

# ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT OF FUND PERFORMANCE

For the period ended December 31, 2023

Fixed Income Private Portfolio

# **NBI Non-Traditional Fixed Income Private Portfolio**

# Notes on forward-looking statements

This report may contain forward-looking statements concerning the Fund, its future performance, its strategies or prospects or about future events or circumstances. Such forward-looking statements include, among others, statements with respect to our beliefs, plans, expectations, estimates and intentions. The use of the expressions "foresee", "intend", "anticipate", "estimate", "assume", "believe" and "expect" and other similar terms and expressions indicate forward-looking statements.

By their very nature, forward-looking statements imply the use of assumptions and necessarily involve inherent risks and uncertainties. Consequently, there is a significant risk that the explicit or implicit forecasts contained in these forward-looking statements might not materialize or that they may not prove to be accurate in the future. A number of factors could cause future results, conditions or events to differ materially from the objectives, expectations, estimates or intentions expressed in such forward-looking statements. Such differences might be caused by several factors, including changes in Canadian and worldwide economic and financial conditions (in particular interest and exchange rates and the prices of other financial instruments), market trends, new regulatory provisions, competition, changes in technology and the potential impact of conflicts and other international events.

The foregoing list of factors is not exhaustive. Before making any investment decision, investors and others relying on our forward-looking statements should carefully consider the foregoing factors and other factors. We caution readers not to rely unduly on these forward-looking statements. We assume no obligation to update forward-looking statements in the light of new information, future events or other circumstances unless applicable legislation so provides.

This annual management report of fund performance contains financial highlights, but does not contain the complete annual financial statements of the investment fund. You can get a copy of the annual financial statements at your request, and at no cost, by calling 1-888-270-3941 or 514-871-2082, by writing to us at National Bank Investments Advisory Service, 500, Place d'Armes, 12th floor, Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 2W3, by visiting our website at www.nbinvestments.ca, by visiting SEDAR+'s website at www.sedarplus.ca, or by contacting your advisor. You may also contact us using one of these methods to request a copy of the investment fund's proxy voting policies and procedures, proxy voting disclosure.

## **Management Discussion of Fund Performance**

#### **Investment Objective and Strategies**

The NBI Non-Traditional Fixed Income Private Portfolio's investment objective is to provide current income while focusing on capital preservation. The Fund invests directly, or through investments in securities of other mutual funds, in a portfolio composed mainly of fixed income securities of issuers around the world selected using different nontraditional investment strategies.

The Fund's investment process is based on selecting mutual funds that offer exposure to the different asset classes mentioned above and to a combination of non-traditional investment strategies aimed at obtaining a low correlation with the main market indices. The portfolio manager selects mutual funds by applying risk management strategies, including tactical global diversification strategies and rotation among various asset classes.

#### Risks

The Fund's risk level was modified from "low" to "low to medium" during the year. This change aims to more accurately reflect the Fund's actual risk level.

# **Results of Operations**

For the twelve-month period ended December 31, 2023, the NBI Non-Traditional Fixed Income Private Portfolio's Series F units returned 9.05% compared to 8.33% for the Fund's blended benchmark. The broad-based index, the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (CAD Hedged), returned 12.45%. Unlike the benchmark, the Fund's performance is calculated after fees and expenses. Please see the *Past Performance* section for the returns of all of the Fund's series, which may vary mainly because of fees and expenses.

Certain series of the Fund, as applicable, may make distributions at a rate determined by the manager. This rate may change from time to time. If the aggregate amount of distributions in such series exceeds the portion of net income and net realized capital gains allocated to such series, the excess will constitute a return of capital. The manager does not believe that the return of capital distributions made by such series of the Fund have a meaningful impact on the Fund's ability to implement its investment strategy or to fulfill its investment objective.

The Fund's net asset value rose by 43.16% over the period, from \$1.281 billion as at December 31, 2022 to \$1.834 billion as at December 31, 2023.

The increase stemmed mainly from a rebalancing of the managed solutions offered by NBI.

