STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 447
Councillor Orlikow requested an update on the Innovation Capital Fund.

Councillor Morantz indicated that the Innovation Capital Fund was a new idea for The City of Winnipeg and was an incentive based program to come forward with investments in efficiencies. He advised that a call for ideas was put out for inclusion on an Agenda by the end of June. He also noted that $1 million was set aside for the project, the process had started, and he looked forward to seeing really good ideas come forward from the public service.

Councillor Gerbasi inquired where they were at in the budget process for 2016. Councillor Morantz announced that an informal budget group had been assembled, comprised of himself, Councillor Gerbasi and Councillor Gillingham, non-Executive Policy Committee (EPC) members. He also advised that discussions were ongoing with respect to public consultations.

Councillor Eadie questioned if the Chair had read through the two communications on the June 17th Agenda, the Annual Financial Statements and the Detailed Financial Statements to which Councillor Morantz replied in the affirmative.

Councillor Eadie referred to the budget for the Winnipeg Police Service and asked if it was a good or a bad idea to have the Chair of the Winnipeg Police Board on the budget working committee in terms of potential conflicts.

Councillor Morantz replied that Councillor Gillingham was a tremendous asset to the budget working group and that the experience would benefit Councillor Gillingham as he navigated many of the same issues with the Police Board as they considered an extremely difficult budget as well.

Councillor Eadie questioned if any consideration was given to some of the other new Councillors who do not have an EPC role or a responsible role on the Police Board. Councillor Morantz replied that the honest answer was they looked around the room and considered those that would be most helpful.

His Worship Mayor Bowman commended the Chair of Finance for the work he had done and reminded everyone that the budget working group was working with the Chair of Finance and was not speaking on behalf of Council. All decisions made on the budget would be made by all Members of Council. He encouraged everyone to work with the Finance Chair throughout the year and questioned if the Chair had balanced the budget yet.

Standing Policy Committee on Finance – Question Period (continued):

Councillor Morantz clarified that inclusion of non-EPC members should not be viewed as usurping the authority of EPC, which was statutorily required to bring forward the budget. He stated that the sole purpose was to be inclusive and respective of Council as a whole. He admitted that it was not perfect but they were trying something new and would see what grew from that and that he was hopeful that it was a bold idea.

Councillor Schreyer referred to the issue of the budget working group and, in terms of being helpful, suggested that every member of Council would be helpful in terms of doing their own job and working collectively towards a proper, fair and open budget process. He suggested that different people would like to be on the working group and suggested they rotate as they go along the experiment.

Councillor Morantz concurred that a rotation was a good idea but there was much to learn to put together a budget for the City and it could be difficult to rotate Councillors once they embarked on the process. He clarified that he was looking for input from everybody. He added that there was a serious budget imbalance to address so any ideas were good ideas.