

Peace agency hires new director

Co-founder Ernie Regehr decides on less public role at Project Ploughshares

By PHILIP JALSEVAC
RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO

John Siebert is the first to admit he has some big shoes to fill as the new executive director of Project Ploughshares in Waterloo.

He took over from Ernie Regehr, a man whom he described as virtually "irreplaceable" in his knowledge and insight, this week.

Nevertheless, Siebert, 46, is game to tackle his new job after a career in the foreign service, consulting and working for the United Church of Canada.

Siebert said he is not planning any immediate changes at Project Ploughshares, an agency of the Canadian Council of Churches that promotes ways to resolve political conflict, build peace and prevent war.

"I anticipate taking a year or more just to immerse myself in the work and to find out what Project Ploughshares is doing and has been

doing," Siebert said.

Regehr, an officer of the Order of Canada, co-founded Project Ploughshares in 1976 and has been executive director for almost 30 years.

He had been due to retire in the fall of 2006. However, Moira Hutchinson, chair of the agency's board, said he wanted to focus more on policy research and writing and have less responsibility for overall administration.

"He requested that we move up the year of transition," Hutchinson said.

Siebert has been appointed to assume his job while Regehr will stay on full-time as senior policy advisor until October 2006 and continue in that role part-time after that.

Siebert, a native and resident of Vineland, is moving with his wife, Carolyn Wiens, and their two children to this community later this month. He was selected by the board of Project Ploughshares from more than 40 candidates.

Siebert graduated in 1982 with a



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JOHN SIEBERT,
NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF PROJECT PLOUGHSHARES

bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Winnipeg. He served in Canada's department of ex-

ternal affairs until 1986, which included working in the United Nations division in Ottawa. Later he was executive assistant to Allan Gotlieb, the former ambassador to Washington.

Siebert then returned to his academic studies and earned a master's degree in theology from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto.

After that, he worked as a consultant primarily for church organizations involved in international development, including Mennonite Economic Development Associates in Waterloo.

From 1992 to 1998, he served as program officer for human rights and aboriginal justice for the United Church, and eventually returned to consulting before being hired by Project Ploughshares.

Siebert concedes he has nowhere near the same experience as Regehr in dealing with issues of war and peace.

"God willing, I will catch on," he said. "There was nobody more surprised than me as I advanced through the interview process ... Project Ploughshares has an incredible reputation."

Hutchinson said Siebert is being "overly modest" and has "a strong

ability in project management, research and policy analysis. Those kinds of skills are transferable from one area to another."

Regehr said Siebert is a person of high calibre and good experience.

"Any organization can use new blood and energy," he said. So it's terrific."

In addition to his administrative function, Siebert said he will eventually do research and writing, as well.

He's thankful that he has Regehr available for support.

He's also looking forward to some "friendship and mentoring" from two key members of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, with whom his agency shares space in the former Seagram museum in Waterloo.

CIGI executive director John English is "a tremendous person," he said. And he's keen on renewing acquaintance with senior research fellow Paul Heinbecker, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations.

Siebert said they served in Washington together when Heinbecker was head of the Canadian embassy's political section.

jjalsevac@therecord.com

Sudanese leaders request Canadian support

By MAUREN FINN
RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO REGION

Waterloo Region's Sudanese community is calling on Canada to help avert more bloodshed in their homeland.

Leaders in the local Sudanese community said they will send the federal government a letter, pleading for its involvement in achieving peace and democracy in Sudan, later this week.

The community believes Canada cares about Sudan and its people, said Sunday Edward of Kitchener. He cited as proof the Canadian government's decision to send a representative, Senator Mobina Jaffer of British Columbia, to John Garang's funeral Saturday.

"We want people to be aware of what's happening and Canada to help control the situation in Sudan," he said.

Garang, the dominant voice of south Sudan since 1983, who fought for equality within the country, was killed in a helicopter crash on July 30.

The crash, which also killed 12 others, has been deemed an accident by the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement — Garang's group — but an international investigation is being conducted.

Garang died just three weeks after taking office as first vice-president in a unity government established under a peace deal that ended 21 years of war between the Arab Muslim-dominated government and rebels in the African Christian and animist south. Two-million people died in the conflict.

Riots broke out in Khartoum and some southern Sudan cities after Garang died. Grief-stricken supporters of Garang have been rioting, angrily blaming the government for their hero's death, Edward said.

"The situation is now very, very hostile," said Manyang Kon of Guelph.

The Sudanese community here fears the violence that has followed Garang's death threatens the stability of the peace deal.

"Sudanese Canadians want to know what's happening back home and to help," he said.

The letter to Ottawa will ask Canada to use its influence to make sure the peace is maintained. The letter will also be sent to groups around the world.

"We want to disperse information to Sudanese people, telling them to be peaceful and to not take what has happened personally or to reflect it here," said Frank Luri of Kitchener. He worries the current violence in Sudan will have a ripple effect.

"All Sudanese people living outside Sudan should be calm and continue to live and keep the peace that started in January," Kon said. "We need to look forward to creating more peace."

Garang's deputy, Salva Kiir Mayardit, was named as his successor in the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. He will be sworn in as first vice president in Khartoum this week.

The local Sudanese community will arrange a memorial service in honour of Garang later this month.

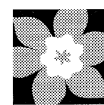
The Sudanese state media reported yesterday that Sudanese president Omar al-Beshir has ordered an investigation into the recent deadly riots.

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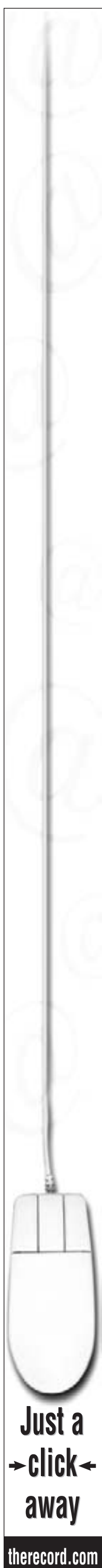
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