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Planning for food security The Manitoba Food Charter

By Meagan Peasgood

Every single day in our province, food is grown, raised, hunted, caught, processed, packaged, slaughtered, imported, exported, transported, traded, shared, purchased, sold, cooked, eaten, celebrated, metabolized, wasted, composted, and thrown away. It is undeniable that food is at the core of our lives as individuals, communities and society. Food is something that connects us all. It connects us back to the land and to each other.

As a society, we're beginning to question what is safe for our families and for the environment, and whether the natural foods we harvest from hunting, fishing and gathering are still healthy to eat. In a food system where the average item on our plate travels more than 2,000 km from farm to fork, there is an increasingly long-distance and disconnected relationship with our food and the people who grow, pick and package it. We often have too much or too little of it; some are overfed but undernourished. We are unsure what is healthy for us or in some cases, how to choose and prepare nutritious food.

The Manitoba Food Charter project is a unique gathering of people working towards food security in our province. In 2004, Winnipeg hosted a national food security assembly. This conference's Local Organizing Committee was solidly committed to maintaining the momentum from the assembly and channeling it into the creation of a provincial food charter.

Creating a Manitoba Food Charter

Food security is a broad and far-reaching concept which invites questions like "Where is the food coming from?" and "How is it grown and transported?" in addition to the common question of "Who is hungry?". One definition of community

food security is "a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice" (Hamm and Bellows, 2003).

The purpose of creating a Manitoba Food Charter is to help inform individuals, families, households, businesses, community organizations and all levels of government, in order to

make healthy, sustainable decisions about all aspects of our food system. A charter is a tool that helps us, as an interconnected society, to put our shared food principles into practice. It can help guide and inform strategic planning, policy, program development and practice toward food security in Manitoba. Several Canadian municipalities have already adopted Food Charters: Toronto, Saskatoon, Sudbury, Vancouver, and Prince Albert.

First province-wide charter

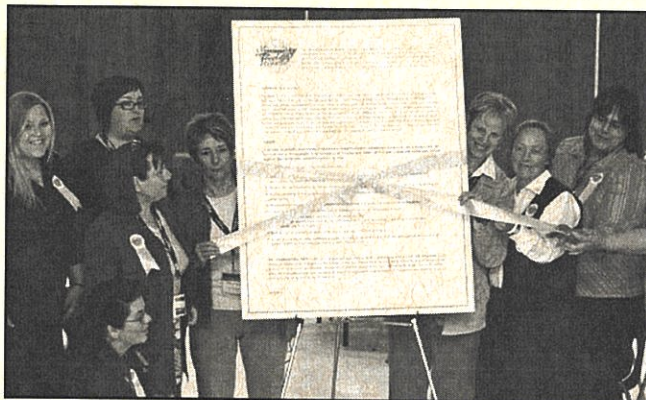
On March 14, 2005, over 40 individuals including Aboriginal people, academics, fishers, students, community gardeners, farmers, activists, policy makers, local food retailers, community health workers, ministers, food action agencies, and seniors from urban, rural and northern Manitoba gathered at Crossways in Common to declare wholeheartedly that we should embark upon a year-long conversation towards the first province-wide food charter in Canada.

With the blessing of that assembled community, a steering committee of dedicated volunteers and staff have crisscrossed the province conducting inclusive, grassroots consultations with individuals, organizations and more; all of whom are stakeholders in various aspects of the Manitoba food system. Input came from across the province: 22% in rural communities, 17% in Manitoba's north, 33% from urban and 28% from consultations involving mixed regions between April 2005 to April 2006.

A multitude of strengths and challenges were raised by participants; however the three most common issues were:

1) Accessibility of Food

Some Manitobans do not have sufficient income to buy healthy foods, or stores do not offer good food at fair prices.



Staff and Steering Committee unveiled the Manitoba Food Charter at Rural Forum in Brandon. Photo by MAFRI.

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Eco-Network wins at 'YIP Olympics'

Anne Lindsey, Executive Director, attended a fun evening of presentations by the many student groups from city high schools involved in this year's Youth In Philanthropy (YIP) program—dubbed the "YIP Olympics". We were very pleased to be the recipient of a \$750 grant from the team at Shaftesbury High School, in support of our general operations. The Winnipeg Foundation once again sponsored this valuable and exciting program which gives hundreds of young people the opportunity to engage with charitable organizations of all stripes, and decide for themselves which ones are deserving of a portion of the \$5000 allocated to each school's YIP committee for this purpose.



The students are charged with researching local charities and booking site visits so that they can get a first hand look at who is involved with the charities, and the kind of work that they do. Every year, it is evident that the program provides a wonderful learning opportunity to the students involved, as well as providing a helping boost to the organizations that they choose to support. Thanks to the gang at Shaftesbury for their commitment to the environment, and their choice of the Eco-Network for a grant!

For more information about YIP, check out the Winnipeg Foundation's website: http://www.wpgfdn.org/prog_yip.php or call 944-9474.

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Organic Lawncare Project Downsized

We are sad to report that this summer's Organic Lawn Care Project will be considerably less active than it has been in the past. We received no funds from Provincial or Federal summer employment programs to run this year's project, considerably shrinking the already very modest budget for this initiative. We are very grateful for the continued support of the City of Winnipeg's Parks and Open Spaces Division, and for the support this year of the 3 councillors of the City Centre Community Committee: Donald Benham, Jenny Gerbasi and Harvey Smith, who are providing Per Capita Grants.

At time of writing, we are working on what the project might look like on a smaller scale. We hope to offer several workshops, though likely not as many as in past years. This reduction in funding comes at an ironic time, as more and more Winnipeggers are looking for information on chemical free lawn care, partly in response to more reports on the adverse health and environmental impacts of commonly-applied lawn care chemicals. Look for the schedule of workshops on our website in the near future. Also, look for our display at community events near you in the month of June.

