STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 91
In reference to the Esplanade Riel and recent protests by several St. Boniface residents regarding the Executive Policy Committee's decision to not make bilingual service a requirement for potential businesses leasing space on the Esplanade Riel, Councillor Gerbasi asked the Chair of the Downtown Development Committee to urge the Executive Policy Committee to reconsider this decision and make bilingual service a requirement out of respect for the crucial symbolic role the bridge plays for the French quarter.

Councillor De Smedt replied that he could take the comment under advisement but noted that the request for proposals had already been issued and that the process was under way. He acknowledged that there were contrary views but there was also a majority view that this made sense in the business context and that it would probably be most unusual for any business to want to operate on that particular structure and not provide some service in the French language.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned why they would not reconsider this decision when they could easily make that change. Councillor De Smedt responded that it was a private sector operation that would be on the site and, as it is not a government service, there was no obligation for bilingual service, adding that other private sector business who operate along Provencher Boulevard, Tache, or Marion are not required to provide mandatory services in French.