Turbulence within U.S. regional banks, conflict in the Middle East, advances in artificial intelligence, record fluctuations in interest rates, hope for a soft landing: once again this year, the economic environment has not been kind to investors. Yet, with inflation slowing, the economy holding up, and the Federal Reserve opening the door to potential rate cuts, 2023 ended positively for most investors, with equities, bonds, and even cash posting appreciable gains over the period. Quite a contrast after a particularly trying 2022 on the markets.

On the fixed-income side, while long-term bonds dominated at the end of the year, it was high-yield bonds that ended 2023 with the best performance in the category against a generally positive backdrop for risky securities. Among commodities, oil prices fell over the period, while gold rebounded amid heightened geopolitical tensions. Finally, widespread market optimism resulted in a weaker U.S. dollar against a majority of currencies at year-end, including the Canadian dollar.

Over the period, the Fund outperformed its benchmark. Among the significant contributors to this outperformance, we find the Purpose Structured Equity Income Portfolio II. This fund managed to add value due to the strong performance of the stock markets in recent months. The NBI Global Tactical Bond Fund, on the other hand, benefited from its exposure to bonds in the European and emerging markets to add value. Among the most significant detractors from performance, we note the NBI Unconstrained Fixed Income Fund, which has a lower return than the benchmark due to its underweighting in credit.

#### **Recent Developments**

During the semester, the portfolio initiated a position in the NBI Canadian Preferred Equity Private Portfolio and the NBI High Yield Bond Fund. The duration of the portfolio is lower than the benchmark. The portfolio is also overexposed to credit compared to the benchmark.

On the economic front, with inflation potentially in the Fed's comfort zone as early as in April, we can expect to see central banks gradually shift their rhetoric to pave the way for rate cuts in the second half of 2024 in the U.S., and probably even earlier in Canada. Quantifying the extent of the economic slowdown that will accompany this process is not obvious, but with the most restrictive monetary policy since the 1980s and three "no-fault" recession signals now triggered, the risks are on the downside. Moreover, with market sentiment in "extreme optimism" territory as quantified by the manager's model, it seems that the soft-landing scenario, while not impossible, is already widely discounted.

Against this backdrop, the manager continues to favor defensive positioning, with a preference for bond markets. In over 50 years, there has never been a bear market trough with a recession before the onset of the latter. In parallel, it is common to see bond yields fall significantly during (and sometimes slightly after) a major economic downturn.

Within bond markets, the manager sees this backdrop as continuing to militate in favor of a cautious positioning, with a slightly longer duration and a neutral allocation to corporate credit at most.

On May 1, 2023, the Fund's independent review committee (the "IRC") was increased to four members when Stéphanie Raymond-Bougie was appointed as IRC member.

On July 1, 2023, the benchmark was modified to better reflect the categories of assets in which the Fund invests. The previous benchmark was the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (CAD Hedged).

# **Related Party Transactions**

National Bank of Canada ("the Bank") and its affiliated companies' roles and responsibilities related to the Fund are as follows:

#### Trustee

National Bank Trust Inc. ("NBT"), a wholly-owned indirect subsidiary of the Bank, is the Fund's trustee. In this capacity, it is the legal owner of the Fund's investments.

## **Custodian and Registrar**

Natcan Trust Company ("NTC") acts as registrar for the Fund's securities and the names of securityholders. NTC also acts as the Fund's custodian. The fees for NTC's custodial services are based on the standard rates in effect at NTC.

## **Fund Manager**

The Fund is managed by National Bank Investments Inc. ("NBII"), which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Bank. Therefore, NBII provides or ensures the provision of all general management and administrative services required by the Fund's current operations, including investment consulting, the arrangement of brokerage contracts for the purchase and sale of the investment portfolio, bookkeeping and other administrative services required by the Fund.

The Manager pays the operating expenses of the Fund other than its "Fund costs" (defined below) (the "variable operating expenses"), in exchange for the Fund's payment to the Manager of annual fixed-rate administration fees with respect to each series of the Fund.

The administration fees are equal to a specified percentage of the net asset value of each series of the Fund, calculated and paid in the same manner as the Fund's management fees. The variable operating expenses payable by the Manager include, but are not limited to: transfer agency and recordkeeping costs; custodial costs; accounting and valuation fees; audit fees and legal fees; costs of preparing and distributing financial reports, simplified prospectuses, annual information forms, Fund Facts, continuous disclosure material and other securityholder communications; and costs of trustee services relating to registered tax plans, as applicable.

