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Manitoba Human Rights Commission Welcomes  
Supreme Court's Decision On Same-Sex Marriage

**Winnipeg** - The Manitoba Human Rights Commission welcomes today's decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the marriage reference case, which endorses the Federal Government's proposal to extend the right of civil marriage to same-sex couples.

"It paves the way to end the discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation inherent in the institution of marriage as it stands," said Janet Baldwin, Chairperson. "This is, indeed, a landmark decision in the history of equality rights in our country."

In regard to the freedom of religious officials to refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs, the Court noted that "human rights codes must be interpreted and applied in a manner that respects the broad protection granted to religious freedom under the *Charter*."

Ms Baldwin said that the Commission has worked to advance equality rights for same-sex couples in areas such as spousal benefits, adoption and property rights. "We have long emphasized that the right to equal marriage was the heart of the matter," she noted. "We now urge Parliament to move forward as quickly as possible to fulfill the government's responsibilities with respect to marriage and this decision."

Ms Baldwin said that it is fitting that this decision was released the day that the Manitoba Human Rights Commitment Award was given to Chris Vogel and Richard North, who have worked tirelessly for decades to end discrimination based on sexual orientation in marriage and in spousal benefits. "We recognized their contribution to the advancement of equality rights at our International Human Rights Day Luncheon earlier today," she said.

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