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Eco-Network Steering Committee, 2004-2005

Allan Diduck, UofW Environmental Studies

Elizabeth Fleming, Member at Large

Amy-Hawkins-Bowman, Organic Food Council of Manitoba

Kristina Hunter, U of M, Faculty of Environment

Alana Lajoie-O'Malley, Eco-MAFIA

Joseph Prymak, Consumers for Responsible Energy (CoRE)

Lise Smith, Consumers Association of Canada, MB Chapter

Pete Walker, Manitoba Federation of Labour

A disappointment for Winnipeg, democracy and the environment

City Summit 2006

By Tom Young

In the time that Sam Katz has occupied the mayor's office, he has been regularly criticized for lacking a vision for the city. Enter the City Summit, a meeting May 3rd and 4th for 200 of the city's leaders to "examine Winnipeg's opportunities, key barriers to the growth and flourishing of our city and the well-being of its citizens". The Summit also had a youth-oriented component, the City Summit Speak Out!, put on by the Mayor's Office in mid-April.

The aim of the Summit was intended to have been the generation of a clear and confident policy direction for the Mayor, but a more pressing question would be the limited degree to which environmental issues were present in these discussions. Although it isn't a fashionable political topic these days, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that all of our social and economic concerns may soon pale in comparison to the problem of a failing environment.

A list of 58 different 'challenges'

Prior to the Summit, delegates were asked to consider a list of "58 different 'challenges' that our city could embrace to improve itself" and then identify their top choices. Of the 58 options, only one could be described as being explicitly environmental ("Lead other cities by example in environmental protection, conservation and waste reduction"), whereas some of them might actually be considered to have negative environmental intent ("Develop more land in and around the city in cooperation with neighboring municipalities to maintain the pace of growth"). In between were a handful of ideas that might be considered to have an implicit environmental agenda:

- Limit the city's growth and focus energy and resources on improving what we have.
- Fill vacant buildings and spaces to reduce the waste of existing infrastructure.
- Preserve parks and natural areas to offer a natural experience within city limits.
- Move people more creatively with a range of transportation alternatives.
- Make Winnipeg more pedestrian-friendly and neighbourhoods more walkable.

Thankfully, "maintaining the pace of growth" was not voted by delegates to be a priority. Those that were:

1. Develop clear, ambitious and measurable goals.
2. Grow local business first.
3. Embrace diversity.
4. Fix the city's basic 'deficits' (housing, infrastructure, etc.).
5. Clarify government's roles.

As Councillor Gerbasi described it: "pretty dull stuff!" None of these 5 prescriptions have an environmental focus, nor are they inspirational fare.

A common complaint by attendees of the event was that there was little opportunity for debate: discussion of issues between delegates was given less emphasis than listening to the speechmakers, resulting in proceedings that were relatively unresponsive to local ideas. A rundown of the list of speakers and what they discussed reveals variety, but very little emphasis on the environment: Leonard Asper talked about ways to raise new revenue; Kay Barnes, mayor of Kansas City, explored the benefits of downtown revitalization; Rudy Giuliani talked

about workshare and fighting crime.

One exception was Joe Berridge, a Toronto urban planner, who talked about Stockholm's approach to creating what they call an 'Eco-Cycle Society', where the city becomes an "entire energy system with all its inputs and outputs matched". Saying that cities need to identify their strengths and encourage creativity, he suggested Winnipeg might find a future in alternative energy systems, turning environmentally-minded experimentation into an economic driver.

Another exception was the presentation by Maureen Cruz and Michael Nava, two youth delegates who were selected to share the results of the Speak Out! One of their suggestions was to "embrace sustainability". A booklet showcasing the ideas of the youth event declared "we want to live in a city that's clean and green. Let's embrace alternative transportation, waste reduction, energy efficiency, infill housing and green buildings.

Let's participate in efforts to... create more active green spaces and protect significant natural areas".

As a delegate to the Speak Out!, I felt the event deserved some criticism, much of which could apply to the Summit itself: what criteria were used to choose the delegates?; were we there to represent all Winnipeg youth or just ourselves?; why did the Mayor tell us how important it was to listen to youth and then leave before we had a chance to say anything? But despite its drawbacks, the agenda of this event was driven entirely by delegates. We were asked to identify the problems Winnipeg faced currently, what we would like Winnipeg to be in the future, and offer suggestions as to how we could reach that ideal state.

Youth delegate priorities 'leagues ahead'

The priorities that we came up with were not exactly revolutionary, suggesting that Winnipeg revitalize its downtown, embrace sustainability, offer more and better choices in housing and transportation, and keep the city safe, among other ideas. If not revolutionary, however, they do seem very sensible, possibly... familiar? Jenny Gerbasi has observed that the ideas coming from youth sound very similar to the basic principles of Plan Winnipeg, a document produced with public input that is, in contrast to the Summit's five priorities, "leagues ahead of these kind of early thoughts about what we might do as a city and less vague than these notions".

I have to conclude that the City Summit was a huge disappointment on a number of fronts. From a democratic perspective, the Summit seemed to suggest that the gathering of ideas from Winnipeggers was its main hope. Yet the selection process for delegates was kept secret from the start, and local delegates to the event were not given much opportunity to speak their minds. From an environmental perspective, possibly the most pressing issue of our time played hardly any role in discussions—as one delegate told me, there was a "complete absence of any acknowledgement of our roots in the natural world". And, on top of its glaring omissions, the Summit didn't even generate any fresh, new ideas. Mayor Katz will have to keep searching.

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Illustration by David Henry

What's Happening

June 3—Manitoba Naturalists Society *11th Annual Great Bird Search* at Birds Hill Park. Get your pledge forms today by calling the MNS office at 943-9029.

June 3 & 4—*Orchid Festival* at Oak Hammock Marsh. Discover native and wild orchids with the help of local experts, videos, presentations, orchid plant sales, games, stories, displays and prizes. 10am-5pm. Presented by Native Orchid Conservation Inc. and Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre. Call 467-3300 for more info.

