



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 5
Halifax Regional Council
November 9, 2021

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Councillor Paul Russell, Chair, Audit and Finance Standing Committee

DATE: October 28, 2021

SUBJECT: Investment Activities – Quarter ending June 30, 2021

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

October 20, 2021 meeting of the Audit and Finance Standing Committee, Item 12.2.1:

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Deagle Gammon

THAT the Audit and Finance Standing Committee forward this report to Halifax Regional Council as an information item.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c.39, subsection 121(1) provides:

121(1) Funds in a sinking fund, capital reserve fund, utility depreciation fund or other fund of the Municipality must be

- (a) deposited in an interest bearing account at a bank doing business in the Province;
- (b) invested pursuant to an investment policy adopted by the Council and approved by the Minister; or
- (c) invested in investments in which a trustee is permitted to invest pursuant to the Trustee Act.

Halifax Regional Municipality Investment Policy, approved by Regional Council on February 12, 2019, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on April 24, 2019

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee received a staff report dated September 13, 2021, at their October 20, 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 September 13, 2021 (Attachment 1).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated September 13, 2021 (Attachment 1).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is outlined in the attached staff report dated September 13, 2021 (Attachment 1).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff report dated September 13, 2021.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at 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
October 20, 2021

TO: Chair and Members of Audit & Finance Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: **- Original Signed -**

Jerry Blackwood, CFO/Executive Director, Finance & Asset Management

- Original Signed -

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 13, 2021

SUBJECT: **Investment Activities – Quarter ending June 30, 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, and 2019. 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:

1. Diversification of Investment Portfolio
2. Regular Review of Performance
3. Risk Management Approach

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

At the Investment Policy Advisory Committee meeting of September 13, 2021, the Committee reviewed the information provided by staff in the Treasurer's report to the Committee for the Quarter ending June 30, 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 June 30, 2021 was \$366,073 versus an original budget of \$187,500. The actual rate of return for the quarter was 0.16%. Total investment income for the portfolio was \$1,163,518 which includes investment income for the operating fund, trusts and reserves, as well as related entities.

