



**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee received a staff report dated June 7, 2021, at their July 21, 2021 meeting.

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee reviewed the staff report and approved a motion to forward the report to Halifax Regional Council for information.

For further information please refer to the attached staff report dated June 7, 2021 (Attachment 1).

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated June 7, 2021 (Attachment 1).

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement is outlined in the attached staff report dated June 7, 2021 (Attachment 1).

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff report dated June 7, 2021.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Annie Sherry, Legislative Assistant, Office of the Municipal Clerk. 902.943.8741.

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**Attachment 1**  
**Audit & Finance Standing Committee**  
**July 21, 2021**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Audit & Finance Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** - Original Signed -  
Jerry Blackwood, CFO / Director, Finance, Asset Management

- Original Signed -  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 7, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Investment Activities – Quarter ending March 31, 2021

**ORIGIN**

Quarterly report of investment performance and adherence to approved Investment Policy.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 121(1) of the HRM Charter requires that funds be invested pursuant to an Investment Policy adopted by Council and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs (the Minister) or invested pursuant to the Trustee Act. Where HRM has chosen to adopt an Investment Policy, and the Minister has approved the Policy, investment activities are governed by this Policy.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Audit and Finance Standing Committee forward this report to Halifax Regional Council as an information item.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Municipality Investment Policy (the Policy) was adopted by Council April 23, 2002 and was approved by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on May 14, 2002. This Ministerial position was later reorganized and now has the title the Minister of Municipal Affairs (the Minister).

The mandate of the Committee is to recommend an investment policy to Council as well as provide ongoing monitoring of investment activities. Following adoption and approval of the Policy, the activities of the Committee have shifted to the monitoring role as well as annual reviews of the Policy.

Amendments to the Policy, as recommended by the Investment Policy Advisory Committee (the Committee) were approved by Council and the Minister in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2017, 2019, and 2020. Reviews of the Policy by the Committee in 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2020 did not result in any recommended changes.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Investment Policy Advisory Committee is pleased to provide this report under the provisions of the Policy. The primary focus of this report will be to report on compliance with the objectives of the Policy.

The three objectives and three strategies of the Policy, stated in order of priority of importance, are as follows:

Objective:

1. Preservation of Capital
2. Liquidity
3. Competitive Return on Investments

Strategies:

4. Diversification of Investment Portfolio
5. Regular Review of Performance
6. Risk Management Approach

The Sector Weight schedule recommended under the 2019 Policy is attached.

At the Investment Policy Advisory Committee meeting of June 7, 2021, the Committee reviewed the information provided by staff in the Treasurer's report to the Committee for the Quarter ending March 31 2021 and accepts the report and the findings contained in the report that the investment activities reported comply with the Policy.

## **Overall Results**

Operating fund investment income for the 3 months ending March 31, 2021 was \$206,666 versus an original budget of \$187,500. The actual rate of return for the quarter was 0.15%. Total investment income for the portfolio was \$909,280 which includes investment income for the operating fund, trusts and reserves, as well as related entities.

