

PRESS RELEASE

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## NEI Investments Announces 2019 Corporate Engagement Focus List

*Responsible lending, solutions for ocean plastic waste and digital rights among this year's commitments to responsible investments through strategic dialogues*

**Toronto – January 31, 2019** - NEI Investments, Canada's leading provider of Responsible Investment (RI) solutions, today announced the 2019 Corporate Engagement Focus List, an annual program of targeted, in-depth dialogues with companies on specific environmental, social and governance (ESG) themes and challenges impacting the asset management industry. NEI's Corporate Engagement Focus List is the most extensive program of its kind in Canada and will target approximately 30 companies this year.

"We are committed to helping our clients grow wealth while advancing the ESG performance of companies wherever we invest," said Fred Pinto, SVP, Head of Asset Management at NEI Investments. "In our view, this year's program focuses on the three most pressing areas for strategic and tactical dialogue in terms of emerging risks and opportunities."

According to research commissioned by the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), companies that were targets of successful ESG dialogues experienced improved profitability.

The 2019 Focus List dialogues include:

### ***Finding Solutions for Ocean Plastic Waste***

Scientists predict oceans will contain more plastic than fish by 2050 if no action is taken. The largest single category of plastic use (25 per cent) is packaging from products manufactured by major consumer brands. Through the Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance, NEI is participating in global dialogues with **Unilever, Pepsi, Nestlé** and **P&G** to explore new ways to address the plastic waste problem.

### ***Responsible Lending***

If all companies – listed and private – are to advance towards sustainability, both investors and lenders need to take ESG considerations into account in financing relationships. That is why NEI Investments engages with banks to enhance their responsible lending due diligence approaches. NEI will continue to engage with the largest Canadian banks on this issue – **BMO, CIBC, RBC, Scotiabank** and **TD**.

### ***Responsibility to Respect Digital Rights***

In 2018, abuses by companies in the new digital economy dominated the headlines. As part of the firm's wider human rights commitment, NEI led a global investor statement on corporate accountability for digital rights, including on-line privacy and security, signed by over 40 investment institutions. In 2019 NEI will take a lead with companies including **Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet (Google)** and **Facebook** in the follow-up collaborative engagement.

"The main objective of the Corporate Engagement Focus List is to reduce risk to the long-term investment value of companies from ESG challenges, while helping to build an economy that works for people and the environment," said Michelle de Cordova, Director, Corporate Engagement & Public

Policy at NEI Investments. “We’re looking forward to engaging with this year’s companies to create positive change for our investors.”

In 2019, NEI will also give special priority to corporate engagement to advance impact on the following five sustainable development goals:

- **Good health and well-being;** continue to work with investors for Opioid Accountability and support the Access to Medicine index.
- **Reduced inequalities;** explore ways to build on earlier engagement on topics relating to income inequality and board diversity, including workforce concerns in corporate operations and supply chains, responsible corporate tax and excessive executive compensation.
- **Responsible consumption and production;** participate in the Circular Economy Leadership Coalition alongside companies active in the Canadian market, and the Plastic Solutions Investor Alliance dialogues with global brands as well as continue to engage on environmental and social challenges in the supply chains of consumer companies.
- **Climate action;** take an active role in the global Climate Action 100+ collaboration, follow-up with Canadian companies as they begin to address the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure, and explore opportunities for lower-carbon economy transition.
- **Peace, justice and strong institutions;** continue to help steer the new Investor Alliance on Human Rights, take leadership roles in advancing responsible lending, build on earlier work on business ethics and consumer trust in digital rights and cybersecurity, and increase focus on the ESG-readiness of Canadian boards.

## 2018 Focus List Reporting

NEI continues to lead the development of responsible investment approaches that add value to the firm’s investors in Canada, including exclusionary screening, ESG evaluations, corporate engagement, impact investing and sustainability-themed investment. In 2018, NEI engaged 118 companies worldwide in intensive dialogue on ESG topics (representing 40 per cent of the firm’s year-end equity holdings), of which 83 were responsive, and 75 showed progress or achievement of the program’s objective.

Specific objectives are established for the year and reported on [neiinvestments.com](http://neiinvestments.com). Regular updates on each company are published as well as an annual compilation of accomplishments on corporate engagement and other program areas.

As active shareholders, NEI can deploy many strategies to advance change within companies. The choice of strategy often depends on how responsive a company is to the firm’s initial approach. The process is flexible and the strategy may be adapted as necessary with changing circumstances.

To view the complete 2019 Corporate Engagement Focus List showing the selected companies and the specific ESG issues to be addressed with each, please visit [neiinvestments.com/](http://neiinvestments.com/)



#### ABOUT NEI

NEI provides a full range of investment solutions to help Canadians achieve their goals. With a deep commitment to Responsible Investing, we deliver the expertise of global money managers in a fund lineup that includes total portfolio solutions and diverse standalone mandates. NEI manages approximately \$8 billion in assets and is a member of the Aviso Wealth group of companies. Visit [neiinvestments.com](http://neiinvestments.com) for more information.

#### ABOUT AVISO WEALTH

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