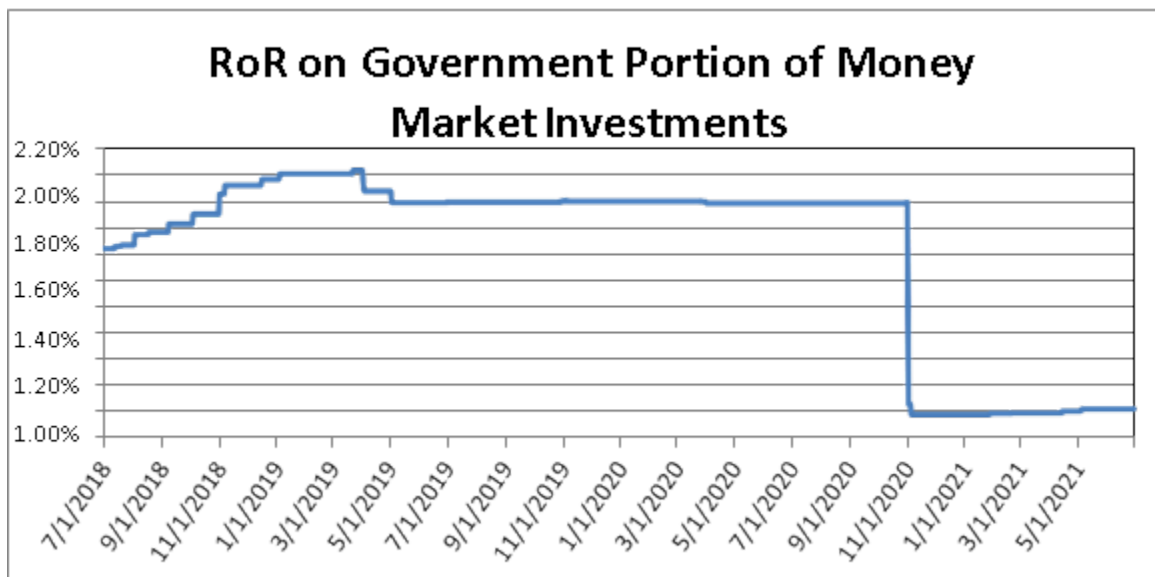
HRM Investment Activities

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

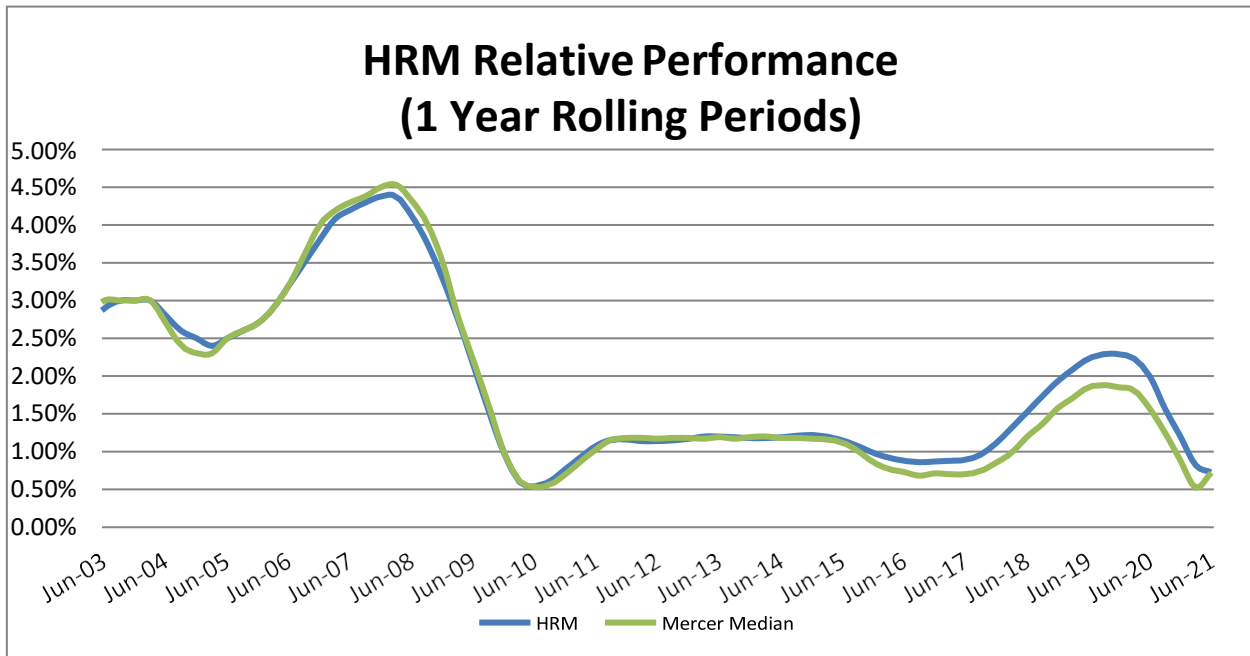
the Mercer Survey. We will be using this survey going forward. Please see the table below with the results using the RBC Survey

Money Market Funds	3 Months (to Jun 30, 2021)	1 Year (to Jun 30, 2021)
Average Return	0.04%	0.29%
5 th Percentile	0.09%	0.52%
1 st Quartile	0.06%	0.36%
Money Market Median	0.04%	0.29%
3 rd Quartile	0.03%	0.20%
95 th Percentile	(0.04%)	0.00%
HRM Overall	0.16%	0.73%

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 four money market investments made in the period as well as one investment carried from the prior period with a total value of \$179,688,050, an average cost of \$35,937,610, and an original average term of 264 days. This compares to the same period last year when we carried three investments into the period with a total cost of \$47,855,866, average cost of \$15,951,955 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.

