adopted by Council on December 11, 2013 to establish an Ethics Commissioner's office and inquired about the status of the motion.

His Worship Mayor Bowman advised that he was working with the Province to make changes in the Charter, was pleased to hear of their openness in the Thorne speech last fall and was pleased with the working relationship with the Province to restore trust and faith in City Hall.

Councillor Eadie questioned if the Mayor was aware that within the City of Winnipeg Charter the City Auditor had the ability to pass on investigative powers to who he deems possible, which could be a commissioner within his own office, and they would not need to amend the Charter. His Worship replied that they were seeking to amend the Charter so there was absolute clarity about the roles and the processes.

Councillor Eadie inquired if the Mayor was aware that the City of Winnipeg employee Code of Conduct was lacking and needed to be updated with the guidance of someone like an Ethic's Commissioner. His Worship stated that he welcomed any improvements and confirmed that an Ethic's Commissioner would review the policies and enforcement of the policies.

Councillor Wyatt noted that Council on June 25, 2014 endorsed six projects; Waverley Street Underpass, the Marion Street widening/grade separation, improvements from Archibald Street to Lagimodiere Boulevard, Chief Peguis Trail Extension from Main Street to Route 90, Louise Bridge Replacement, the William R. Clement Parkway Extension from Grant Avenue to Wilkes, and the widening of Kenaston Boulevard from Ness Avenue to Taylor Avenue, and questioned who decided which projects went forward to the provincial and federal governments since only four out of the six projects were submitted.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

His Worship confirmed that Council was supreme and steps were being taken to ensure that the will of Council was respected and implemented. He indicated that he could not speak for the actions of the previous Council or the previous senior members of the public service and could not answer why two were not submitted. He advised that some clarity was received in the recent Council seminar and they would continue to do their best to ensure that the will of Council was respected.

Councillor Wyatt reiterated that Council voted on all six projects but Louise Bridge is directly tied to the eastern corridor and was the only project out of the six that has a rapid transit implication. He questioned why a junior bureaucrat with the Province of Manitoba was sending correspondence dictating that Council had to set priorities when the Mayor was elected to negotiate for the good of the City and to get a better deal.

His Worship Mayor Bowman noted that part of what he was elected to do was work collaboratively with the provincial and federal partners. He added that he heard the Councillors' concerns about the correspondence but stated he believed the relationship with the province and the federal government had improved since the November 4 swearing in and that the current Council would continue to work collaboratively while looking out for the best interests of Winnipeggers.

Councillor Wyatt questioned what progress had been made with the provincial government and what announcements could be expected from the provincial government in terms of reducing the infrastructure deficit.

His Worship Mayor Bowman thanked Councillor Wyatt for his comments, advised that he was not in a position to make announcements on behalf of the provincial government and would continue to work with provincial partners to ensure that the priorities that Winnipeggers have expressed with regards to infrastructure renewal were honoured and acted upon. He added that a number of announcements with the province had been made since the election, one of which recently was the federal government's contribution to phase two of rapid transit, and the Province also stepped up to ensure that phase two of rapid transit was completed with the appropriate funding.

Councillor Schreyer questioned if His Worship Mayor Bowman would enhance or create a new motion in regards to the CentreVenture issue would be solved.

His Worship Mayor Bowman advised that the Executive Policy Committee created a working group on mandate review, chaired by Councillor Orlikow. He added that Councillor Orlikow had dialogue with the Chair and the Executive Director of CentreVenture to look at how the City could make improvements to the mandate and the governance of CentreVenture and those efforts would go back to Council for consideration and action, if necessary.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Schreyer asked if the sole sourcing issue of the contract for True North at the Carlton Street hotel venue could be the leading priority in the Executive Policy Committee report.

His Worship Mayor Bowman confirmed that the process regarding 200 Carlton would be part of the discussions with CentreVenture on how the mandate and governance could be improved.

Councillor Schreyer asked if the Mayor understood his question that the City did not solve the problem with the issue of how CentreVenture does their contracts, to which His Worship stated that he was not entirely clear on the question but thanked all Members of Council for their ongoing diligence to focus on downtown and improve the processes.

Moved by Councillor Gillingham,

That Rule No. 51.6 of the Procedure By-law be suspended to allow question period to be extended for five additional minutes.

Carried

His Worship reiterated his ongoing commitment to ensure the decision making process at City Hall was much more transparent and more accountable. He added that key steps in processes were overlooked with regards to 200 Carlton; Council was not given a choice, and was expected to move taxpayer dollars without conditions to ensure value. He added that elected officials were accountable to the taxpayer and were not doing their jobs if an unconditional 3.75 million was allowed to flow to any project without asking the hard questions and expecting complete and full disclosure for the use of taxpayer dollars. The results of an expression of interest, as Council unanimously agreed, ensured the best solution and the details about the business case for any development, and the Convention Centre would also benefit. CentreVenture had opportunity to proceed with any deal all along and all Council said was if millions of dollars were to be sent to CentreVenture, public accountability and more information was needed and, to that end, His Worship would meet with CentreVenture and the Convention Centre Board Chairs to collaboratively find a public accountable path forward.

Councillor Wyatt questioned if there would be an opportunity in the near future to revisit part of the decision made in February to allow the process that unfolded prior to the current Mayor taking office to either fail or succeed.

His Worship Mayor Bowman stated that what everybody wanted was whatever was in the best interests of Winnipeggers and Council's responsibility was to protect taxpayer dollars and ensure accountability for spending.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued):

Moved by Councillor Gillingham,

That Rule No. 51.6 of the Procedure By-law be suspended to allow question period to be extended for one additional minute.

Carried

His Worship Mayor Bowman advised that the reason he reached out to the Chair of both the Convention Centre and CentreVenture was to try and see all could move forward in a collaborative manner. He added that public money required public accountability and as such, public expressions of interest were asked for by Council. If CentreVenture or True North did not wish to proceed with that, they did not need to and could continue with the current arrangements they had, if they so chose.