June 4—*Arbor Day in the Park* hosted by Coalition to Save the Elms. There will be a ceremonial tree planting, climbing demonstrations, sawmill demonstrations, children's rides, "Ask the Arborist", a walking tour of trees in the Park, a barbeque and musical entertainment for the whole family. Noon to 4:00pm in Assiniboine Park.

June 5—Winnipeg Vegetarian Association Dinner, *Celebrating Mondragon*. Tickets are \$15 for WVA members, \$16 for non-members. Taxes and tip included. Beverages extra. (Licensed.) Tickets are available at the restaurant or by calling Mondragon at 946-5241. Deadline for purchase/reservations and cancellations is Thursday, June 1. Mondragon Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 91 Albert St. 7:00pm. Call 946-5241.

June 18—*Insect Daze* at Living Prairie Museum. Guest speakers, insect displays and exhibits, guided hikes through the tall grass prairie, insect "refreshments" butterfly and bee nectar, chocolate covered insects, door prizes, games, and crafts. 10:00am to 5:00pm, 2795 Ness Ave. Call (204) 832-0167 for more info.

June 24—North Point Douglas Residents *Tree Planting*. 9am to 12:00 noon at Rover Ave, along the Red River. For info contact Julie Sveinson at 986-3549.

June 25—*A Walk for Animals* in support of The Winnipeg Humane Society at Assiniboine Park. Please come out and join us! All of the money generated from this event will be directed towards the Capital Campaign to create a new home for the animals. We need your help! Contact the WHS at 982-2037 for more info.

Late June—Independent Media Centre Winnipeg will be holding an information session for environmentally-concerned groups wishing to freely promote their activities. Write us at imc-winnipeg@indymedia.org to receive complete details.

Thursdays from July 6 to August 31—*Family Theme Days* at Living Prairie Museum. From prairie plants to incredible owls, new themes will be presented every Thursday in July and August. Programs may include storytelling, prairie walks, crafts, and/or games. Please call ahead for reservations. Programs are free, but donations are welcome. 11:00am to 12:00 noon, 2795 Ness Ave. Call (204) 832-0167.

Tuesdays from July 11 to August 22—*Prairie Walks* at Living Prairie Museum. Join naturalists for a leisurely prairie stroll. Discover the sights and sounds of the tall grass prairie during this 45 minute guided walk. Donations welcome. Hikes are every Tuesday morning. 11:00am to 12:00 noon. Please call ahead for availability (204) 832-0167.

July 22—Manitoba Naturalists Society *Natural Garden Tour*. View nine new and unique Winnipeg gardens. Begin in North Kildonan, move along through East Kildonan and end up in St. Boniface and Norwood. Tickets are \$10 each (open to adults and children 12 and up) for this SELF-DIRECTED tour. Information on each garden and the addresses and directions are included on the ticket. Carpools are suggested to avoid traffic congestion. For tickets call the MNS office at 943-9029.

July 29–August 3—Churchill Northern Studies Centre *Belugas in the Bay Learning Vacation*. Learn more about Manitoba's highly intelligent and vocal whales while living at an active research station. Cost: \$1000 (excluding travel to Churchill). All proceeds go directly towards supporting research at the CNSC. See www.churchillmb.net/~cnscc or call (204) 675-2307 for more details.

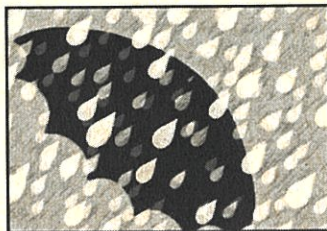
August 19 and 20—*Tall Grass Prairie Days* at Oak Hammock Marsh. Explore one of the last remaining pieces of land where bison used to roam free and learn how fire can help protect this fragile habitat. Make a crafts and watch a film or join in a canoe adventures in the marsh. Visits to the Tall Grass Prairie throughout the weekend. Call 467-3300 for more info.

August 24—Churchill Northern Studies Centre *Annual General Meeting*. 7:00pm, Pioneer's Gallery Churchill Town Centre Complex. Call (204) 675-2307 for info.

September 8 & 9—Winnipeg Humane Society *Tag Day*. An annual event in which volunteers collect donations on behalf of the WHS at local Safeway stores. It requires a large number of volunteers to make the event a success! Consider volunteering your time for two to three hours on September 8 or 9 to sell WHS tags. If you are not already a volunteer for the WHS, please call 982-2043 to register for Tag Day. By volunteering you can give back to an animal that may have touched your life.

September 10—*Spirit of the Prairie Celebration* at Living Prairie Museum. Join us for our annual celebration of tall grass prairie—its beauty, cultures and all its gifts. The event will include the release of a short eared owl by Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization at 1:00pm, bannock baking, prairie jeopardy, atlatl competition, prairie hikes, music, storytelling, door prizes and much more! 12:00 noon to 4:00pm 2795 Ness Ave. Call (204) 832-0167.

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Building a Fund for the Future

By Anne Lindsey

Recently, Kathy Taylor, a retired City employee, decided that she would like to make a substantial contribution to environmental work in our community. A self-declared practitioner of a simple lifestyle, and an ardent lover of nature, Kathy wanted her accumulated savings to make a difference in the city and province she has called home her entire life. She was attracted to the variety of programs and projects that the Manitoba Eco-Network undertakes, and was delighted to learn about our newly established Endowment Funds, where her contribution could grow over the years, and help to provide a lasting source of stable income for the organization.

Kathy chose to take out a life insurance policy with our organization as the beneficiary—the first time anyone has ever done that. And further, she also decided to make a monthly contribution, starting right away, to the Endowment Fund. Through her generosity, that fund is growing every day!

