EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 360
In noting that the City of Winnipeg qualified for federal money for bus rapid transit and recreation centres, Councillor Benham questioned why His Worship Mayor Katz failed to obtain funds for both initiatives.

His Worship advised that Minister Alcock had informed everyone in public statements that the government would address the issue of bus rapid transit and look for funds once the Rapid Transit Commission comes forth with a recommendation. Mayor Katz also noted that the City currently had secured money for recreational facilities, which was a priority for the majority of Council, and stated that in the very near future, when the City's plan has gone through proper consultation and the Rapid Transit recommendations are made, the City will seek support from all levels of government for that issue.

Councillor Benham asked what steps the Mayor had taken to protect the City's interests with respect to recreation centres and sewer / water if there were to be a change in the federal government.

His Worship acknowledged that he would make every effort to get a signed agreement as quickly as possible to make sure that these projects are followed through and stated that he believed that all of the federal parties supported these initiatives.

Councillor Benham asked the Chair of the Rapid Transit Task Force what point there was in the work being done by the task force if there was no certain money available for the task force's recommendations.

Councillor Wyatt replied that when the task force recommendations come forward, Council will be able to consider them and decide what recommendations to pursue and then consider funding for these recommendations. He also noted that the report creating the task force was very clear in stating that ideally two thirds of funding should come from other levels of government.

In reference to the recently released Diversity Report Card, Councillor Gerbasi noted that targeted groups for diversity were severely under represented by the political staff in the Mayor's Office and EPC Secretariat and requested the Mayor to make a commitment to choose from a wider pool and comply with the spirit of the city policies on diversity when hiring future political staff to which His Worship Mayor Katz stated that he had hired people based solely upon their qualifications.

Executive Policy Committee – Question Period (continued)

Councillor Gerbasi thanked the Mayor for his position of support for the IATSE members that have been denied work at the MTS Centre in favour of a British Columbia company and asked His Worship to advise what he intends to do now that the letter has been withdrawn and there is no deal for IATSE.

His Worship advised that he recently received a letter from Barney Haines thanking him for his support but acknowledged that the reality is the City doesn't have a lot of say since the building is privately owned and they are negotiating with the private sector.

In noting that the 2004 operating budget asked the administration to report back on the solid waste user pay garbage issue, Councillor Gerbasi requested that the administrative report be released to all Members of Council for discussion.

His Worship replied that it was very obvious that Council did not really have a taste for making solid waste user fees a reality but noted that Council has to address and resolve some very important issues and that he has no problem with Council having further dialogue on this.