

NOMINATION FORM: Global Business & Interfaith Peace Awards

Note: Nominations are open to CEOs (present or past) of companies who have championed interfaith understanding and peace.

Nominee Contact Information

1. Nominee Full Name: Abdo Ibrahim El Tassi, C.M., O.M., LL.D.
2. Corporate Title: President and CEO
3. Company Name: Peerless Garments LP
4. Company Headquarters Location (Country): Canada
5. Engagement with the UN Global Compact and/or the Religions Freedom & Business Foundation*
 - ☐ Company is a signatory of the UN Global Compact
 - ☐ Company has joined Business for Peace
 - ☐ Company has signed the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's pledge to protect freedom of religion
 - ☒ Company intends to join one or more of the initiatives listed above in the next six months, please specify M. El Tassi is considering acceding to all three

* Nominees are invited to:

1. join the [UN Global Compact](#) and its [Business for Peace](#) platform and,
2. make the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's [corporate pledge to protect freedom of religion or belief](#) (FoRB)

Nominator Contact Information

1. Nominator Full Name: The Rev. Prof. Dr. James Christie
2. Corporate Title: Director
3. Company Name: Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy
4. Email Address: j.christie@uwinnipeg.ca
5. Phone Number: 204-988-7683
6. Relationship to the Nominee: Long time colleague

Please submit a Biography of the Nominee (max 200 words)

Abdo El Tassi is a well-known businessman and philanthropist who works tirelessly to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in Winnipeg, nationally and globally. Abdo has made Winnipeg his home since 1969 and has been recognized as a leader in business, culture, education and interfaith relations. He gives generously of his time and wealth to many deserving causes, especially educational and humanitarian. His door is always open

to those in need; help in finding a job, housing or counseling to new Canadians. Giving back to his nation, his community and the wider world is fundamental to his personal beliefs and his adherence to Islam. The success he has achieved has provided him the opportunity to reach out to others. First and foremost a family man, he has made the world his family, and the children of the world his children. A full curriculum vitae is attached.

Information about the policy, programme or initiative

1. Please describe a policy, programme or initiative that the Nominee has launched or spearheaded to advance the company's efforts to champion interfaith understanding and peace (max 300 words)

Mr. El Tassi's efforts, reflected in corporate policy, are also the individual contributions of a committed philanthropist in the Muslim tradition. Of special note is the corporate conviction and policy of hiring persons of every faith tradition, and maintaining harmonious and respectful relations with all.

2. Which category or categories does the policy, programme or initiative fall into:

- ☐ Core business
- ☒ Social investment & philanthropy
- ☐ Advocacy and public policy engagement
- ☐ Partnership and collective action

3. Does the policy, programme or initiative address any of the following related to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)¹:

- ☐ Promote sustainable and innovative business through protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)
- ☒ Non-discrimination and/or non-harassment on the basis of religion or belief
- ☒ Religious accommodation and inclusion
- ☒ Protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in the community
- ☐ Other (describe below, max. 25 words)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

4. Please describe the objective of the policy, programme or initiative and the need, goal or gap that it was designed to address. (max 200 words)

Mr. El Tassi's goal as a businessman and a member of the Arab community in Canada has been to build a better life for his family, his employees and newcomers to Canada. He has dedicated himself to building bridges to promote tolerance and harmony between and among our multicultural and Multifaith communities. With the general collapse of an indigenous Canadian garment industry, Mr. El Tassi has striven

¹ Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

no not only to maintain but to expand a proudly Canadian company, in no small measure through the diversity and dignity of his hiring and retention policies.

5. How was the policy, programme or initiative implemented? What role did the Nominee play? (max 200 words)

Entirely under the direction and authority of Mr. El Tassi as CEO

6. What were/are the most persistent challenges in implementing the policy, programme or initiative? How were they/are they being overcome and what was the role of the Nominee? (max 200 words)

Mr. El Tassi has seen such success over so many years, that what were initial challenges are now simply normative company practice: best practice, in fact.

7. What are the key lessons learned from launching the policy, programme or initiative? (max 200 words)

That human dignity and respect, especially with regards to Freedom of Religion, builds strong citizens, strong companies, strong communities and a global community of unimaginable potential.