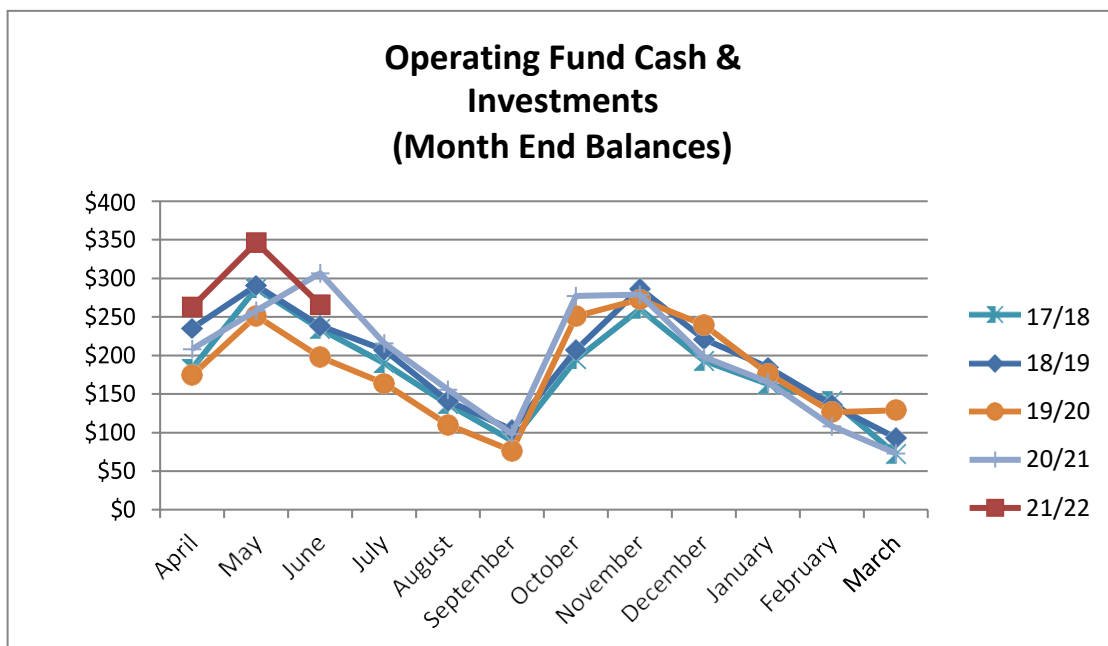
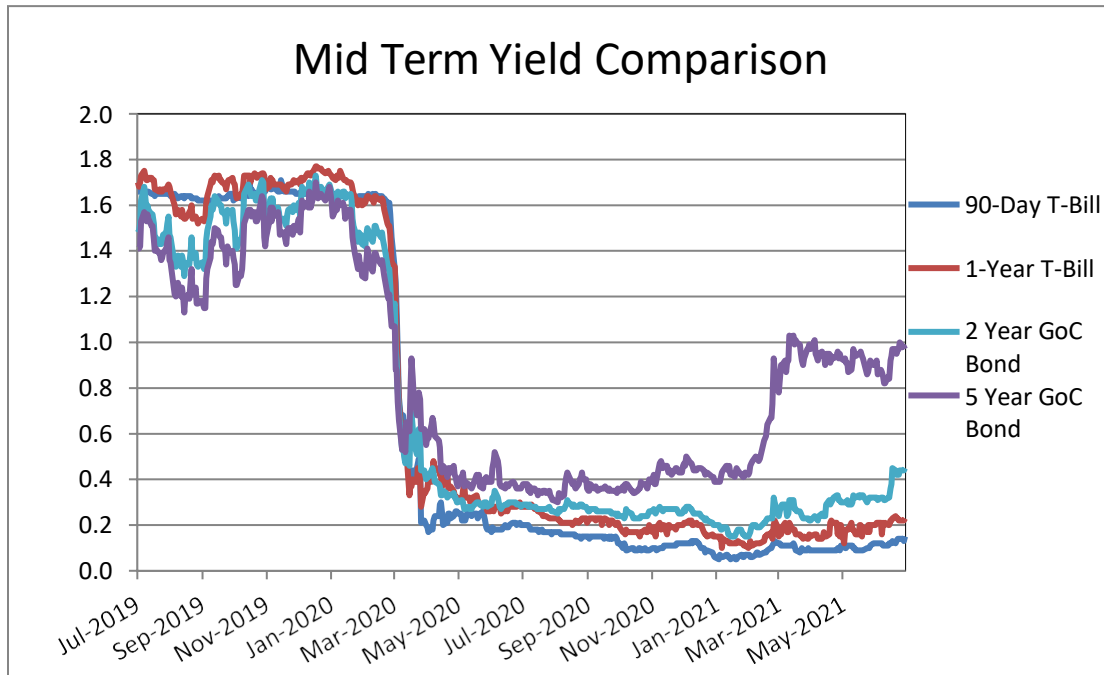
Funds held in the investment bank accounts, including term deposits, totaled \$587,686,693 at the end of the quarter. This balance represents all funds for which we invest including related agencies such as Halifax Water, HRM reserve funds, as well as operating funds. Using 0.18% as the proxy for the BA and BDN average annual yield for the three months, incremental income in the investment accounts was \$698,443 for the quarter over BA's and BDN's. The income from our investment accounts provided a quarterly return of 0.19%, and an annual return of 0.76%.

Cumulative incremental gross investment income from the 2007 policy change that expanded the non-government sector weight was \$5,521,873 including a \$279,753 increase during the reporting period. An additional \$255,725 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 \$2,725,849.

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 – July 2019 to June 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% should be reached in 2022 and a rate hike is expected as early as the second half of 2022.

Outlook & Strategy

We continue to monitor guidance with respect to the Bank of Canada's overnight rate. As noted, the current outlook indicates the rate will remain at 0.25% until the second half of 2022, where it is expected to rise to 0.50%.

We continue to see some downward movement in the interest rates on the investment bank accounts, however, 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. We balance the portfolio with government sector instruments, primarily in the form of provincial Treasury Bills. This provides diversification of the portfolio while maintaining a suitable level of risk for the needs of Treasury.

