

Manitoba Humanist



At the Rally
in support of
Manitoba
Bill 18 on
March 28th

Published by and for the
Humanists, Atheists and
Agnostics of Manitoba

*“We are beyond
belief”*



www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca



PUBLIC FORUM IN SUPPORT OF BILL 18

**Note: We are NOT
having a regular
meeting this month.**

Instead, we are hosting a public discussion on Manitoba Bill 18. The date is Saturday, April 13th, at 11:00 a.m., at the Carol Shields auditorium at the Winnipeg Millennium Library.

The event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited.

In case you're not familiar, a number of us at HAAM have been following the public debate quite closely, and we disagree with those groups who object to this anti-bullying legislation. Objections from certain faith-based schools largely boil down to claiming that their religious freedom is

being compromised by being forced to accept “gay-straight alliance” groups.

In short, we believe that protecting any and all students from bullying – including those who identify as LGBT – is the higher priority, and religious freedoms are in no danger.

We will have a panel of invited speakers who will each briefly address the audience, then we'll have a question and answer session with the audience.

The panel members include:

- Jim Rondeau, NDP MLA for Assiniboia
- Chad Smith, Executive Director, Rainbow Resource Centre
- Dr. Sharon Wilson,

UPCOMING EVENTS

All of our upcoming events can be found on page 5 of this newsletter.



Scott volunteering at Lunches with Love. See the story on page 4

Chairperson, Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church

- Donn Short, Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba
- Donna Harris, HAAM president, panel moderator

If you know anyone who would like more information about Bill 18, or is on the fence over the issue, please let them know about this event!

- Donna Harris

OUR NEW WEBSITE

It's been a while in development, but our new HAAM website is now live. It's at a new web address:

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

It still needs some tweaking and additions, but we're happy with how it's turned out. Please go and check it out!

BEING AN "OUT" ATHEIST

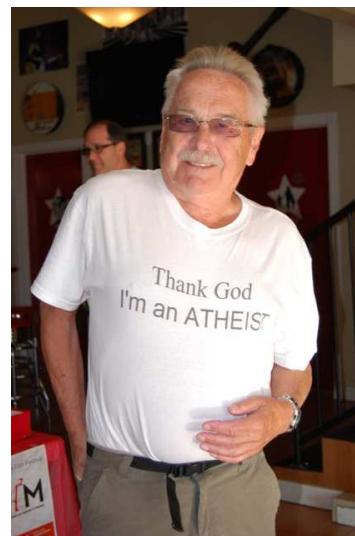
Following is the text of a presentation that Pat Morrow gave at our March meeting. Enjoy.

Being "out" as an atheist, and active as a secular group. What does that mean? Being out, being vocal and up front about what you believe, and don't believe.

I don't believe atheism is a personal choice, but coming out as one is. For some it can negatively affect their personal relationships, family, friends...their jobs. For me, I find it kind of liberating to tell people that I'm an ... atheist.

Not that I'm standing in shopping malls, glad-handing people and saying "Hi how you doing, Pat Morrow, atheist". I do think it is very important for people to understand that there are a lot more nonbelievers out there than they think. So, I encourage people to come out as atheists.

You don't have to stand on a street corner and announce it to the world...you can be much more subtle. Buy a shirt, wear a pin, slap a Darwin fish on your car. That said, I do have a sort of saying or motto when stepping into discussions over the big questions. "If you want to talk about what I don't believe in, I'm an atheist. If you want to talk about what I do believe in, I'm a humanist".



Being Active as a Secular Humanist Group

This brings me to my next point – on the topic of Manitoba's anti-bullying legislation, Bill 18, the public schools amendment act.

It bothers me that with just a couple of weeks' notice, the religious can muster up over a thousand people to support an indefensible position, and we can't get 40 people out to a meeting. What appears to be apathy is frustrating. But why? Is the group too small? I'm just one person? Maybe people don't want the public spotlight? Maybe we're just unfamiliar with the issues we're up against.

But here is something to think about. Gary Goodyear is Minister of State. In an interview with the Globe and Mail he was asked if he believed in the theory of evolution. He's quoted as saying "I am a Christian, and I don't think anybody asking a question about my religion is appropriate". Later, in another interview with CTV news, he clarified and said he did and then offered an explanation that would lead you to

believe that he is either a young earth creationist or has no idea what evolutionary theory is about.

Now that might not matter if he were Minister of Trade and Commerce. Or Minister of Labour. But he is the Minister of State for Science and Technology, and he has no idea how one of the basic theories of biology works.

This ministry has gutted the environmental sciences. Genome and stem cell research in Canada are stagnant. Scientists are effectively muzzled. Today in Canada, scientists employed by the government can only speak to the public through a government spokesperson, or official government press release.

Anti-bullying laws passed in Ontario after a long fight with the, for the most part, Christian right wing. In Alberta, it went the other way. There, anti bullying legislation was gutted of any mention of protections for LGBT youth. Why, you may ask? One group was offended by one particular clause. They said that would take away their religious freedoms. Their freedom to pass on their faith and values to their children. Supported by the Christian right and the Catholic Church and spearheaded by the Alberta Association of Home Schoolers and the Home Schoolers Legal Defence fund. Both are evangelical Christian organizations. The Alberta government capitulated and removed the portion of the offending passage.

Here is the offending passage of the Bill (Section 16): "all coursework is to promote understanding and respect for others and honour and respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act".

The Charter of Rights, as well as the Alberta Human Rights Act, protect LGBT individuals from discrimination, and this was a big problem for the religious right. Their freedom to discriminate was being infringed upon. And here in Manitoba with Bill 18 we are poised for a fight of our own, with the same opponents, using the same arguments.