The beauty of Endowment funds is that eventually they can provide regular revenue for a group's operations, without drawing upon the capital that is invested in them. We are not at that point yet, but as Hugh Arklie of the Thomas Sill Foundation likes to point out, the best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the next best time is today (an ancient Chinese saying, according to Hugh). It applies equally well to trees, and to money.



Kathy Taylor. Photo by Heather Laird

benefit of being part of a large investment pool, and thus can earn higher than average rates of interest. Even better, the Foundation has a matching grants program, which with certain minimum levels of investment can greatly boost the capital assets of an Endowment Fund.

Fund started out with an investment of \$7,500

The MEN/TREE Legacy Fund started out with an investment of \$7,500. Within one year, other earmarked donations to the Winnipeg Foundation, including contributions from forest company Tembec, and from Peter Miller, as well as the re-

mainder of the TREE funds, brought the capital to twice this amount. This allowed for the Foundation to make its matching grant of \$7,500, and suddenly the fund had \$22,500! If the fund can grow by another \$7,500, the Foundation will make a second matching grant of the same amount. For the time being, interest earned on the fund will be capitalized into the Endowment itself, but we look forward to the day when the interest can begin being utilized for Manitoba environmental programs. The Winnipeg Foundation publicizes all the Agency endowments it holds in

its Annual Report, and donations may be made directly to the Foundation, in the name of the fund being supported.

According to Hugh Arklie, "if you build it, they will come". By that, he means that if an Endowment fund exists, it is an excellent vehicle for donors to be able to make a lasting and significant contribution to something they care about deeply. He can relate a number of stories, particularly from Community foundations around Manitoba, who have been the beneficiaries of some surprising donations over the years—because their Endowment funds were established and available. Hugh encourages all community groups to start their own Endowment Fund, even if it is very small to begin with.

And with that advice in mind, together with personal donations from Hugh and his wife, Val, the MEN Board decided to set up another Endowment fund option—all of whose profits will be explicitly directed to the general operating expenses of the Network. Kathy Taylor chose to direct her contributions to

see "Fund forFuture" on page 10 ►

First endowment established in 2004

Three years ago, Manitoba Eco-Network had no Endowment Fund, but today we have two, thanks to Hugh's encouragement, the foresight and generosity of Peter Miller and the organization he chairs, Time to Respect Earth's Ecosystems (TREE), and the Winnipeg Foundation.

The first endowment was established in 2004. TREE, an MEN member group, found itself with money in the bank that was not earmarked for any particular purpose. While TREE members wanted to keep the group going, they did not envision any immediate need for the cash that had accumulated, and decided it would be better off as an investment for an organization that needed funds to run its programs.

Peter, together with Hugh Arklie, who happened to be the group's Treasurer at the time, embarked upon a period of consultation with TREE members, the Eco-Network's Board and others in the community, to determine where the money should go. In the end, a decision was made to establish the Manitoba Eco-Network/TREE Legacy Endowment Fund as an Agency Fund at the Winnipeg Foundation. Eventual profits from the Fund are earmarked for two purposes: public participation, research and educational work relating to sustainable forest policies in Manitoba; and, for other activities supported by the Manitoba Eco-Network, to be disbursed at the discretion of the MEN's Board of Directors.

Why the Winnipeg Foundation? As Peter discovered, the Foundation has a pretty sweet deal for community groups who want to start an Endowment fund. An agency fund agreement means that the Foundation holds the capital of the fund on its own books, in trust for the Agency, and invests it as part of its large "consolidated fund". In this way, agency funds have the

Manitoba's Lands & Waters

ManitobaWildlands.org
EnergyManitoba.org



MANITOBA WILDLANDS

Getting off the Pesticide Treadmill

By Ian Greaves, Campaign for Pesticide Reduction! Winnipeg

Your lawn: you water it, you feed it, you cut it, you weed it and you water it, you feed it, you cut it, you weed it. Every once in awhile, you put lots of poisonous chemicals on it too. Such is the routine of thousands of lawn owners in the city of Winnipeg. Like a royal domain, any patch of lawn may represent riches imported from the far corners of the kingdom. Fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation systems, water, tools, gas, oil, labour, and the very seed itself, are convened for the purposes of growing greener grass.

Winnipeggers love their lawns and are satisfied with a rich chunk of pure grass. Our attachment to lawns has a long history and a fond one. A lawn is a gathering place for family, our neighbours, a place where we can engage in our favorite pastimes. The lush green grass feels good on the feet, and fresh cut grass smells good.

But there's a down side along with that smell of the fresh cut grass: the odour of the chemicals, both fertilizers and pesticides, that Winnipeggers will put on the lawn to keep it lush, thick, dark green and weed free.

Some lawn owners cringe at the site of dandelions popping up like blades of grass. In some yards, they are considered a curse. The lawn care industry wants you to believe that the ideal lawn is all grass, 100% weed and pest free, and continuously green. A culture has grown up around this ideal and created a large and steady market for lawn care services in its pursuit. Unfortunately, most of these services depend on chemical inputs for keeping the weeds down. Putting pesticides on lawns or turf for this reason is called using pesticides for cosmetic purposes. It's lucrative. Michel Gaudet, of the Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, in Quebec, estimates that pesticide application is about 9% of a lawn care company's business, but that it accounts for 56% of their profit.

Lawn care industry promotes the 'industrial' lawn

The lawn care industry thrives on and is probably the chief promoter of the 'industrial' lawn, and it's no small enterprise. Every year, sales of non-agricultural pesticides exceed millions of dollars in Canada, not counting the fees charged by lawn-care companies. Many people purchase and spray the pesticides themselves — and sometimes they really pour it on. It's estimated that two to four times more pesticide per hectare is applied each year in Canadian urban settings than in Canadian agriculture.

