EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 143
Councillor Magnifico requested clarification on comments made by Minister Reg Alcock in a radio interview that the City was not only getting money for rapid transit, but was also getting extra money for community clubs.

His Worship Mayor Katz stated it was his understanding that all the monies the federal government had put up were still available. He noted that the City was looking for ways to accommodate the community centre program and stated that the monies that were in the pot would be available for many projects. He further commented that if and when the Minister tells him that the monies are definitely not available, only then would he start addressing other options.

Councillor Gerbasi referred to the process the Mayor had envisioned for proceeding with dealing with the Public Use Facility Study and asked the Mayor to explain how his approach makes sense as a way to prioritize which facilities are built first.

His Worship advised what he was referring to in the PUFS report were campus type structures located throughout the city. He noted that in order to make those a reality, community centres would have to volunteer to shut down. He further noted that if a group of community centres came forward voluntarily and said they were prepared to all get together under one big roof and have a campus built in their area, it would then proceed in that manner. The same thing would also apply to an urban oasis concept. In regards to renovating and fixing up existing infrastructure, priorities would be assessed based on need. His Worship stated these were two different concepts; one specifically dealt with creation of large campuses and urban oasis, and the other with specific monies available to enhance and renovate existing structures.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if those areas of the city in greater need would be given priority when deciding where recreational dollars would go.

His Worship responded that public input along with input from all of Council would be used in the decision making process.

Councillor Gerbasi questioned if the Mayor had a personal commitment to do something about the problems faced by people in the inner city who do not have access to adequate recreation services, to which His Worship replied that he has a commitment to the inner city on all issues, not just community centre issues.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Benham questioned if the City is allowed to have access to the $34 million dollars in federal and provincial money originally intended for bus rapid transit, would community centres still be the Mayor's first choice and first priority for that money.

His Worship stated that when he gets answer from the Minister that the money can be accessed, it will be used for community centres.

Councillor Benham noted that there was now a Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund and questioned if the Mayor was turning down the opportunity to apply for monies for community centres and have the money under the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund as well.

His Worship replied that he would not turn down the opportunity to get any monies that come available from the federal or provincial governments and would be taking advantage of every opportunity that exists.

Councillor Benham questioned if an application had been made for monies available under the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund to which His Worship replied that he did not believe so.

Councillor Wyatt referenced a radio program whereby the Premier of Manitoba was responding to a query regarding monies generated by Waverley West, to which the Premier had responded that the monies generated were supposed to go to the inner city. Councillor Wyatt requested that the City secure in writing from the Premier assurances that these were new dollars and not existing funds being rerouted, and further asked that the City request that the Province route all monies raised through the joint venture through the Public Accounts Committee to ensure full accountability.

His Worship noted that the Premier did state that all profits would go to the downtown and inner city and that at this stage, the City would have to take the Premier at his word.

Councillor Thomas asked to hear more about the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's upcoming trip to Winnipeg's Sister City in the Philippines; Councillor Pagtakhan briefed members of Council about the trip to Manila taking place from January 27 through to February 5, 2005.

Councillor Lazarenko questioned if the Mayor had any plans in place to meet with the Premier of Manitoba on a regular basis to which His Worship replied that he communicated with the Premier on a fairly regular basis although not always formally.

Councillor Lazarenko questioned if the Mayor would be setting priorities based on the needs of each member of Council that could be communicated through the Mayor to the Premier.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

His Worship replied that if there were certain issues important to a Councillor, that they would be communicated to him or his staff and he would be more than happy to be the messenger.

Councillor Lazarenko noted the importance of Council members participating when the Mayor meets with the Premier or with counterparts from the federal government.

His Worship responded that he would have no problem trying to make these arrangements whether it was quarterly or whatever the case may be.

Councillor Lubosch made reference to the Province reportedly grossing in the neighbourhood of nine million dollars from the photo radar red light camera enforcement program. He questioned if the Province had alluded to any safety initiatives that were going to be developed as a result of the revenue to which His Worship replied that he did not have an answer at this time.

Councillor Lubosch questioned if there had been any discussions with the Province to amend the Privacy Act to allow collection of some four million dollars that may be outstanding in parking ticket fines to which His Worship thanked the Councillor for bringing up the issue and noted that it would be addressed in the near future.

Councillor Steeves questioned what was planned to address the issue of panhandling in the downtown for 2005.

His Worship replied that better by-laws were needed to address aggressive panhandling and noted that there were also enforcement issues and social issues involved that needed to be addressed in a sensitive manner.