Impact and Reporting on Progress

1. How do you monitor and evaluate progress on the policy, programme or initiative? If relevant, what indicators and metrics are used? (max 200 words)

Not available.

2. What outcomes or impact have been reached to date? Please be as specific as possible and supply available data. (max 200 words)

See cv attached.

3. Is the Nominee's company reporting on its practices, policies, programmes and/or initiatives to champion interfaith understanding and peace? If so, please provide relevant weblink(s) for posting on the Awards' website. If integrated into the company's corporate sustainability report, Global Compact COP or GRI Report, please indicate relevant pages and/or sections. (max 200 words)

Not available.

Additional Information:

1. Are there additional actions the Nominee has taken on an individual level to support interfaith understanding and peace within the organization? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

2. How has the Nominee taken action to support and promote the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

The nominee has yet to sign, but is exploring doing so.

Please provide any additional information to be considered. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Nominations team nominations@religiousfreedomandbusiness.org

Mr. El Tassi has championed education at all levels, hence his honorary degree from the University of Winnipeg. He takes particular pride in the Al-Hijra Islamic School, extensive details of which are attached to this nomination form.

ABDO (ALBERT) IBRAHIM EL TASSI, C.M., O.M., LL.D.

353 Almey Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3W 1P4
Telephone: (204) 669-1111

Born: Kherbet Rouha, Kadaa Rashaya, Lebanon

Citizenship: Emigrated to Canada – October 1969
Naturalized Canadian Citizen – May 1975

Family: Wife – Samira (married 1976)
Children: Marriam, Omyia, Aiche, Mohammed
Grandchildren: 17

Education: Al-Azhar University of Egypt – 1966
Principal and School Teacher – Lebanon

Current Position: C.E.O. / Director
Peerless Garments LP
515 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, MB. R3B 1R9

Garment manufacturer – cloth & leather, domestic and import sales – employing 100 people.
Responsible for all aspects of the company, including but not limited to: sales; material acquisition; union contract negotiations; design and development of prototype garments & materials. Major supplier of military uniforms to the Department of National Defence.

Honours :

- 2002 - Recipient of **The Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal**
- 2003 - Inducted as a **Member of the Order of Canada**, Canada's highest honour for civilians
- 2009 – Named to the **Order of Manitoba** Manitoba's highest honour for a civilian
- 2009 – **Premier's Volunteer Service Award**
- 2011 – **City of Winnipeg** announced the street naming honour of El Tassi Drive in a new development.
- 2012 - Recipient of **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal**
- 2013 - Winner of the First **Arab Ambassadors' Award**, Business category honouring Arab descent Canadians with outstanding achievements.
- 2013 – Appointed by the **Minister of National Defence**, to the official rank of: **Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel - The Royal Winnipeg Rifles.**
- 2013 – Received **Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws** from the University of Manitoba.
- 2013 – Recipient **Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year Award 2013** from the Association of Fundraising Professionals – Manitoba Chapter

- 2015 – **El Tassi Park Dedication** from City of Winnipeg in honour of his generous support of local charities, in addition to founding and ongoing financial support to the Alhijra Islamic School.
- 2015 – Recipient of the **2015 Martin Bergen Award** from The Concordia Foundation for outstanding contribution to society and commitment to the Concordia Campus.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Albert El Tassi is a well known Business Man and Philanthropist who works tirelessly to promote understanding, tolerance and respect not only in Winnipeg but globally.

Albert considers with great pride and honour to have had the privilege of making Winnipeg his home since 1969 for himself, his children and his grandchildren.

He gives generously of his time and money to many charitable organizations. At home or at work, his door is always open to those in need; whether it be money or advice, help in finding housing, a job, or providing counselling to new immigrants adjusting to the Canadian way of life – he is there to help.

Giving back to the nation in which he lives; the community which he serves; and the world to which he belongs is a fundamental part of his beliefs. The opportunity for success that he has enjoyed has also been an opportunity to reach out to others in need around the world.

He is first and foremost a family man. He has made the world his family and the children of the world are his number one priority.