In addition to administration fees, the Fund shall also pay certain Fund costs, namely: taxes (including, but not limited to, GST/HST and income taxes); costs of compliance with any changes to existing governmental or regulatory requirements introduced after August 1, 2013; costs of compliance with any new governmental or regulatory requirements, including any new fees introduced after August 1, 2013; interest and borrowing costs; costs related to external services that were not commonly charged in the Canadian mutual fund industry as at August 1, 2013; Independent Review Committee costs, including compensation paid to IRC members, travel expenses, insurance premiums and costs associated with their continuing education; and variable operating expenses incurred outside of the normal course of business of the Fund.

The Manager may, from time to time and at its sole discretion, decide to absorb a portion of a series' management fees, administration fees or Fund costs.

As described under the heading *Management Fees*, the Fund pays annual management fees to NBII as consideration for its services.

#### Portfolio Manager

The Manager has appointed National Bank Trust Inc. ("NBT"), an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of the Bank, as the portfolio manager for the Fund. A flat fee is payable annually to NBT for its management services.

## **Distribution and Dealer Compensation**

National Bank Financial Inc. ("NBF") acts as principal distributor for the Advisor Series, Series F, Series F5 or Series T5 of the Fund. NBF may receive, depending on the distributed series, a monthly commission representing a percentage of the average daily value of the securities held by its clients.

NBII acts as principal distributor for the Series N and Series NR of the Fund. Trailing commissions are covered by NBI Private Wealth Management's service fees, which are paid directly by investors.

#### **Registered Plan Trust Services**

NBT receives a fixed amount per registered account for services provided as trustee for registered plans.

### **Administrative and Operating Services**

The provision of certain services was delegated by the Fund Manager, NBII, to National Bank Trust Inc. ("NBT"), a wholly-owned indirect subsidiary of the Bank. These include accounting, reporting and portfolio valuation services. The fees incurred for these services are paid to NBT by the Fund manager.

#### **Management Fees**

The Fund pays annual management fees to the Fund manager for its management services. As the Fund invests in underlying funds, the fees and expenses payable in connection with the management of the underlying funds are in addition to those payable by the Fund. However, the Fund manager makes sure that the Fund does not pay any management (or operating) fees that, to a reasonable person, would duplicate a fee payable by the underlying fund for the same service.

The fees are calculated based on a percentage of the Fund's daily net asset value before applicable taxes and are paid on a monthly basis. Under the *Distribution* heading, expenses include the broker's compensation consisting of the maximum annual trailer fees and sales commissions paid to brokers. Under the *Other* heading, the fees relate mainly to investment management, investment advisory services, general administration and profit.

The management fees paid by the Fund only cover management of fund investments, i.e. the fees related to management of fund portfolios constituting the profiles of the NBI Private Wealth Management service ("PWM"). General administration services, trailer fees and sale commissions paid to brokers are covered by the PWM's service fees, which are paid directly by investors. The breakdown of major services provided in consideration of the management fees, expressed as an approximate percentage of the management fees is as follows:

Series	Management Fees	Distribution	Others <sup>†</sup>
Series F	0.60%	_	100.00%
Series N and Series NR*	0.60%	_	100.00%

<sup>(\*)</sup> Includes all costs related to management, investment advisory services, general administration and profit.

#### **Past Performance**

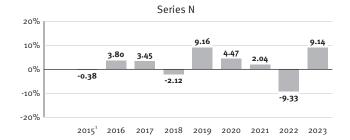
The performance of each series of the Fund is presented below and calculated as at December 31 of each year. It assumes that all distributions made in the periods shown were reinvested in additional securities and does not take into account sales, redemption charges, distributions, or optional charges that would have reduced returns. Past performance of a series of a Fund does not necessarily indicate how it will perform in the future.