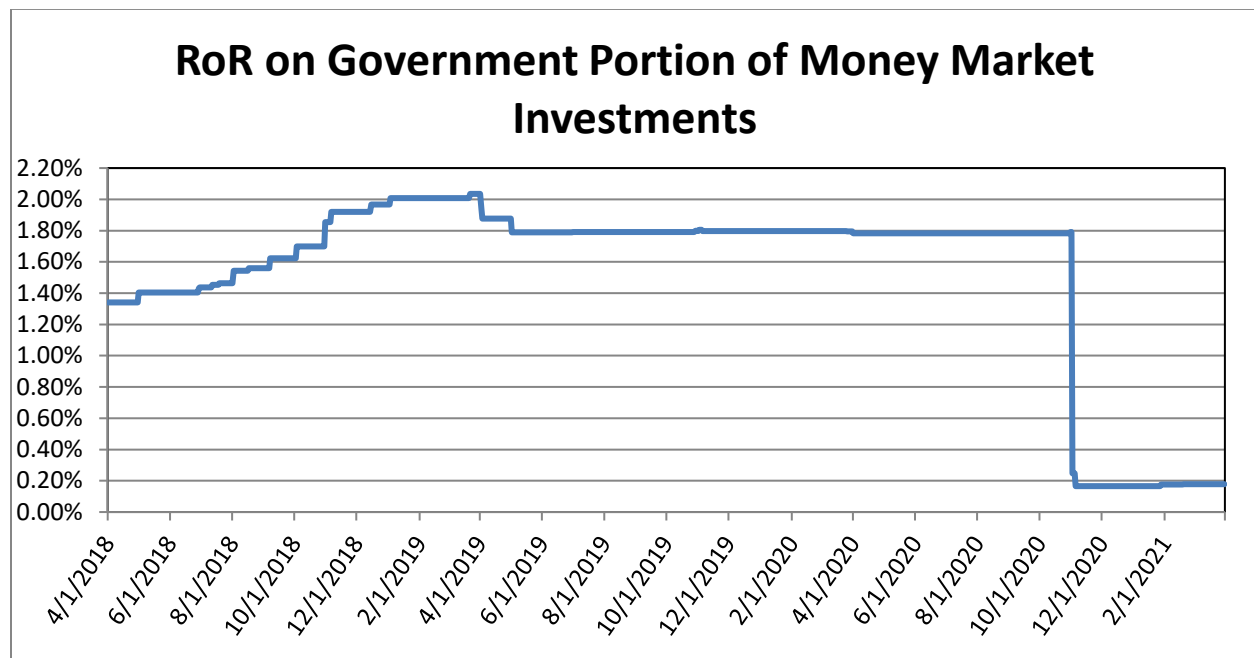
## **HRM Investment Activities**

Mercer has discontinued its Investment Consulting Survey of Canadian Institutional Pooled Funds. HRM had been using this survey to compare returns with the industry. We have also been including the RBC Investor and Treasury Services Pooled Fund survey to the Investment Committee, which is very similar to

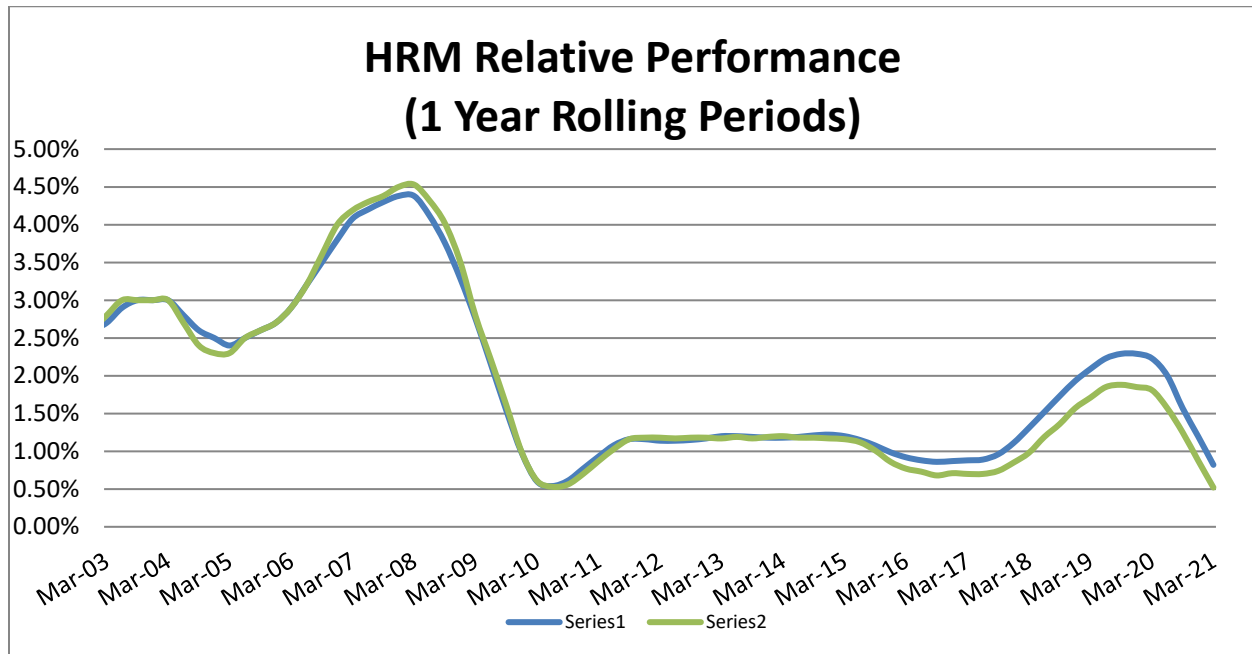
the Mercer Survey. We will be using this survey going forward. Please see the table below with the results using the RBC Survey

Money Market Funds	3 Months (to Mar 31, 2021)	1 Year (to Mar 31, 2021)
Average Return	0.06%	0.49%
5 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	0.12%	0.72%
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	0.07%	0.62%
Money Market Median	0.05%	0.52%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	0.03%	0.37%
95 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	(0.01%)	0.14%
<b>HRM Overall</b>	<b>0.15%</b>	<b>0.82%</b>

Overall performance continues to be positive as we note both the three-month and one-year return exceeds the 5th percentile. These returns are before any allowance for fees that could be paid for external management. The investment bank accounts continue to be largely responsible for this relative performance.