Will we go the way of Alberta or Ontario? It may

be up to groups like ours.

We are faced with many issues here in our province. Whether it be charities that need our help or separation of church and state issues. And I've only begun to scratch the surface.

The short of it is, people like us – humanists, atheists, agnostics and secular supporters – need to make our voices heard.

HAAM needs to grow. We need more people involved, more people driving the bus. HAAM also needs people in the background, such as contributors to our newsletter, and to our website. Right now we are in need of a newsletter editor. We need people for pamphlet and handout design and development so we can get our information out there.

We also need input from members to develop position statements on what could be some very complex issues.

We also need people up front. Ones willing to speak with the public and the press in what I hope will be many future public events. HAAM already supports the LGBT community and participates in the gay pride parade. We sponsor and help organize the MASH film Festival, we've had an outreach event at the Morden Corn & Apple Festival and this year we'll also be at Manyfest. Of course, there is also our monthly meetings and our charity of the month.

We have many other ideas in the works, and this year we will get our name out there with the atheist bus campaign. If you find some or all of our events interesting, I'm asking you to get involved and become a member, if you're not one already.

We have started to move in new directions with the updated website and a new mission statement. At the same time, keeping the old and the sense of community this group has brought us.

I think it's an exciting time to be a part of HAAM, but we need the help, ideas and talents of our members to grow and move ahead.

To quote Christopher Hitchens, "If the human species is to rise to the full height that's demanded by its dignity and by its intelligence, we must all of us move to a state of affairs where that condition is permanent. And I think we should get on with it."

And I agree...let's get on with it.

- Pat Morrow

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO HAAM'S GARAGE SALE

This time of year is prime time for spring cleaning! While you're sorting and clearing out the junk, please keep our garage sale in mind!

HAAM will be holding a garage sale in Mitchell, Manitoba in the month of May (exact weekend to be determined), during that community's garage sale weekend. All proceeds from the garage sale go directly to our Atheist bus advertising campaign.

Early drop off of items within Winnipeg can be arranged! Please contact us at ham_news @ yahoo.ca for more information and details!

LUNCHES WITH LOVE

Lunches with Love is a local grassroots effort to provide the homeless with paper bag lunches. It's run out of one family's apartment, every second Saturday. On a recent Saturday, several of us volunteered and had a great time slinging tuna and making sandwiches.

The group can be found on Facebook, as the non-profit organization Lunches with Love.

- Donna Harris



So many lunch bags filled!



The artists at work

SAGE HOUSE

In Winnipeg, there are girls and women who walk the streets, at all hours and in all types of weather, exchanging sex for money. They're essentially out there all alone, generally driven by the need to feed an addiction, rather than lust or greed. In a city where the Aboriginal population hovers at around 10 (or 12) percent, the vast majority of street-level, sex trade workers are Aboriginal.

But there is at least one place where these women can go that provides a brief haven. **Sage House** is not very well known, but it has been around for many years. This large old house is a project run by Mount Carmel Clinic, and it's located on Dufferin Avenue. It's name comes from the Aboriginal tradition of using sage as an herb with healing power.



Officially, it's a street women's health, outreach and resource centre that provides a variety of services to women and transgendered women. Street-involved women can go to Sage House for a meal, or a shower, perhaps to do their laundry or access a computer. They can pick up bus tickets, condoms, or clean needles. Most importantly, they can also access nursing services, health screening, counseling and support.

So if most of the women in the sex trade in Winnipeg are Aboriginal, and most, if not all, have some kind of addiction, what chances do they have of leaving this life? Try and get a "real" job while you're living with an addiction. Make the odds even longer if you also have a criminal record. Let's say you decide to try and get help, only to find that the waiting lists for addiction treatment could be months.

And according to Sage House's program manager, there aren't clear gang ties here in Winnipeg, like there are in other cities. Meaning most women don't have a pimp or a biker-type managing their money, but they also don't have someone looking out for their physical safety. It would then come as no surprise that some of Winnipeg's missing women would come from this group.

If you'd like to learn more, or offer your support to Sage House, the web address is

<http://mountcarmel.ca/programs/community/sage%20house.php>

They have a wish list of items that they use

regularly, and if that's not possible for you, they would definitely appreciate any donations of time or money.

- Donna Harris

UPCOMING EVENTS

NB; THERE IS NO REGULAR MEETING IN APRIL. MONTHLY MEETINGS RESUME IN MAY.

Saturday, April 13, 2013

Public Forum/Discussion

Topic: Manitoba Bill 18 (Anti-Bullying Legislation)

Location: Carol Shields Auditorium, Millennium Library, 251 Donald Street

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Free, but seating is limited

Saturday, May 11, 2013

Regular Monthly Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue

Time: 5:30 pm

Speaker/Topic: Curt Hull, Climate Change Connection

Topic: "Climate Change: Glimmers of Hope from Winnipeg... and Beyond!"

Saturday, June 22nd, 2013

Solstice Party / Picnic

Location: Assiniboine Park, Picnic Site #3

Time: 5:00 pm

Executive:

Donna Harris, President
Heather McDonell, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Allison Nelson, Secretary

Members at Large:

Scott Burton
Cheri Frazer
Diana Goods – HAAM Librarian
Pat Morrow
Jeff Olsson
Jake Peters
Grant Rogerson

Newsletter Editor:

Donna Harris
ham_librarian@yahoo.ca

We're on the Web!

See us at:

mbhumanistsatheists.ca

HA²M



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

Individual Membership \$30.00
 Individual Limited Income \$10.00
 Household Membership* \$50.00
 Household Limited Income \$15.00

* After July 1st, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year.
After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA²M of:

\$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
 Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Humanist Association of Manitoba and mail to:
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane,
Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HA²M meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.