COMMUNITY & HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

- Mr. El Tassi has helped and sponsored as many as 50 immigrants to Canada, including refugees from war-torn countries such as Vietnam and the Middle East.
- He has acted as liaison for numerous immigrants and refugees seeking a new and better life in Canada.
- One of his proudest moments came when he was instrumental in reuniting a mother with her two sons. At the request of then Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Joe Clark, Mr. El Tassi travelled to Lebanon and ensured the safe return of the boys to their mother by providing immediate financing for their trip after intervening with the family and gaining permission to bring the boys home to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

- The Raza Family spent 18 months from August 2006 to February 2008 in Sanctuary at the Crescent Fort Rouge United Church to avoid deportation under fear of sectarian violence in Pakistan. Through the efforts of many in the community, the family achieved Permanent Resident Status. Wife and mother, Kausar Raza was accepted into the Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program thanks to the efforts of Mr. El Tassi and came to work at Peerless Garments to help support her family.
- In 2005, Mr. El Tassi was introduced to a young refugee from Iran. Alone in Canada with serious heart problems, she asked for help. Unable to go on Social Assistance because it could jeopardize sponsorship of her husband, she came to Mr. El Tassi in desperation and he responded immediately. Since 2005 he has continued to provide her with monthly support for basic necessities, food and shelter. This is an example of only one family, there have been numerous families over the years who have benefitted from Albert's generosity.
- He has adopted as foster children numerous overseas children in both Afghanistan and Central America.
- His sponsorship and financial support have enabled those he helps become productive and self-supporting members of society. Many have gone from social assistance to business ownership – fully self-supporting members of the community.
- Over the years, Mr. El Tassi has provided interest free loans totalling in excess of \$1.7 million dollars to cover business start-ups, mortgages, university tuition etc. to help those in need to build a better life in Canada. Often the loans are “forgiven” in whole or in part keep business momentum going or to alleviate further hardship on the family.
- Since 1975, he has generously donated to various Canadian charities such as UNICEF, the Sick Kids Foundation, SOS Children's Villages Canada, the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA), many schools throughout Winnipeg, the Canadian Red Cross, Human Concern International, and the Canadian Diabetes Association, World of Vision, United Way and many others. Albert has always continued to give throughout his lifetime and as his success increases, so do his numerous contributions. In the last 5 years alone, Mr. El Tassi has donated in excess of 1.6 million dollars to Canadian charities.
- When the Prime Minister's Office called after the December 26, 2004 Tsunami devastated Indonesia and Thailand, urging Mr. El Tassi to canvas the community for aid relief – he not only raised money from the community at large, he matched the total dollar value of the funds raised personally (\$40,000.00) – which total was in turn matched by the Government of Canada.
- After the Earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 – Mr. El Tassi personally contributed \$22,000.00 to the Canadian Red Cross for aid relief, matching the total contributions of City of Winnipeg Councillors.
- During the 2011 Drought in East Africa, Mr. El Tassi matched and donated dollar for dollar money raised within the community.
- The Military Family Fund providing much needed support to the families of the Canadian Armed Forces has been the recipient of Mr. El Tassi's generous financial support. Due to the close relationships he has cultivated with the various branches of the Army, Navy and Air Force, it has been his honour and privilege to contribute to the Fund. He was the largest personal contributor

to the Fund (\$100,000.00) when approached by General Hillier for his help in starting up the fund, and continues to contribute to the fund annually.