Across Canada, there is growing momentum of municipalities wanting to reduce significantly or outright ban the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. In Halifax, and Toronto, it is now illegal to use these chemicals. Many other cities have taken their first steps to ban use. In Quebec, the provincial government has taken the lead, and has begun the process of banning hundreds of pesticides commonly used on lawns. Here in Manitoba, Brandon City Council has taken its first steps with a ban on cosmetic pesticides in public spaces. (Residential uses are still permitted).

Winnipeg NDP MP, Pat Martin, has recently introduced a Private Members Bill, designed to put a moratorium on the use

of lawn care chemicals in Canada, until the industry can PROVE that these substances are safe. To date, the onus has been on citizens or governments to prove that they pose a danger. Martin's proposed bill ignited a storm of interest across the country, and early indications here in Winnipeg are that it would enjoy strong support in this community.

In many urban settings, exposure to herbicides is virtually ubiquitous, both indoors and out (residues can enter the home in the form of dust, or on footwear or clothing), and is a primary cause of concern for children. Because toxins are carried in the blood and in some cases can cross the placenta, many children receive their first exposures while still in their mother's womb.

Every time children are exposed to pesticides, they are exposed to complex mixtures of chemicals—the active ingredients, formulants (the other ingredients that help in the transport and application of the pesticide), contaminants (formed as by-products of the manufacturing process), and metabolic breakdown products. In some cases, the various formulants, contaminants and metabolites may be more hazardous than the respective active ingredients. These exposures are multiple, cumulative and may be additive or synergistic in effect.

Children are vulnerable to toxins

Children are not 'little adults'. Because of their smaller size, greater intake of air relative to body weight, recreational environment and developing physical and mental systems, children are particularly vulnerable to toxins. They are also less able to metabolize and excrete most toxic substances than fully-grown adults.

Even though lawn and garden chemicals are regulated by Health Canada, that does not necessarily make them safe. There are major inadequacies in the regulatory process including the fact that the majority of pesticides (and other toxic substances) in commercial lawn use today were evaluated based on the hypothetical healthy 70 kg adult male and not the 7-kg child, or the less-than-14-gram embryo. In addition, chemicals are almost never tested in the kinds of combinations in which they usually occur in the real world. The Ontario College of Family Physicians encourages people to avoid exposure to pesticides when possible due to epidemiological evidence pointing to possible links with many common diseases. The message to the public should be clear. To ignore the potential dangers of these chemicals is to place ourselves, one's own and other people's children and our pets in peril, in the privacy of our own homes and gardens.

In Rachel Carson's 1962 book "Silent Spring", an indictment of the use and overuse of chemicals in America, she argued that our culture had headed willy-nilly into the age of chemicals without considering the totality of nature. She demonstrated that processes within nature were working to undo the very things we hoped to achieve using pesticides, thereby causing large-scale imbalances.

Rachel Carson also demonstrated that it is not just acute incidents that we have to fear. The accumulations of small



Photo by Ian Greaves

Children's Environmental Health Project

By Alix Sobler

Parents' first concern is usually for the welfare and well being of their children. People spend money on child safety products and car seats, and vigilance about diet and nutrition begins during pregnancy. However, there are threats to children's health that parents do nothing about, most of the time, because they don't even know about them. The Children's Environmental Health Project, an organization headed by Kimlee Wong Morrisseau, strives to get the message out about the dangers in the environment, and the steps that can be taken to minimize the risk. "There is so much new emerging science from credible people," Morrisseau says, "It's amazing that the information really isn't out there."

The Project is funded by a grant from the Winnipeg Foundation, and is focused primarily on disseminating information that people need to make the right choices for their children and themselves. "One thing people don't know is there is lead in a lot of children's toys. The symptoms of lead poisoning are the same as ADD," says Morrisseau. "It's something that no one is looking at."



Illustration by David Henry

Studies are still being done about these and other possible contaminants in the day-to-day life of children, but Morrisseau says people shouldn't wait for the science to prove they are dangerous before protecting themselves. The group's guiding principle is the 'precautionary principle', best summed up by the statement of a group of scientists, academics and environmentalists—known as the Wingspread Statement—which says "...that where there are threats of harm or irreversible damage, a lack of scientific certainty will not restrict action from being taken to protect our environment and ourselves."

Spreading the word about under-publicized contaminants and dangerous exposures is not the only goal of the Children's Environmental Health Project. The project takes a holistic view on children's health, encouraging people to provide their children with access to green spaces where they can play in grass and among trees. It may seem obvious, but for children living in urban centers, these opportunities don't arise as often as they should. "Studies have shown that people in hospital rooms that look out onto green space have shorter recovery times than those that don't," Morrisseau says. She asserts that the positive effects of nature are important for developing children as well. "Access to green space leads to more social interaction and promotes community."

Houseplants remove contaminants and clean the air

In the brochure the Children's Environmental Health project provides, the group suggests growing houseplants rather than using air fresheners. "Not only will it help psychologically to have living things in your home, but plants by nature take out contaminants and clean the air, whereas air fresheners can be carcinogenic."

Kimlee is no stranger to dangerous contaminants lurking in the environment. She grew up in the Sagkeeng First Nation situated at the mouth of the Winnipeg River, immediately downstream of the Tembec Paper Mill. There were always problems with contamination, even though no warnings or concrete evidence were given. "It's hard to pinpoint the exact problems caused by those chemicals because there hasn't been much

research on the synergistic effects, when the chemicals combine in our bodies, but the elders said they had never seen so much illness as in recent decades," Morrisseau says. "Studies have shown that chronic low dose exposures to chemicals and contaminants are shown to be worse than one time high-dose exposures."

Morrisseau went on to get a degree in Wildlife Biology from Acadia University in Nova Scotia. After her studies she got a job working for a social justice group in South East Asia where she worked on environment and policy. During that time she came back to Canada for a visit and was asked to stay and work for the Sagkeeng First Nation as an environmental officer and on another project in environmental education. "I have always been interested in the environment and justice issues," she says, "but 8 years ago I had a child, and began to do my own research. When I found the data I became really alarmed and surprised that this information was not in the public sphere."