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 June 30, 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 June 30, 2021 was \$366,073 versus an original budget of \$187,500 due to higher cash flows than anticipated. The actual rate of return was 0.16% 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 & Finance Standing Committee could choose not to approve the recommendation.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A – Sector Weight Schedule @ June 30, 2021

Appendix A – Economic Statistics and Central Bank Actions

Appendix B – List of Eligible Investments

Appendix C – DBRS Rating Scale

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Renée Towns, CPA, CGA, CTP, Director of Revenue, Treasurer, 902-293-7983]

**Total Portfolio
Sector Weights @ June 30, 2021**

SCHEDULE A

	Category Status	Cumulative Amount Invested @ Book Value	Guideline Limit	%	Limit Available	%
CASH & EQUIVALENTS						
Federal Government & its Guarantees	Open	0	767,381,153	100%	767,381,153	100%
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				
Provincial Governments & their Guarantees	R-1 Mid or Greater	179,688,050	767,381,153	100%	587,693,103	77%
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	24,977,250				
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	104,776,800				
Quebec (R-1 Mid)	Open	24,943,500				
Quebec		24,943,500				
Financement Quebec		0				
Hydro Quebec		0				
Saskatchewan (R-1 High)	Open	24,990,500				
Municipal Governments & their Guarantees*	R-1 Mid or Greater	0	191,845,288	25%	191,845,288	25%
Calgary (R-1 High)	Open	0	76,738,115	10%	76,738,115	10%
Financial Institutions & their Guarantees /Corporations		587,686,693	667,190,577	50%	79,503,884	10%
	BA's Schedule A Canadian Banks R-1					
Tier 1 - Financial Institutions & their Guarantees	Mid	487,459,493	667,190,577	50%	179,731,084	23%
Bank of Montreal (R-1 High)	Open	99,914,269				
BMO - Instruments		0				
BMO - Account		99,914,269				
Bank of Nova Scotia (R-1 High)	Open	37,961,687				
Bank of Nova Scotia Effective Cash		12,961,687				
Bank of Nova Scotia - Notice Account		25,000,000				
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (R-1 High)	Open	70,367,761				
CIBC - Instruments		0				
CIBC - Account		70,367,761				
Royal Bank (R-1 High)	Open	143,023,350				
RBC - Instruments		0				
RBC - Account		143,023,350				
Toronto Dominion (R-1 High)	Open	136,192,428				
TD - Instruments		0				
TD - Account		136,192,428				
Tier 2 - Financial Institutions & Corporations	R-1 Mid/High***	100,227,199	191,845,288	25%	91,618,089	12%
National Bank of Canada (R-1 Mid)	Open	100,227,199				
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				
Total Cash and Equivalents		767,374,743				
Federal Government & its Guarantees						
Money Market		0	120,012,573	20%	120,012,573	20%
Reserves - Bond Pool		0	163,944,195	100%	163,944,195	100%
Canada Mortgage & Housing Corp.		0	163,944,195	100%	163,944,195	100%
Provincial Government & their Guarantees		0	120,012,573	20%	120,012,573	20%
Money Market		0	120,012,573	20%	87,223,734	15%
Alberta		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Alberta		0				
Alberta Capital Finance Authority		0				
Alberta Treasury Branches		0				
British Columbia		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Manitoba		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
New Brunswick		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Nova Scotia		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Ontario		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Quebec		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Quebec		0				
Financement Quebec		0				
Hydro Quebec		0				
Saskatchewan		0	60,006,287	10%	60,006,287	10%
Bond Pool		0	32,788,839	20%	32,788,839	20%
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%
Total Fixed		0	32,788,839	20%	32,788,839	20%
Equities						
Bank of Montreal		6,410				
Total Equities		6,410				
Total Investments		767,381,153				
Interest Bearing Bank Accounts - O/S Cheque Coverage		23,000,000				
Total Investments and O/S Cheques Coverage		790,381,153				

Appendix A

Economic Statistics	Canada			United States		
	Apr	May	Jun	Apr	May	Jun
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	8.2%	7.8%	6.1%	5.8%	5.9%
Jobs Created / (Lost) ('000's)	(207)	(68)	231	266	559	850
Core Inflation Rate (year over year)	3.4%	3.6%	3.1%	4.2%	5.0%	5.4%

Date	Central Bank	Central Bank Action
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%
Apr 28, 2021	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Jun 9, 2021	Bank of Canada	Maintains overnight rate at 0.25%
Jun 16, 2021	U.S. Federal Open Market Committee	Maintained target range to 0.0% to 0.25%
Jul 14, 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.