

Peter Nares plans to retire as head of SEDI this fall

The search for a new leader has begun; Nares to be honoured at the fifth SEDI Awards gala, November 3, 2010

May 18, 2010 - Social and Enterprise Development Innovations Founder and Executive Director Peter Nares today announced that he plans to retire as head of the organization this fall. Rebecca Finlay, Chair of SEDI's Board of Directors, said the search for the new Executive Director has begun and that Nares will remain as Executive Director until the transition is complete.

Following are statements from Rebecca Finlay and other SEDI stakeholders about Peter Nares' legacy, as well as a statement from Nares about his journey with SEDI.

Statement from Rebecca Finlay, Chair of SEDI's Board of Directors:

"A pioneer of social innovation, Peter created SEDI in 1986 based on his vision that all Canadians should have opportunities to build better futures for themselves. He envisioned an organization that would be a vehicle for generating, testing and bringing to scale new and effective ideas to reduce poverty by fostering economic independence. What makes Peter's work unique is that it bridges the gap between what works in communities to effective policy development and ultimately, large scale results.

"In partnership with businesses, governments and over 800 community groups across Canada, SEDI has transformed hundreds of thousands of lives by introducing breakthrough ideas that catalyzed public policy innovations. Examples include: the Canada Learning Bond, the Registered Disability Savings Bond, the Self-Employment Benefit program, and, most recently, the federal government's Task Force on Financial Literacy.

"SEDI has also been a principal driver behind efforts to promote financial literacy and saving in Canada with the award-winning Independent Living Account, the *learn\$ave* program, the Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy, and the TD Financial Literacy Grant Fund.

"In 2008, Peter's remarkable achievements were recognized with an Ashoka Senior Fellowship. The international award goes to outstanding social entrepreneurs who have tackled major social issues with new ideas for wide-scale change.

"Peter's vision will continue to inspire SEDI's efforts to build a truly inclusive economy in which everyone has the opportunity to become financially literate, save and invest in their dreams."

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Statement from Robert Friedman, General Counsel, Founder and Chair of the Board of the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED), a national nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., and SEDI's sister organization in the United States:

“Peter Nares and SEDI have been opening the doors to economic opportunity not only for Canadians, but for high-ability, low-income people worldwide for more than two decades.

“With Peter’s leadership, SEDI and CFED joined to sponsor the first bi-national conference on self-employment in 1989, giving impetus to microenterprise development in both countries. During the last two decades, Peter and SEDI worked alongside CFED to pioneer the asset-building and matched savings movement in Canada, the U.S. and beyond.

“Peter’s model of humble, enlightened and committed (some might even say stubborn) leadership has been an inspiration to a whole generation of economic development pioneers on both sides of the border. Asset-building, financial capability, youth leadership and microenterprise have now become global phenomena.

“SEDI and Peter have provided continuing inspiration, guidance and affirmation for our work to broaden economic opportunity in the U.S. We are deeply grateful.

“Above my desk I have a picture of Jawaharlal Nehru with the quote, ‘In a gentle way, you can change the world.’ Peter has.”

Statement from Ursula Menke, Commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC):

“It has been a pleasure to work with Peter over the past couple of years, as we shaped our shared vision of a more financially literate population. Peter, as the Founder and Executive Director of SEDI, co-hosted with FCAC two highly successful conferences on financial literacy that put this issue on the map for Canada.

“Through his strong leadership and clear vision, he has helped to shape financial literacy programs that are reaching Canadians in their own communities. He has helped to build a vast network of partners, and I am pleased to be one of these key partners who are helping Canadians build the knowledge, skills and confidence to make sound financial decisions.”

Statement from Charles Coffey, Officer of the Order of Canada:

“As I criss-cross this great country I meet two types of people – those that get it and those that don’t.

“Those that do, like Peter Nares, embody the essence of enlightened, compassionate leadership. Peter has given voice to those who have none. He has fought for social justice for the disadvantaged when few would, and he has set a standard of excellence that will be a lasting legacy.

“Peter has always taken the high road in all his dealings with the public, private and NGO sectors, simply because he finds it less crowded up there. He has indeed made a difference.”

(more)

Statement from Peter Nares, SEDI Founder and Executive Director:

“My entire career with SEDI has been continually inspired by the courage and tenacity of the low-income and unemployed Canadians we have tried to support. Their remarkable capacity to create, contribute and produce in the face of overwhelming obstacles has been the single most motivational aspect of my journey with SEDI.

“It is also true that our work would not have been possible if it were not for the hundreds of community organizations, governments and companies that have partnered with us throughout these years and shared our vision of building a financially-inclusive Canada.

“I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to share this journey with extraordinary community, government and business leaders. I hope you will continue to support and make SEDI what it is, a social innovation powerhouse moved by different sectors working together to turn good ideas into solutions to combat poverty.

“I will retire confident that SEDI is well-positioned to continue to produce breakthroughs in social programs and policies in the years ahead and under new leadership. I am also confident that we have put together the best team in the social innovation business, a passionate team that will continue thinking outside the box to make a real difference for Canadians living in poverty.”

Peter Nares’ legacy will be honoured at the fifth SEDI Awards (www.sedi.org/sediawards), to take place on November 3, 2010, at the Arcadian Court, Toronto.

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