- The Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) is also an annual recipient of Mr. El Tassi's support. It has been his privilege to be able to extend help and comfort to the families of the Armed Forces of Canada.
- Mr. El Tassi as CEO and Director of Peerless Garments also supports the efforts of various projects for the Armed Forces – “Pillows for Troops”, “Operation Santa” , the “Airport Lounge” service for armed forces personnel and many others.
- As well, Winnipeg benefits from yearly donations to: St. Boniface Research Foundation (\$200,000.00 towards the purchase of a High Speed CT Scanner), Health Sciences Centre Foundation, Children Hospital Foundation, Concordia Hospital Foundation, Islamic Social Services Association, The United Way of Winnipeg, University of Winnipeg Foundation, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and many others.
- Programs in Winnipeg which focus on caring and feeding the needy and the hungry children of the community such as Winnipeg Harvest, Siloam Mission and Agape Table have all benefitted from Mr. El Tassi's support throughout the years.
- In 2007 he personally pledged \$100,000.00 to the Canadian Human Rights Museum being built in Winnipeg with Federal and private funding.
- He continues to work within the community as a conciliator, a mentor to new entrepreneurs, and as a supporter of Muslim students in pursuit of a higher education.
- Mr. El Tassi launched a Public Awareness Campaign highlighting the contributions of Muslims in Manitoba. A project funded by Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's “Welcoming Communities Initiative”. The objective is to promote and strengthen the participation of new immigrants and to foster a more inclusive and welcoming community for new immigrants.
- He was one of the founders of the Islamic Social Services Association (**ISSA**) of Manitoba and has been active within ISSA in many capacities since 1975. His work was recognized and applauded by ISSA in December 2007 with a special award of appreciation for his contributions to the Muslim community.
- One of the largest financial contributors (\$75,000.00) towards the establishment of the **Mosque of Thompson**, Manitoba - the only Mosque outside the city of Winnipeg serving the Muslim community in the north of the province. He continues today to be a major supporter of this project.
- He participates in a variety of discussions and projects centering on the welfare of children around the world, especially in war-torn countries. He provides support, both moral and financially, to the world-wide effort of **Landmine removal** from war torn countries. Mr. Tassi received a letter of appreciation from the **President of Lebanon**, recognizing his contributions to this cause.
- In 1996 Mr. El Tassi was one of the founders and largest contributors of **Alhijra Islamic School** to meet the needs of the Islamic community in Winnipeg. Alhijra Islamic School is funded

provincially and privately. Any shortfalls in funding are personally covered by Mr. El Tassi to keep the school operating at its maximum potential to provide the students with a quality education and an atmosphere conducive to learning.

- In September 2004, the **Alhijra Islamic School** opened its doors to a new 20,000 square foot fully remodelled building to accommodate increased enrolment. The renovations cost \$600,000.00 which Mr. El Tassi + Family contributed \$550,00.00 In order to provide a modern, fully functional school for the children of the Islamic community from established Winnipeg families and the children of refugees who have come to Canada – no child is turned away. Mr. El Tassi's contributions continue to fund the many programs, scholarships and bursaries the school has available for its students.
- Mr. El Tassi's relationship with the **Embassy of Lebanon in Canada** is greatly valued by both the Embassy and Mr. El Tassi. He is extremely proud to be Lebanese and is honoured to provide whatever services and support to Lebanon within his capacity.
- In the **2006 War on Lebanon**, he contributed heavily to both the Lebanese Red Cross and to Human Concern to provide medical aid, medicine and other support as needed in his home country. His commitment to his native country has never wavered. Over the last 30 years he has continued to support the Education in public schools and universities, Mosques, town needs, ie Hydro, etc. as well as recreational facilities.

BRIEF PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Pre-1969, Mr. El Tassi started as a principal and teacher in Lebanon.
- In 1969, Mr. El Tassi began working in the shipping department of Peerless Garments Ltd. shortly after his arrival in Canada.
- In 1986, Mr. El Tassi took over complete management of the company.
- In June of 2006, was named President and Chief Executive Officer of Peerless Garments LP.
- As the Chief Executive Officer and a Shareholder in both Peerless Garments Ltd., and Peerless Garments LP, Mr. El Tassi has guided the company from earnings of \$3,000,000.00 annually to over \$45,000,000.00 sales annually.
- Over the years Peerless Garments has been instrumental in maintaining and creating new jobs in the garment industry for new Canadians in Winnipeg as well as through our sub-contractors across Canada. During a time when many garment manufacturers across Canada closed down because of economic conditions and an increasing amount of imports, Peerless Garments has grown and continues to provide quality "Made in Canada" garments at competitive prices.
- Mr. El Tassi's dealings with the Department of National Defence have earned him high recognition and a solid reputation for personal and business integrity. He has been proud and honoured to be the recipient of several awards from members of the Armed Forces – Army, Navy and Air Force. The Awards acknowledge his leadership and expertise as well as the professionalism and enthusiasm he brings to their many projects for the Clothe the Soldiers programs.