The Children's Environmental Health Project had its first big event two years ago at a conference that brought speakers in from all over Canada and the world to speak about these issues. Since then they have put brochures with this information all over the city in health centres, stores and community centres, and they have been meeting with health care professionals who want to know and do more on this front.

There has even been movement in the government. Pat Martin MP, (NDP) recently proposed a bill to put a moratorium on pesticides used in cosmetics, among other things. "People think that because these products are on the shelf they are safe to use, but many of these products haven't been tested and we don't know the effects they will have on children, who have increased vulnerabilities," according to Morrisseau.

Manitoba behind other provinces

The Project is trying to get some of this vital information into the Healthy Child Program run by the government. They are also working with health care professionals and with nursing instructors, and there is a very strong, energetic push to include some of the information in the nursing curriculum. Also, the Province has doubled their number of organic agriculture specialists.

Yet, despite all of this, Morrisseau says that Manitoba is far behind many other provinces in these issues. "I am trying to get this message across without people thinking it's all 'gloom and doom'." Morrisseau says. "I wish someone had told me some of these things when I was expecting." Morrisseau insists that women are children's first 'environment', and children are always born contaminated when their mother's bodies are contaminated. Toxins are dangerous both in the fetal stage and after birth, when children's lungs and brains are still at a critical state of development.

"I am not always a fan of the term 'environmentalist'. I approach these issues as a mother first. People have a right to know about these things. I don't want people to think of it as gloom and doom, but I do want them to take action."

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Food Charter

continued from page 1...

This is as true for people in Winnipeg's inner city as it is for those in more remote areas. Northern communities, especially, face the challenges of unreliable winter roads, high pricing, and long distance transport. People say they want to make healthy food choices but can face barriers such as low income, no community store or lack of healthy options.

2) Education about Food

People have a stated hunger for more information on nutrition; about growing and cooking food and the sharing of food knowledge with their families and children. There are concerns about where our food comes from, the clarity of food labeling and what available information is in the public interest. Manitobans want to know more about how food is produced and seek accurate information on the journey of food products from field to table.

3) Disconnect between Urban and Rural Communities

Manitobans display overwhelming support and pride in Manitoba farmers and want more opportunities to buy local food, from farmer's markets and local businesses in rural, northern and urban settings. There is a perception that local food is not available, displayed and labeled. People express a strong desire to have a relationship and connection to the people who are harvesting, growing and processing the food they eat.

Other issues by category include (in random order): Farm

and rural issues, food production and processing, fast-food culture, consumer demands, transportation, political and public will, health, community building, local food, environmental sustainability and ecology, economics, food safety, food waste, hunting, fishing, gardening, food in schools, genetically modified foods, and organic food.

A little more than one year later, the Manitoba Food Charter is nearing completion. After having consulted with more than 70 groups, the final draft of the charter is in essence a one-page statement summarizing what Manitobans believe their food system should look like. It includes a brief outline of the current context in the province, a vision statement, and guiding principles that could shape the movement towards a just and sustainable food system in Manitoba.

The final draft of the Manitoba Food Charter was officially launched at the Brandon Rural Forum in April 2006. A workshop held again at Crossways in Common in Winnipeg on May 10th, 2006, brought people back together from all around the province to reflect on the draft Charter, examine possible structures for an organization; and as a group, to determine what the priorities are for future action.

To read the draft Manitoba Food Charter please visit the Manitoba Food Security Website at <http://food.cimnet.ca>, or for more information about the Manitoba Food Charter project, please call the office at 1-877-947-3082.

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Growing with the Community Since 1985

Brandon and Area Pesticides Bylaw Greening Brandon

By Bill Paton and Jan Chaboyer

On March 28, Brandon City Council unanimously passed a bylaw to regulate pesticides in the City of Brandon. Many other cities and towns in Canada have pesticide bylaws, but Brandon is the first city in the prairie region to implement a bylaw of this nature. The Brandon bylaw has been criticized by some, including the Manitoba Green Party, because it is not comprehensive. We concede that the bylaw is modest in terms of its scope and its immediate impact, however we would argue that the bylaw and the process by which it was achieved, have created a foundation for on-going initiatives to improve health and the quality of life in Brandon.

The Brandon & Area Environmental Council (BAEC)

In the latter part of 2003, the Brandon and District Labour Council and local scientists, initiated discussions to ensure that environmental issues were included in local policy deliberations. Consideration was given to a wide range of options. It was decided that the most effective approach would be to establish an independent environmental watch dog organization to monitor city and regional policies, promote public discussion of environmental issues and make timely and substantive interventions to support or oppose public or private sector actions with positive or negative environmental consequences.

On January 26, 2004, seventy-five people from Brandon and surrounding communities attended a meeting and endorsed the creation of a new environmental organization. The main reasons cited in support of such an initiative were the health implications of the increasing use of chemicals in urban activities (pesticides) and agriculture (pesticides, growth hormones, and intensive-livestock operations), the threat from economic activities to the quantity and quality of water, and the ongoing degradation of the environment.

An interim executive was elected to prepare a constitution and bylaws and establish an action plan that would address the issues identified. Recommendations were presented at an annual general meeting on October 18, 2004. The membership formally adopted the name Brandon & Area Environmental Council (BAEC) and approved the mission to conserve and protect the natural and urban environment of Brandon and Area, to proactively build public awareness of environmental issues, and to promote citizen involvement in environmental policy development and decision-making. The October annual meeting gave the executive a mandate to continue these efforts and also recommended that priority be given to the preparation of a model pesticide bylaw for presentation to city council. The task was assigned to the agriculture sub-committee who put in a great deal of time through the fall and early spring looking at bylaws in other jurisdictions. Ian Greaves from Winnipeg came out and shared resources he had with the group. We also acknowledge lots of assistance and information from Mike Christie in Ottawa and Sandra Finley in Saskatoon. A draft bylaw was finally approved and released on Earth Day, 2005.

