



Responsible Investment Association

Responsible Investment Association launches the RI Academy and advisor certification program

Professional training program to educate financial advisors and other financial professionals on best practices in environmental, social, and governance risk analysis

[Toronto, January 28, 2014] – The Responsible Investment Association (RIA), the definitive organization on responsible investment in Canada, today announced the launch of the RI Academy. The new professional training program will offer financial advisors and other investment professionals online courses on risk management strategies associated with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) analysis, and the growing field of responsible investment (RI).

"As investors and financial services professionals, we can no longer ignore the impact a company's behaviour has on its license to operate, and therefore its value," said Deb Abbey, CEO of the RIA. "Whether it's questionable environmental practices or vulnerability from poor supply chain management, these issues have a real impact on a company's valuation."

Courses offered through the RI Academy are eligible for CFA, Advocis and IIROC CE credits, and teach advisors best practice approaches to responsible investment and risk management. According to a 2011 Environics study commissioned by NEI Investments, 47 percent of investors say they are more likely to invest with advisors who are able to discuss RI investment options. The courses are designed to give advisors the tools to meet this increasing demand.

Through key principles and real life case studies, the courses clearly establish the business case for responsible investment. They demonstrate how the integration of environmental, social and governance issues into the management and selection of investments in mutual funds and other portfolios can reduce risk and enhance returns.

At the same time, the RIA is launching the first RI Advisor certification program in Canada. Successful completion of the RI Essentials course will be required for advisors seeking certification.

"Over the past few years we've seen a growing demand for RI across our client base," said Ross Campbell, CFP, R.F.P., of Assante Capital Management. "We expect these courses to provide our industry professionals with the know-how necessary to respond to these demands, and to stay ahead of the curve in investment risk management."

The launch of the RI Academy and an official RI Advisor certification program are the logical next steps in the development of RI in Canada, both from a professional services and an investor education perspective. These initiatives are also part of a rebrand of the Responsible Investment Association, formerly known as the Social Investment Organization.

"We decided to change our name to be more in line with the terminology used by the growing community of global investors, governments, and academics who are making responsible investment a priority," said Abbey. "The name change, the RI Academy and certification are all part of a strategic effort to capitalize on the momentum behind ESG analysis as an essential risk management strategy, and bring it to the forefront of mainstream financial conversations."

As part of the evolution of the organization, NEI Investments, widely recognized as the Canadian leader in the RI space through its Ethical Funds family, has signed on as an exclusive sponsor of the RI Academy for the next three years.

NEI Investments

T: 416-594.6633 F: 416.594.3370

NEIinvestments.com Toll Free: 1.888.809.3333

151-1200 Yonge St Toronto, Ontario M5C 2W7

"The future is bright for RI in Canada," said John Kearns, CEO, NEI Investments. "ESG is no longer a niche tactic for a few managers – it is an essential risk management strategy. We are excited to continue our work in educating the industry about environmental, social and governance issues in risk management and we look forward to working with the RIA to bring ESG best practices to the mainstream in financial services."

For more information on the Responsible Investment Academy, and the RI Advisor certification program visit www.riacanada.ca.

ABOUT THE RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT ASSOCIATION

The Responsible Investment Association (RIA) is the leading membership organization representing the Responsible Investment Industry in Canada. Founded in 1990 as the Social Investment Organization, its members are mutual fund companies, investment managers, financial institutions, investment advisors, research firms and others interested in the practice and promotion of Responsible Investment.

Responsible Investment is the integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into the selection and management of investments. The integration of ESG factors can provide superior risk adjusted returns and positive societal impact. There is a strong and growing RI mutual fund industry in Canada with outperforming funds in every major fund category.

The RIA has offices in Toronto and Vancouver.

ABOUT NEI INVESTMENTS

NEI Investments is a national investment firm with approximately \$6 billion in assets under management. It offers Canadian retail investors unique access to top independent money managers through high quality investment solutions in two fund families, NEI Ethical Funds and NEI Northwest Funds. Its products provide investors with a full range of investment management styles as well as conventional and socially responsible investment choices.

NEI Investments is 50% owned by the Provincial Credit Union Centrals and 50% by Desjardins Group, united in their focus to strengthen and serve the cooperative financial movement across Canada. This backing of experience and resources allows NEI Investments to actively support business growth in these networks as well as independent advisor channels.

NEI Investments has offices in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

Media contact:

Colin Nikolaichuk
MAVERICK Public Relations
416.640.5525 ext. 253
colinn@wearemaverick.com

NEI Investments

T: 416.594.6633 F: 416.594.3370
NEIinvestments.com Toll Free: 1.888.809.3333
151-1200 Yonge St Toronto, Ontario M5C 2W7