As shown in the graph below, over the longer term HRM investment performance closely matches the median with fee savings also accruing to HRM.



During the quarter, there were no money market investments made as we carried five investments into the period with a total value of \$231,759,860, an average cost of \$46,351,972, and an original average term of 177 days. This compares to the same period last year when we also carried five investments into the period with a total cost of \$87,148,666, average cost of \$17,429,733 and average term to maturity of 362 days. The predominant strategy continues to see HRM allocate funds to the investment bank accounts and rebalance the portfolio using government instruments to manage sector weights.

Funds held in the investment bank accounts, including term deposits, totaled \$312,288,563 at the end of the quarter. This balance represents all funds for which we invest including related agencies such as Halifax Water, HRM reserve funds, as well as operating funds. Using 0.19% as the proxy for the BA and BDN average annual yield for the three months, incremental income in the investment accounts was \$596,738 for the quarter over BA's and BDN's. The income from our investment accounts provided a quarterly return of 0.21%, and an annual return of 0.88%.

Cumulative incremental gross investment income from the 2007 policy change that expanded the non-government sector weight was \$5,242,120 including a \$212,607 increase during the reporting period. An additional \$243,891 was realized over the reporting period due to recent changes made to the investment policy that excludes operational cash requirements from the sector weights, for a cumulative impact since April 2019 of \$2,470,125.

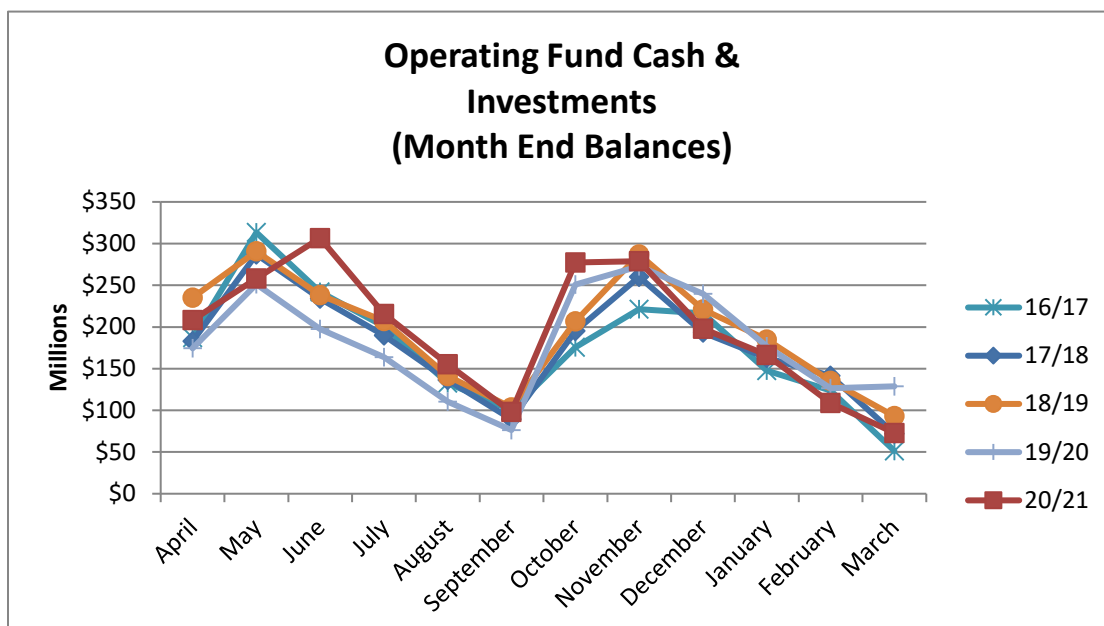
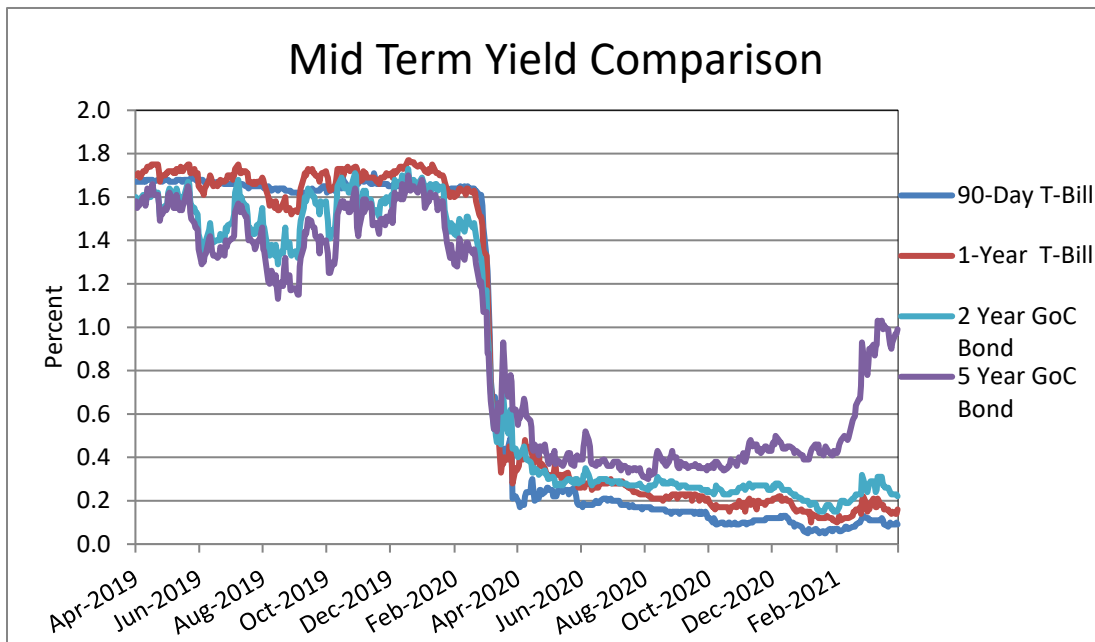
#### HRM Short Term Bond Pool