BAEC's Pesticide Bylaw

Before BAEC presented its proposed Bylaw to Brandon City Council on May 30, 2005, the debate on the issue was already well underway. Local pesticide firms in opposition to the proposed bylaw made presentations to City Council and

national organizations of firms in the pesticide business (Croplife Canada and the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers) contributed letters opposing a bylaw to the Brandon Sun. BAEC, local physicians, and many others wrote to counter the industry arguments.

The model bylaw presented to City Council on May 30 called for a phase out of the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes by the year 2008. Presenters in support of the bylaws stressed the negative health effects (on adults, children, pets and wildlife) and the tendency of regulatory agencies to be lenient with producers of chemical pesticides. They also noted the availability of safe and effective alternatives.

Council directed Brandon's administration to prepare an evaluation and response to the proposed bylaw. Rick Bailey, former manager of parks and recreation and now in charge of public works, was assigned the task of preparing the City response. Bailey formed a broad-based committee including representatives from Eco-Green, Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Conservation and BAEC.

The committee had a series of meetings that led to consensus on a final draft that maintained

the foundation of the model bylaw with greater flexibility to make it acceptable to industry representatives. In its final form, Bylaw 6825 bans the use of pesticides only on public grounds—health facilities, school grounds, personal care homes, day care centres, etc. It also allows people with pesticide sensitivity to have their residences placed on a register that would protect them from exposure to pesticide sprays. The bylaw also establishes a committee to monitor effects and recommend changes as required.

Concluding observations

BAEC members were fully aware that agreeing to join the City committee would require them to make concessions on the original proposed bylaw. However, it was recognized that successful negotiation of a bylaw endorsed by a broad-based committee was a first step that could pave the way for future adjustments as awareness grows, and industry looks to less harmful methods. It is apparent that to move forward with a green agenda aimed at improving community health and protecting the environment requires support from a broad base of citizens who approve of both objectives and methods.

The Success of BAEC and the implementation of the pesticide bylaw demonstrates how the community can play a leadership role in shaping public policy. The formation of BAEC and the pesticide bylaw was the result of the hard work and determination of the Brandon & District Labour Council, committed local scientists, students at Brandon University and citizens from all walks of life who want to curb activities that hurt the environment and the health of people in Brandon. We also greatly appreciate the assistance provided by Ian Greaves of Winnipeg, Mike Christie, and others in the green community in Canada and the United States.

Jan Chaboyer is the President of the Brandon & District Labour Council and Treasurer of the BAEC. Dr. Bill Paton is a Professor of Botany at Brandon University and President of the BAEC.

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Illustration by David Henry

Fund for the Future

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it. For now, it is invested at Assiniboine Credit Union, but if it grows enough, maybe it will become a second Agency fund at the Winnipeg Foundation.

It is our hope that other supporters and environmentally-concerned folk in the community will follow the examples of Kathy Taylor, Peter Miller and Hugh and Val Arklie, and consider making a contribution, whether it be today, or in the future by means of a bequest for example, to one or other of Manitoba Eco-Network's Endowment Funds. Another option to consider is the contribution of securities and stocks. The recent Federal budget removed the Capital Gains Tax on donations of securities to charities, thereby creating an added incentive for this kind of charitable support.

While donations to the Endowments cannot, in the short term, replace our day-to-day needs for basic operating funds, they do lay the foundation for a secure source of income in the years to come.

Contributions to Endowment Funds are eligible for a tax receipt. For further information about the MEN's Endowment Funds, please contact Anne Lindsey, Executive Director at 947-6511.

For further information about Agency Funds at the Winnipeg Foundation, please contact Cathy Auld, Director of Donor Relations at 944-9474, or check the Foundation's website: www.wpgfdn.org

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Canada

Pesticide Treadmill

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doses over long periods can constitute another source of danger. Pesticides are being sprayed everywhere for every conceivable purpose. Carson asked Americans to question the ultimate fate of these chemicals. When the smell is gone, where have the chemicals themselves gone?

Carson also wrote: "The contamination of our world is not alone a matter of mass spraying". Indeed, for most of us this is less of importance than the innumerable small-scale exposures to which we are subjected day by day, year after year. Like the constant dripping of water that in turn wears away the hardest stone, this birth to death contact with dangerous chemicals may in the end prove disastrous. Each of these recurrent exposures, no matter how slight, contributes to the progressive build up of chemicals in our bodies and so cumulative poisoning.

The City of Winnipeg should stop pondering the question of whether we need a municipal bylaw and act. We need to start the process of banning cosmetic pesticide use now!

Since this article was written, Pat Martin's Private Members Bill on the pesticide moratorium was proposed in Parliament. The motion was defeated by a vote of 87 to 207.

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Cheryl Crowe
ACU's SRI Specialist

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World Water Day in Winnipeg March 22

Local Actions for a Global Challenge

By Audrey McClelland, volunteer with KAIROS, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

World Water Day has been observed on March 22 every year since 1993. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the Earth Summit) designated this day as a time when nations might bring attention to and implement the recommendations of the United Nations' Agenda 21 dealing with the protection of and access to fresh water.

Stating that "Water is needed in all aspects of life," the signatories to Agenda 21 assert that their "general objective is to make certain that adequate supplies of water of good quality are maintained for the entire population of this planet, while preserving the hydrological, biological and chemical functions of ecosystems."

The World Water Forum is one of the places where governments and water companies come together to address issues of water access. The 4th World Water Forum took place in Mexico City this year from March 16 to 22. 'Controlling' is perhaps the word that best captures the ambitious objective that underlies the World Water Forum—an objective that is contested by many of the world's social movements. The Forum receives funding from the Canadian government and is organized by the World Water Council, which brings together major international financial institutions, a number of multinational corporations and different governments. Forum sponsors believe that privatizing water systems is still the best solution to the world's water dilemma.