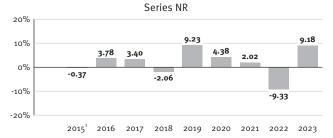
#### **Annual Returns**

The bar charts indicate the performance for each the Fund's series in existence greater than one year during the years shown, and illustrate how the performance has changed from year to year. They show, in percentage terms, how much an investment made on January 1 (or made commencing from the start of the series) would have grown or decreased by December 31 of that year, in the case of the Annual management report of fund performance, or by June 30, in the case of the Interim management report of fund performance.



<sup>(°)</sup> For Series N and NR, offered only to investors using the NBI Private Wealth Management service ("PWM"), management fees only cover management of fund investments, i.e. the fees related to management of fund portfolios constituting the PWM profiles. General administration services, trailer fees and sale commissions paid to brokers are covered by the PWM's service fees, which are paid directly by investors.





<sup>(9)</sup> Returns for the period from October 28, 2015 (commencement of operations) to December 31, 2015.

## **Annual Compounded Performance**

The following table shows the Fund's annual compound returns for each series in existence greater than one year and for each of the periods ended on December 31, 2023, compared with the following benchmark:

The blended benchmark (the "Benchmark") is composed of:

- Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (CAD Hedged) (67%)
- ICE BofA US High Yield Constrained Index (CAD Hedged) (33%)

The broad-based index is the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (CAD Hedged).

#### **NBI Non-Traditional Fixed Income Private Portfolio**

	1 year	3 years	5 years	10 years	inception
Series F <sup>1</sup>	9.05%	-	-	_	4.39%
Benchmark	8.33%	-	-	-	5.06%
Broad-based index	12.45%	-	-	-	11.61%
Series N <sup>2</sup>	9.14%	0.32%	2.86%	_	2.31%
Benchmark	8.33%	(1.17)%	2.15%	_	2.52%
Broad-based index	12.45%	1.44%	4.35%	-	4.54%
Series NR <sup>2</sup>	9.18%	0.33%	2.86%	-	2.31%
Benchmark	8.33%	(1.17)%	2.15%	-	2.52%
Broad-based index	12.45%	1.44%	4.35%	_	4.54%

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Commencement of operations: May 20, 2022

A discussion of the Fund's relative performance in comparison to the index (or indices) can be found in the *Results of Operations* Section of this report.

### **Index Description**

The **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index**, hedged in CAD, is a market capitalization weighted index which is designed to measure the broad global markets for corporate, government, governmental agency, supranational, mortgage-backed and asset backed fixed income securities.

The ICE BofA US High Yield Constrained Index, hedged in CAD, is composed of U.S. dollar-denominated, high yield corporate bonds that have at least \$250 million of outstanding face value, have an original maturity date of at least 18 months; and have at least one year to maturity. The Index contains all securities in the ICE BofA US High Yield Index but caps issuer exposure at 2%. Index constituents are capitalization-weighted, based on their current amount outstanding, provided the total allocation to an individual issuer does not exceed 2%.

The benchmark was modified to better reflect the categories of assets in which the Fund invests. The information related to the previous benchmark is presented below.

The previous benchmark was the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index (CAD Hedged).

#### **NBI Non-Traditional Fixed Income Private Portfolio**

	1 year	3 years	5 years	10 years	Since inception
Series F <sup>1</sup> Benchmark	9.05% 6.33%	-	-	-	4.39% 1.85%
Series N <sup>2</sup>	9.14%	0.32%	2.86%	-	2.31%
Benchmark	6.33%	(2.47)%	0.98%		1.46%
Series NR <sup>2</sup>	9.18%	0.33%	2.86%	-	2.31%
Benchmark	6.33%	(2.47)%	0.98%		1.46%

¹Commencement of operations: May 20, 2022

<sup>(2)</sup> Returns for the period from May 20, 2022 (commencement of operations) to December 31, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Commencement of operations: October 28, 2015

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Commencement of operations: October 28, 2015

# **Financial Highlights**

The following tables show selected key financial information about the Fund and are intended to help you understand the Fund's financial performance for the accounting periods shown.