Currently, the portfolio does not contain any bonds. Staff will continue to look for opportunities to add to the bond portfolio.

**Government Sector Performance – April 2019 to March 2021**

Subsequent to End of Reporting Quarter

The Bank of Canada continues to maintain the overnight rate at 25 bps; however, guidance has shifted as we see signals that the rate will not stay at its lower bound for as long as originally forecast. The most recent report indicates that the target level of inflation of 2% could be reached in late 2022 which would trigger an increase in the rate.



### Outlook & Strategy

We continue to monitor guidance with respect to the Bank of Canada's overnight rate and are beginning to see signs of optimism in the Monetary Policy Reports.

Although we are now seeing some downward movement in the interest rates on the investment bank accounts, when compared to instruments with similar risk, we still enjoy higher overall returns. Therefore, the strategy remains to maximize returns by leveraging HISA accounts, keeping in mind that their liquidity adds a safety factor.

### **Policy Compliance**

#### Objectives:

Preservation of Capital - There was no loss of capital during the quarter.

Liquidity - No overdraft charges were incurred and sufficient cash was available to meet all requirements.

Competitive Return on Investments - The rate of return exceeded the 5th percentile for the quarter ending March 31, 2021 before allowing for fees that could have been paid to an external management firm. As a result, staff maintains that the rate of return objective of the Investment Policy has been met.

#### Strategies:

Diversification of Investment Portfolio - Staff believe that diversification has been adequately maintained under the constraints of the Policy.

Regular Review of Performance - Performance data continues to be reported to the Investment Policy Advisory Committee.

Risk Management Approach - In implementing investment decisions staff seek a balance between the objectives of the Investment Policy and the risks inherent in markets to look to achieve an optimal rate of return.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As discussed above, operating investment income for the three months ending March 31, 2021 was \$206,666 versus an original budget of \$187,500 due to higher cash flows than anticipated. The actual rate of return was 0.15% for the period.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Investment activities are reported quarterly to the Investment Policy Advisory Committee. The majority of members of this Committee (4 of 6) are volunteers from the general public. The Committee reports to the



Audit and Finance Committee of Council quarterly on staff's compliance with the Investment Policy. In addition, the Committee conducts an annual review of the Investment Policy and makes recommendations for any changes considered appropriate.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee could choose not to approve the recommendation.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - Sector Weight Schedule @ March 31, 2021 (Schedule A)