Community control of water resources

At the previous World Water Forum in Kyoto in 2003, activists from around the world demanded universal access to drinking water and lobbied against the privatization of water systems. The 2006 Forum, whose theme is "Local Actions for a Global Challenge," promised to be even more hotly contested. KAIROS, Development and Peace, and other groups stood in solidarity with our southern partners at the Forum in pressing for community control of water services—not privatization that benefits multinational corporations.

Our vision of water governance is one where "communities have true decision-making power and where profit and privatization are not the driving forces—very different than that which

governments and water corporations pursued in Mexico City." (kairoscanada.org website).

World Water Day was celebrated in approximately 50 cities across Canada. Winnipeg's celebration took place in the courtyard of City Hall at noon in the sun and chilly breeze. Approximately 130 people came, some with colourful messages on



Photo courtesy of Lutheran Magazine.

placards. The program opened by honouring Mother Earth with song and drumming, then representatives of the Aboriginal community, KAIROS, Development and Peace, Council of Canadians, CUPE and city and provincial governments spoke briefly. There was an interlude with the Winnipeg Raging Grannies' satirical songs about bottled water and privatization. The hour ended with a solemn water ritual.

The event was planned with the help of Glen Koroluk of the Water Caucus at Manitoba Eco-Net-work and accomplished through the work of the members of the sponsoring organizations, including, Carolyn Garlich of the Council of Women of Winnipeg, Andre Goussaert and Diana Ludwick of Development and Peace, Margaret Maier and Florence Wiens of the Council of Canadians, Glenoria Molnar of CUPE, Chestor Rouleau and Wendy Maclean of St. Timothy's Parish, Dennis Lewycky and Lesley Hughes who helped with media, and Lorraine Dumont who reported from the World Water Forum in Mexico City.

Thanks to all those who participated in the noon hour program, moderated by Bill Harrison (in order of appearance): Aboriginal elder Art Shofley, City councilor Gord Steeves, Assembly of First Nations Regional Vice-Chair Katherine Whitecloud, ELCIC Bishop Ray Schultz, Diana Ludwick, Winnipeg Raging Grannies, Kevin Rebeck, Barry Hammond, Rob Atlemeyer MLA, and Sheila Madden and friends.

And thanks to City Councillors Mike Pagtakhan and Justin Swandel, who moved the Water Declaration and the rest of City Council who passed it without debate:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT this Council support in principle the statement put forth by the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, which states:

- Water is a sacred gift that connects all life;
- Access to clean water is a basic human right;
- The value of earth's fresh water to the common good takes priority over any possible commercial value;
- Fresh water is a sacred legacy, a public trust and a collective responsibility.

What might happen next? Reports from the World Water Forum tell us that water was not yet recognized as a human right by the powers that be, and our mayor has been heard talking recently about public-private partnerships regarding water and sewer systems in this city. There is more to be done if water is to be for life, not for profit. There are many ways to get involved. See www.kairoscanada.org and our links page for starters.

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Blue Lagoon's Winter Greenhouses

By Heather Laird

Just west of Winnipeg, in St. Francois Xavier, two unique greenhouses are slowly taking shape. When completed, they will combine energy efficiency with organic growing techniques. The owners, Lori Ann and Rene Regnier of Blue Lagoon Florascape, hope these new greenhouses will help them to grow organic produce even in the midst of a harsh Manitoba winter.

The new Blue Lagoon greenhouses combine several unique construction techniques and new combinations of existing greenhouse technology in an effort to make winter produce production in Manitoba more cost-efficient. This project is the culmination of years of work by the Regniers, and a symbol of their commitment to organic growing.

The Regniers bought the family farm near St. Francois in 2000, and began looking at ways to improve the property. Lori Ann was already interested in organics, as she had previously experienced chemical sensitivities to antibiotics and pesticides in conventional food. The Regniers attended an organic growers' conference in Winnipeg, and that helped confirm their decision to "go organic".

They started the long process that would eventually lead to their farm, now fancifully named "Blue Lagoon Florascape". The Organic Producers Association of Manitoba certification process involved a three-year transition period to allow the soil and water to clear of any chemical residues. The Regniers used a combination of manure, organic fish emulsion and green manure, including rotations of legume crops, to improve their soil. All fertilizers used for an organic farm have to be completely organic in source—even the animals that supply the manure have to be free of antibiotic treatments!

As they improved the farm, the Regniers were also looking for new ideas and sources of information to improve their growing techniques, and in 2001, they visited Wenkai Lieu, a vegetable grower near Elie, Manitoba. Lieu had built an unusual greenhouse using a kit from China—its main feature being a retaining wall containing sand to trap heat, an adaptation for growing in colder climates. The Regniers ordered the greenhouse kits, and this same design, with some modifications, is now being built on their Blue Lagoon Farms. Two greenhouses, each 106' x 22', are in the final stages of construction, and should be supporting new crops of vegetables later this spring.

Dr. Qiang Jhang, from the University of Manitoba's biosystems engineering department, will be running plant growth trials at the Blue Lagoon greenhouses this spring and next winter. The greenhouses will be divided into three sections, consisting of a completely unheated area, heat provided under the plants by electric mats, and an air heated area. The three trials will be compared for plant growth and cost.

The Regniers' greenhouse experiment just might lead to healthier food and an improved quality of life for many people in northern Manitoba.

Blue Lagoon Farms accepts volunteers throughout the growing season, and participates in the WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) program—volunteers are welcome for a few hours, a day, or longer periods. They also run a "shared farm" program where customers can receive a weekly organic food box during the summer months. For more info, please phone (204) 864-2724.

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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.

A supporting membership includes a subscription to **Eco-Journal** as well as notice of events and regular updates on issues and is open to any individual.