## **Series F**

Net Assets per Unit <sup>(t)</sup>	Commencement of operations: May 20, 2022

2023 December 31	2022 December 31	
9.38	10.00	
0.34	0.71	
(0.08)	(0.05)	
(0.01)	(0.27)	
0.58	(0.26)	
0.83	0.13	
0.16	0.41	
0.04	0.04	
_	_	
_	_	
0.20	0.45	
10.02	9.38	
	0.34 (0.08) (0.01) 0.58 0.83 0.16 0.04 —	December 31 December 31   9.38 10.00   0.34 0.71   (0.08) (0.05)   (0.01) (0.27)   0.58 (0.26)   0.83 0.13   0.16 0.41   0.04 0.04   - -   - -   0.20 0.45

# Ratios and Supplemental Data

Accounting Period Ended	2023	2022
	December 31	December 31
Total net asset value (ooo's of \$) (5)	11,975	13,831
Number of units outstanding (5)	1,194,544	1,474,445
Management expense ratio (%) <sup>(6)</sup>	0.91	0.93
Management expense ratio before waivers or absorptions (%)	0.92	0.93
Trading expense ratio (%) (7)	0.10	0.10
Portfolio turnover rate (%) (8)	28.70	5.48
Net asset value per unit (\$)	10.02	9.38

# Series N / Private Series\*

Net Assets per Unit<sup>(1)</sup> Commencement of operations: October 28, 2015

Accounting Period Ended	2023 December 31	2022 December 31	2021 December 31	2020 December 31	2019 December 31
Net Assets, Beginning of Accounting Period Shown (4)	8.98	10.37	10.32	10.12	9.50
Increase (Decrease) from Operations (\$)					
Total revenue	0.33	0.47	0.27	0.27	0.34
Total expenses	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Realized gains (losses)	(0.01)	(0.09)	0.02	0.11	0.01
Unrealized gains (losses)	0.55	(1.34)	_	0.22	0.59
Total Increase (Decrease) from Operations (\$) (2)	0.79	(1.04)	0.20	0.51	0.85
Distributions (\$)					
From net investment income (excluding dividends)	0.21	0.38	0.14	0.12	0.10
From dividends	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.06	0.14
From capital gains	_	_	0.01	0.06	_
Return of capital	_	_	_	_	_
Total Annual Distributions (\$) <sup>(3)</sup>	0.25	0.42	0.16	0.24	0.24
Net Assets, End of Accounting Period Shown (\$) (4)	9.54	8.98	10.37	10.32	10.12

# Ratios and Supplemental Data

Accounting Period Ended	2023 December 31	2022 December 31	2021 December 31	2020 December 31	2019 December 31
Total net asset value (ooo's of \$) (5)	1,797,821	1,249,433	1,640,055	1,406,501	950,337
Number of units outstanding (5)	188,486,513	139,112,469	158,185,878	136,333,339	93,871,829
Management expense ratio (%) (6)	0.91	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.95
Management expense ratio before waivers or absorptions (%)	0.92	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.95
Trading expense ratio (%) (7)	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.01
Portfolio turnover rate (%) (8)	28.70	5.48	14.59	8.79	31.94
Net asset value per unit (\$)	9.54	8.98	10.37	10.32	10.12

 $<sup>^{(\</sup>prime)}$  Please note that the Private Series was created on November 28, 2016, and is offered by way of private placement.

Net Assets per Unit<sup>(1)</sup>

Commencement of operations: October 28, 2015

Accounting Period Ended	2023 December 31	2022 December 31	2021 December 31	2020 December 31	2019 December 31
Net Assets, Beginning of Accounting Period Shown (4)	7.62	9.05	9.28	9.33	8.91
Increase (Decrease) from Operations (\$)					
Total revenue	0.28	0.42	0.24	0.24	0.31
Total expenses	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Realized gains (losses)	_	(0.08)	0.02	0.09	0.01
Unrealized gains (losses)	0.44	(1.13)	0.01	0.14	0.55
Total Increase (Decrease) from Operations (\$) (2)	0.65	(0.86)	0.19	0.39	0.79
Distributions (\$)					
From net investment income (excluding dividends)	0.18	0.33	0.12	0.11	0.10
From dividends	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.06	0.13
From capital gains	_	_	0.01	0.05	_
Return of capital	0.10	0.23	0.27	0.22	0.17
Total Annual Distributions (\$) (3)	0.31	0.59	0.41	0.44	0.40
Net Assets, End of Accounting Period Shown (\$) (4)	7.99	7.62	9.05	9.28	9.33