Appendix A - Economic Statistics and Central Bank Actions

Appendix B - List of Eligible Investments

Appendix C - DBRS Rating Scale

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Vicki Robertson, CPA, CGA, Deputy Treasurer, 902-817-1479

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**Total Portfolio**  
**Sector Weights @ March 31, 2021**

## SCHEDULE A

Category	Status	Cumulative Amount Invested @ Book Value	Guideline Limit	%	Limit Available	%
<b>CASH &amp; EQUIVALENTS</b>						
<b>Federal Government &amp; its Guarantees</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>504,824,746</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>504,824,746</b>	<b>100%</b>
Federal Government	Open	0				
Business Development Bank	Open	0				
Canada Mortgage & Housing Corp.	Open	0				
Canadian Wheat Board	Open	0				
Export Development Canada	Open	0				
Farm Credit Corp	Open	0				
<b>Provincial Governments &amp; their Guarantees</b>	<b>R-1 Mid or Greater</b>	<b>178,776,780</b>	<b>504,824,746</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>326,047,966</b>	<b>65%</b>
Total Alberta (R-1 High)	Open	0				
Alberta (R-1 High)	Open	0				
Alberta Capital Finance Authority (R-1 High)	Open	0				
Alberta Treasury Branches (R-1 High)	Open	0				
British Columbia (R-1 High)	Open	41,966,820				
Manitoba (R-1 Mid)	Open	0				
New Brunswick (R-1 Mid)	Open	0				
Nova Scotia (R-1 Mid)	Open	0				
Ontario (R-1 Mid)	Open	136,809,960				
Quebec (R-1 Mid)	Open	0				
Quebec		0				
Financement Quebec		0				
Hydro Quebec		0				
Saskatchewan (R-1 High)	Open	0				
<b>Municipal Governments &amp; their Guarantees*</b>	<b>R-1 Mid or Greater</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>126,206,186</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>126,206,186</b>	<b>25%</b>
Calgary (R-1 High)	Open	0	50,482,475	10%	50,482,475	10%
<b>Financial Institutions &amp; their Guarantees /Corporations</b>		<b>326,041,556</b>	<b>389,412,373</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>63,370,817</b>	<b>13%</b>
	<b>BA's Schedule A</b>					
	<b>Canadian Banks R-1</b>					
<b>Tier 1 - Financial Institutions &amp; their Guarantees</b>	<b>Mid</b>	<b>325,896,253</b>	<b>389,412,373</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>63,516,120</b>	<b>13%</b>
Bank of Montreal (R-1 High)	Open	99,836,282				
BMO - Instruments		0				
BMO - Account		99,836,282				
Bank of Nova Scotia (R-1 High)	Open	18,674,993				
Bank of Nova Scotia Effective Cash		8,674,993				
Bank of Nova Scotia - Notice Account		10,000,000				
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (R-1 High)	Open	20,354,605				
CIBC - Instruments		0				
CIBC - Account		20,354,605				
Royal Bank (R-1 High)	Open	111,771,790				
RBC - Instruments		0				
RBC - Account		111,771,790				
Toronto Dominion (R-1 High)	Open	75,258,583				
TD - Instruments		0				
TD - Account		75,258,583				
<b>Tier 2 - Financial Institutions &amp; Corporations</b>	<b>R-1 Mid/High***</b>	<b>145,303</b>	<b>126,206,186</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>126,060,883</b>	<b>25%</b>
National Bank of Canada (R-1 Mid)	Open	145,303				
OMERS Realty Corporation (R-1 High)	Open	0				
CDP Financial Inc (R-1 High)	Open	0				
Desjardins Total		0				
Desjardins Group (R-1 High)	Open	0				
Caisse Centale Desjardins (R-1 High)	Open	0				
<b>Total Cash and Equivalents</b>		<b>504,818,336</b>				
<b>Federal Government &amp; its Guarantees</b>						
<b>Money Market</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>67,501,292</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>67,501,292</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Reserves - Bond Pool</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>163,944,195</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>163,944,195</b>	<b>100%</b>
Canada Mortgage & Housing Corp.		0	163,944,195	100%	163,944,195	100%
<b>Provincial Government &amp; their Guarantees</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>67,501,292</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>67,501,292</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Money Market</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>67,501,292</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>34,712,453</b>	<b>10%</b>
Alberta		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Alberta		0				
Alberta Capital Finance Authority		0				
Alberta Treasury Branches		0				
British Columbia		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Manitoba		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
New Brunswick		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Nova Scotia		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Ontario		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Quebec		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
Quebec		0				
Financement Quebec		0				
Hydro Quebec		0				
Saskatchewan		0	33,750,646	10%	33,750,646	10%
<b>Bond Pool</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>32,788,839</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>32,788,839</b>	<b>20%</b>
Alberta		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Alberta		0				
Alberta Capital Finance Authority		0				
Alberta Treasury Branches		0				
British Columbia		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Manitoba		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
New Brunswick		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Nova Scotia		0				
Ontario		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Quebec		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Quebec		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Financement Quebec		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Hydro Quebec		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
Saskatchewan		0	16,394,420	10%	16,394,420	10%
<b>Total Fixed</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>32,788,839</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>32,788,839</b>	<b>20%</b>
Equities						
Bank of Montreal		6,410				
Total Equities		<b>6,410</b>				
Total Investments		504,824,746				
Interest Bearing Bank Accounts - O/S Cheque Coverage		55,000,000				
<b>Total Investments and O/S Cheques Coverage</b>		<b>559,824,746</b>				

