

Fink plans broader base for city government

by Steve Pilkington

for the *Tundra Times*

Anchorage Mayor-Elect Tom Fink said in an interview Thursday that changing the direction of the current municipal government and giving it a

broader base are the main plans for his administration.

Part of that change will be brought about by speeding up the current decision making process in order to get things done.

"I think we've been shrinking our horizons the last few years. We tend to study everything to death," he said. "The study and review process has got to be faster."

Fink does not believe that speeding

things up will lead to problems such as those Anchorage currently has with the Performing Arts Center, which cost millions of dollars over the estimated budget.

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• Relationship to Bush not yet decided

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"That didn't move too fast, they just moved the wrong way," he said.

Increasing the responsibilities of private business in the municipality is what will prevent those kinds of problems, he said.

The mayor-elect said so far he has spent most of his time considering problems within Anchorage and that he hasn't yet determined Anchorage's relationship to rural Alaska.

But for Anchorage, Fink wants to see more jobs. He said he believes finding more private sector jobs will also play a large part in reforming the economy.

"We're going to try to get government out of the way," he said.

Already, Fink has received dozens of letters and resumes from people asking for jobs with the municipality. And handling those takes up most of his extra time.

Before he begins increasing jobs in the municipality, however, Fink said he is going to continue lobbying for the use of the earnings of the Permanent Fund. He met with Alaska mayors recently and said the response to his idea about using the Permanent Fund earnings has been good.

He also met with Gov. Steve Cowper recently to try and get him behind his ideas.

"A method of economic stimulation is a matter of convincing him that we have an economic crisis," Fink said. "We have a sick economy, and it's going to get sicker."

Part of the problem is that so much of Alaska's economy depends on oil, he said.

"Oil is always going to be big in Alaska," said Fink, who supports the opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling.

But some of the problems connected with a fluctuating economy may be alleviated "if you have a broader based economy," he said. Fink believes that tourism and trade with Europe and the Far East will be valuable also.

Until Jan. 2, when Fink will take office as mayor, his transition team, headed by former Anchorage Mayor George Sullivan, is looking into ways to begin improving the local economy.

Fink could not be specific about those plans, however, at least until mid-December when his transition

team will have looked into all of the programs in each municipal department.

But part of his plan to change the direction of the government may involve cutting current programs supported by the city, he said.

"I've asked the city employees if they want to stay on board," he said, indicating that some of his transition team members may become part of the permanent government. But it was too early for him to say who would go and who would stay.

Fink hopes that once Anchorage has turned around, he can begin to consider ways to help the rural areas in Alaska.

"The main job of the mayor is Anchorage. But we are a trade center and we're the largest Native village."