Ratios and Supplemental Data

Accounting Period Ended	2023 December 31	2022 December 31	2021 December 31	2020 December 31	2019 December 31
Total net asset value (ooo's of \$) (5)	24,065	17,751	21,840	19,339	17,181
Number of units outstanding (5)	3,012,244	2,328,172	2,412,485	2,084,086	1,841,902
Management expense ratio (%) (6)	0.91	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.95
Management expense ratio before waivers or absorptions (%)	0.92	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.95
Trading expense ratio (%) (7)	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.01
Portfolio turnover rate (%) (8)	28.70	5.48	14.59	8.79	31.94
Net asset value per unit (\$)	7.99	7.62	9.05	9.28	9.33

<sup>(1)</sup> This information is derived from the Fund's Annual Audited Financial Statements. The net assets per unit presented in the financial statements might differ from the net asset value calculated for fund pricing purposes. The differences are explained in the notes to the financial statements.

<sup>(2)</sup> Net assets and distributions are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase or decrease from operations is based on the average number of units outstanding over the accounting period.

 $<sup>^{(3)}</sup>$  Distributions were paid in cash or reinvested in additional units of the Fund, or both.

<sup>(4)</sup> The net assets are calculated in accordance with IFRS.

 $<sup>^{(</sup>s)}$  This information is provided as at the last day of the accounting period shown.

<sup>(6)</sup> Management expense ratio is based on total expenses including sales taxes for the accounting period indicated (excluding commission, other portfolio transaction costs and withholding taxes) and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net value during the accounting period. The management expense ratio includes, if necessary, the management expenses from its underlying funds, as described in Article 15.2 of Regulation 81-106.

<sup>(</sup>a) The trading expense ratio represents total commissions and other portfolio transaction costs expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the accounting period. The trading expense ratio includes, if necessary, the trading expenses from its underlying funds, as described in Article 15.2 of Regulation 81-106.

<sup>(8)</sup> The Fund's portfolio turnover rate indicates how actively the Fund portfolio's manager manages its portfolio investments. A portfolio turnover rate of 100% is equivalent to the Fund buying and selling all of the securities in its portfolio once in the course of the accounting period. The higher a Fund's portfolio turnover rate in an accounting period, the greater the trading costs payable by the Fund in the accounting period, and the greater the chance of an investor receiving taxable capital gains in the accounting period. There is not necessarily a relationship between a high turnover rate and the performance of a Fund.

# **Summary of Investment Portfolio**

## As of December 31, 2023

### **Portfolio Top Holdings**

	% of Net
	Asset Value
NBI Unconstrained Fixed Income Fund, Series O	36.7
Purpose Structured Equity Yield Portfolio II	
RP Strategic Income Plus Fund, Class O	9 <b>.</b> 8
Manulife Strategic Income Fund, Series I	9.7
NBI High Yield Bond Fund, Series O	
NBI Global Tactical Bond Fund, Series O US	7.4
NBI Floating Rate Income Fund, Series O	1.9
NBI Canadian Preferred Equity Private Portfolio	
Cash, Money Market and Other Net Assets	(o <b>.</b> 3)
	100.0

Net asset value \$1,833,861,415

#### **Term Allocation**

	% of Net
	Asset Value
Under one year	
From 1 year to 5 years	<b>1.1</b>
From 5 years to 10 years	95.2
More than 10 years	2.6
Credit Quality	
	% of Net
	Asset Value
AAA	28.6
AA	
٨	
A	16.7
A	
	29.7

The above table shows the top 25 positions held by the Fund. In the case of a Fund with fewer than 25 positions, all positions are indicated.

The Summary of Investment Portfolio may change due to ongoing portfolio transactions of the investment Fund. A quarterly update is available. Please consult our website at www.nbinvestments.ca.

If this investment Fund invests in other investment funds, please consult the prospectus and other information about the underlying investment funds on the website indicated above or on SEDAR+'s website at www.sedarplus.ca.