

United Way gift an 'investment' in city's health Fundraising head makes pitch to business

By Murray McNeill

IT was akin to a politician telling a roomful of voters he wouldn't be asking for their votes.

The chairman of the one of the city's largest annual fundraising drives the United Way campaign stood up in front of a roomful of business leaders yesterday and told them he wouldn't be asking them for any donations this year.

"A donation implies a short-term perspective," Hartley Richardson told about 300 people attending a Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the downtown Fairmont Winnipeg.

"An investment, on the other hand, implies a long-term perspective," he added. "So I thought it would be more appropriate to talk about an investment opportunity and the United Way is a good investment opportunity for your companies."

The president and CEO of James Richardson & Sons Ltd. and chairman of the United Way's 2004 campaign went on to explain that when corporations and individuals donate their time and money to help the United Way, they are really investing in the future of their community because of all the community service organizations the United Way funds: things like palliative care homes, talking-book services for the blind, and after-school drop-in centres.

"The list goes on and on," he added.

He said all of those things help to make Winnipeg a better place to live and work, which makes it easier for businesses to attract and retain quality workers. It also helps to create in Winnipeggers a growing sense of pride and passion about their city, he added, and a renewed sense of hope for its future.

To illustrate his point, Richardson described how about five years ago he asked a group of his son's middle-school friends if they were planning to remain in Winnipeg and attend university here when they graduated from high school. Almost to a one, they said they would likely be leaving to attend university somewhere else because they saw no future for themselves here.

Then a few months ago, as they were getting ready to celebrate their graduation from high school, Richardson asked those same friends if they were still planning to leave Winnipeg.

"This time almost all of them indicated they are staying and going to university here," he added. He said when he asked them what made them change their minds "they said 'We never wanted to leave. The difference now is we no longer feel we have to.'"

Richardson said that in the last five years he's seen signs of a similar sense of renewed hope and pride among other Winnipeggers he has encountered.

In an interview following his speech, he said he believes the change in attitude is due in part to some of the positive, physical developments that are taking place in Winnipeg things like the new downtown sports and entertainment complex, the new Millennium Library, the new, world-class pedestrian bridge linking St. Boniface to the downtown and the development along Waterfront Drive.



"A donation implies a short-term perspective," Hartley Richardson told about 300 people attending a Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the downtown Fairmont Winnipeg.

"But those are only meaningful when you combine them with the positive feeling that people have about their community," he added.

Referring again to the change in attitude among his son's friends, he said, "That, to me, speaks to people's belief that we are moving forward and there is a bright future here and you don't have to go elsewhere."

In concluding his pitch for "investment" dollars from the business community, Richardson told the luncheon a contribution of time and money to assist the United Way will indirectly help to build upon that renewed sense of hope in Winnipeg's future. "It benefits all of us," he added. "No one is excluded."

The prolonged round of applause he received at the end of his address indicated Richardson's speech struck a chord with many in the luncheon audience. Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce president Dave Angus said later that it certainly did with him.

"He talked in business terms," Angus said, "and that's why I liked it."

The United Way of Winnipeg's 2004 fundraising campaign was officially launched earlier this week. This year's goal is to raise a record \$15.7 million. Last year, a record \$15 million was collected.

murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca

Click [here](#) to read the PDF transcript of Hartley T. Richardson's address to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.