**Appendix A**

Economic Statistics	Canada			United States		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Jan	Feb	Mar
Unemployment Rate	9.4%	8.2%	7.5%	6.3%	6.2%	6.0%
Jobs Created / (Lost) ('000's)	(213)	259	303	49	379	916
Core Inflation Rate (year over year)	1.0%	1.1%	2.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%

Date	Central Bank	Central Bank Action
Mar 27 2020	Bank of Canada	Lowered overnight rate to 0.25%
Apr 15, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Apr 29, 2020	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
June 3, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Jun 10, 2020	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
July 15, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
July 29, 2020	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Sept 9, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Oct 28, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Nov 5, 2020	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Dec 9, 2020	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Dec 26, 2020	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Jan 20, 2021	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Jan 27, 2021	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Mar 10, 2021	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Mar 17, 2021	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Apr 21, 2021	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%

List of Eligible Investments

The Government of Canada & Its Guarantees:

Federal Government

Business Development Bank

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation

Canadian Wheat Board

Export Development Canada

Farm Credit Corporation

Provincial Governments & Their Guarantees:

The Province of Alberta & Its Guarantees

The Province of British Columbia & Its Guarantees

The Province of Manitoba & Its Guarantees

The Province of New Brunswick & Its Guarantees

The Province of Ontario & Its Guarantees

The Province of Quebec & Its Guarantees

The Province of Saskatchewan & Its Guarantees

The Province of Nova Scotia

Municipal Governments & Their Guarantees:

The Municipality of Calgary & Its Guarantees

Financial Institutions & Their Guarantees (Tier 1):

The Bank of Montreal & Its Guarantees

The Bank of Nova Scotia & Its Guarantees

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce & Its Guarantees

Royal Bank of Canada & Its Guarantees

Toronto Dominion Bank & Its Guarantees

Financial Institutions & Corporations (Tier 2):

Desjardins Group

Caisse Centrale Desjardins

CDP Financial Inc.

National Bank of Canada

OMERS Finance Trust

**Dominion Bond Rating Service (DBRS) Rating Scale**

**R-1 (high)**

Short-term debt rated R-1 (high) is of the highest credit quality, and indicates an entity possessing unquestioned ability to repay current liabilities as they fall due. Entities rated in this category normally maintain strong liquidity positions, conservative debt levels, and profitability that is both stable and above average. Companies achieving an R-1 (high) rating are normally leaders in structurally sound industry segments with proven track records, sustainable positive future results, and no substantial qualifying negative factors. Given the extremely tough definition DBRS has established for an R-1 (high), few entities are strong enough to achieve this rating.

**R-1 (middle)**

Short-term debt rated R-1 (middle) is of superior credit quality and, in most cases, ratings in this category differ from R-1 (high) credits by only a small degree. Given the extremely tough definition DBRS has established for the R-1 (high) category, entities rated R-1 (middle) are also considered strong credits, and typically exemplify above average strength in key areas of consideration for the timely repayment of short-term liabilities.

**R-1 (low)**

Short-term debt rated R-1 (low) is of satisfactory credit quality. The overall strength and outlook for key liquidity, debt, and profitability ratios is not normally as favourable as with higher rating categories, but these considerations are still respectable. Any qualifying negative factors that exist are considered manageable, and the entity is normally of sufficient size to have some influence in its industry.