COMMENDATIONS:

Plaque presented in November from the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Manitoba Chapter – “2013 Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year”.

Award presented in November from the Variety, the Children’s Charity of Manitoba – “2012 Gold Heart Humanitarian of the Year”.

Award presented in May from The Canadian Red Cross – “2012 Humanitarian of the Year”.

Plaque presented “In appreciation of the Expertise, Professionalism and Enthusiasm of the Clothe the Soldier, Improved Environmental Clothing System Project – On Spec – Ahead of Time – On Budget.”

Plaque presented from Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA) 2007 “ In recognition of his philanthropy, volunteerism and contributions in alleviating suffering and building institutions within Manitoba, Canada.”

Plaque presented from Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) and military families February 2011 “In recognition of ongoing commitment to the WMFRC and military families.”

Recognized for “Outstanding and Distinguished Performance in the Support of the Canadian Forces Clothing and Personal Equipment Program” by the Department of National Defence and the Director Soldier Systems Program Management (DSSPM)

Certificate of Appreciation for: “Dedication to Excellence and High Quality Design and Manufacturing in the Production of Operational Clothing for Canadian Air Force Personnel” from the Air Force Environmental Clothing Standardization Project A2755.

Letter of Commendation for: “Expediting production to ensure troops are properly outfitted” from Mr. Gary Gravelle, Manager, Clothing Group, Supply and Services Canada/ K. Lockett, DND.

- Mr. El Tassi is well known and respected by all three levels of government – Municipal, Provincial and Federal.

- Mr. El Tassi's goal as a businessman and a member of the Arab community in Canada has been to build a better life for his family, his employees, and newcomers to Canada. He has dedicated himself to building bridges to promote tolerance and harmony between our multi-cultural communities.

COMMUNITY & PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- World Trade Centre Winnipeg – September 2012 Board Member
- Winnipeg Foundation – Appointed December 2011 to Board of Directors
- Global College – October 2011 Appointed to Advisory Council
- Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce – Appointed July 2011 to Board of Directors
- Canadian Forces Liaison Council – April 2011 Member of the Senate
- Honourary Vice President of The Royal Winnipeg Rifles Foundation
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba – February 2011-3, Board of Governors
- Member of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce – Manitoba, Canada
- Canadian Islamic Chamber of Commerce – President
- Member of Advisory Committees for Members of Parliament representing the province of Manitoba
- Member of the Board – Mauro Center for Peace and Justice at the University of Winnipeg, St. Paul's College

- Participant in the Winnipeg Arab/Jewish Dialogue – to promote understanding and strive for resolutions to the conflicts in the Middle East
- Arbitrator for U.N.IT.E and the Manitoba Garment Manufacturers Association
- Fundraiser for the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation such as the Cardiac Science Program, 2009 to raise \$2 Million Dollars for the purchase of a High Speed CT Scanner. Of total amount raised, personal contribution of 10%=\$200,000.00.
- Fundraiser for the Children's Hospital Foundation – Manitoba
- Participant and Major Fundraiser for the Downtown Winnipeg Biz, CEO Sleepout
- One of the Founders of Alhijra Islamic School in 1996
- Founding member of Islamic Social Services Association in 1975
- Supporter of many worthy charitable organizations dedicated to feeding and clothing the poor and hungry. Locally, he is actively involved with Siloam Mission, Winnipeg Harvest, Agape Table, and many other charitable organization in Winnipeg for many years dedicated to feeding the young and homeless.
- Groupe CTT – honoured Mr. El Tassi for his vision, leadership and business spirit which has a positive influence on the textile sector. Peerless Garments has supported the Canadian Textile industry with its yearly participation as partner and sponsor in the many endeavours of Groupe CTT such as High-TEX, the CTI/DND annual conference held in Ottawa as well as participating in additional Textile shows throughout Canada.