

PRESS RELEASE

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November is Financial Literacy Month

Desjardins launches LetsThinkSRI.com, a website for socially responsible investing

Lévis (Qc), November 17, 2014 – To mark Financial Literacy Month, Desjardins Wealth Management has launched LetsthinkSRI.com, a website designed to make information about socially responsible investing (SRI) more accessible. The platform is an extension of Desjardins Group's Education and Cooperation Program, for which Desjardins has earmarked 1% of its annual surplus earnings.

Responsible consumption continues to be a growing trend since its adoption in 2013 by 65.4% of Quebecers, a 3.1% annual increase per the [Baromètre 2013 de la consommation responsable](#). To 62.8% of the respondents, responsible consumption means buying products and services that are good for the environment, whereas 50.9% would like to see a more equitable sharing of resources across the population. According to the study "[Les Québécois et l'investissement socialement responsable : portrait 2014](#)," which was sponsored by Desjardins Group and conducted by the *Observatoire ESG UQAM de la consommation responsable (OCR)* last February, 84% of Quebecers had either never heard of socially responsible investing (SRI) or had heard of it but weren't familiar with the concept.

"This information deficit has allowed Desjardins to advance its extensive SRI platform, designed to inform investors and help them make sound investment decisions," said Rosalie Vendette, senior SRI advisor with Desjardins Wealth Management. "When investors hear about SRI, more than 50% of them show an interest in this type of investment." According to the OCR study, this is not surprising; 92.1% of Quebecers consider pollution a top priority, 89.1% are concerned about human rights and 88.9% see corruption as a major issue.

Shareholder engagement serving people

The LetsthinkSRI.com platform contains articles, videos and provides definitions—including one for shareholder engagement—as well as figures on environmental, social and governance issues of interest to citizens. This financial education site shows how socially responsible investing has become a driver for the economic, social and environmental development of populations here and around the world. Here's a sample of what's on the site:

- In the United States in the 1970s and in Quebec in the 1990s, religious communities played a seminal role by demanding to see the books of companies in which they were investing. This was instrumental in the boycotting companies with operations in South Africa still embroiled in Apartheid.

- Today, nearly 1.2 billion people cannot access clean drinking water and more than 2.4 billion do not have access to acceptable sanitation; these stark realities lead to three to five million deaths every year.
- The First Nations Peoples of Canada rank 63rd in the world for quality of life.
- Close to 160 million girls and boys aged 5 to 14 around the world spend their days working. This represents one out of six children.
- Uzbekistan has caught the attention of the media in recent years for its questionable practices in the cotton trade. In 2013, the Responsible Sourcing Network's *As You Sow* campaign resulted in a boycott supported by 136 international companies and clothing brands.
- A report published by the Ontario Securities Commission in 2013 about the representation of women on boards and in senior management showed that they held only 10.5% of executive positions in companies listed on the S&P/TSX Composite Index and the S&P/TSX Small Cap Index.

Assets invested in Desjardins's SRI funds grew 402% between the end of 2009 and the end of 2013. In 1990, Desjardins launched its first SRI product, the Desjardins Environment Fund and 2014 will mark the fifth anniversary of SocieTerra portfolios.

About Desjardins Group

[Desjardins Group](#) is the leading cooperative financial group in Canada and the fourth largest cooperative financial group in the world with assets close to \$ 227 billion. It has been rated one of Canada's top 100 employers by Mediacorp Canada. To meet the diverse needs of its members and clients, Desjardins offers a full range of products and services to individuals and businesses through its extensive distribution network, online platforms and subsidiaries across Canada. The group has one of the highest capital ratios and [credit ratings](#) in the industry. In 2014, Desjardins was named the fourth safest bank in North America by *Global Finance* magazine and the second strongest bank in the world by *Bloomberg News*.

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