

Wealth Insights

Personal Newsletter from The Riedl Group

SUMMER 2021



The Riedl Group

National Bank Financial
Wealth Management

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As we find ourselves at the halfway mark of another year that has required continued endurance, there is hope that we are emerging from the worst of the pandemic. With the return of summer, our perseverance and resilience should be rewarded. Wishing you many days of well-deserved relaxation this summer.

—The Riedl Group

Our advisory practice is built on the satisfaction of clients like you. Thank you to those of you who have introduced us to family, friends and colleagues who can benefit from our experience, support and advice.

We continue to welcome new clients and are grateful for such referrals. We will, of course, deal with them in the strictest of confidence. Whether it is a fresh opinion on an existing portfolio or advice relating to a new situation, we are here to help.

Cutting Through the Noise

There is an old saying in the investment industry: “Don’t confuse brains with a bull market.” The inference, of course, is that it’s easy to pick winners when markets are rising. The challenges emerge when the markets change their course, as they always do. With the tremendous proliferation of investment information available through the internet and other sources, a modern corollary might be: “Information is not the same as advice.”

Technology continues to make information more widely, and instantaneously, available. This has provided the opportunity for investors to make more informed decisions. However, this also comes with pitfalls. Primarily, the difficulty arises in interpretation. Prudent evaluation often requires specialized skills and insight. It also involves cutting through the noise to focus on the most important factors when making investment decisions.

In buoyant markets, the noise can be amplified. Rising markets provide confidence for investors to take on more risky behaviours. New innovation can also make it difficult for many to assess risks, because expectations are largely driven by hope and uncertainty about the future.

Today is no exception. In May, the cryptocurrency Dogecoin, a joke between two engineers named after a “doge meme,”¹ became the fourth most valuable digital currency after gaining 14,000 percent this year. This was much to the surprise of its cofounder, who reportedly created it in “a few hours” and sold his holdings in 2015.² Similarly, SPAC issuances have surged, prompting regulators to issue warnings. SPACs sell shares with the objective of buying a private company to take public. They are known as “blank cheque” companies for a reason: they have no operating business and often no stated acquisition targets. With increasing endorsements by celebrities, investors have been warned not to be “lured into participating in a risky investment.”³

It’s easy to get caught up in the excitement — we’d all like to ride the next superstar investment to financial freedom. We may also feel that we aren’t successful investors unless we are in the middle of the action. Yet, when there is too much enthusiasm for what appears to be a good opportunity, it can prove unsustainable; the warning signs often only apparent to the astute.

Some of the most successful investors are able to ignore the noise when they make portfolio decisions. They follow the specific rules established to control risk within a portfolio. While such an approach may not produce the results that make overnight headlines, it provides a good litmus test to avoid being carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment.

As we look ahead, we’ve needed greater endurance than other nations in the return to normalcy. With strengthened commodity prices, the reopening of certain economies and increasing inflationary pressures, the investing landscape looks different than just a year ago. The changing times are precisely when trusted advisors can provide thoughtful evaluation and scrutiny in investment choices. Enjoy the market advances, but continue to look forward and use our resources to help you reach your own investment goals.

1. Meme: an amusing captioned picture/video widely spread online through social media; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doge_(meme); 2. markets.businessinsider.com/currencies/news/dogecoin-price-rally-eclipses-xrp-4th-largest-crypto-doge-2021-5-1030391242; 3. Special Purpose Acquisition Company; sec.gov/oiea/investor-alerts-and-bulletins/celebrity-involvement-spacs-investor-alert

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In Short: The 2021 Federal Budget — How It May Affect You

In April, the federal government released its first federal budget in two years. Perhaps most notably, the federal government expects to continue its significant spending — over \$101 billion for the next three years — to support strong economic recovery in the fight against Covid-19. It extended various emergency benefits, resulting in a record deficit and significantly higher projected debt for the foreseeable future.

Some would argue that the excessive spending has Canada wading into “Modern Monetary Theory” (MMT) waters. MMT suggests that federal government spending shouldn’t be constrained by its revenues, which are largely created through taxation. It suggests that countries that issue their own fiat currency should determine what their requirements are and spend accordingly, not worrying about running larger deficits as long as inflation is under control. Given the pledged spending, it may seem as though Canada is embracing this new way of economic thinking. And we’re not the only ones. Many governments have followed suit, with an estimated US\$12 trillion spent globally in just the first 8 months of the pandemic.¹

While the future economic consequences are yet to be seen, the injection of significant liquidity into the economy appears to be having inflationary effects. We see increasing commodity prices (lumber prices have more than tripled this year!) and steepening grocery bills, as just some examples. Beyond the spending spree, the budget had no changes to personal or corporate income tax rates. Here is how you may be impacted:*

For Seniors: Extending Benefits — Seniors who are 75 years or older as of June, 2022 will receive a one-time Old Age Security (OAS) payment of \$500 by this August. For this same group, monthly OAS payments will be increased by 10 percent beginning in July, 2022. If you aren’t in need of these funds, consider investing them. If you haven’t maxed out contributions, a tax-free savings account is an ideal way to potentially grow funds on a tax-free basis.

For Investors: Green Investing — The budget pledges \$8.8 billion over five years to support a greener future, including the issuing of \$5



billion of green bonds to finance green projects. The budget suggests that the presence of government backed bonds may support more mature investors who are “looking for a green portfolio but also need to manage their investment risk.”² With the rise in support for green investing, if you are interested in incorporating environmental factors into your portfolio, please call the office.

For High-Net-Worth Spenders: A Luxury Tax — If you’re considering the purchase of a luxury vehicle in the near future, you may want to do so by Dec. 31, 2021. As of January 1, 2022, sales of cars and personal aircraft with a retail price of over \$100,000, as well as boats priced over \$250,000, will incur a new tax. It will be calculated at the lesser of 20 percent of the value above those thresholds, or 10 percent of the full value of the vehicle.

For Business Owners: Accounting for Capital Assets — If you operate a Canadian-controlled private corporation, the business will now be able to purchase up to \$1.5 million of certain capital assets and fully expense these in the year they become available for use. This includes eligible assets purchased on or after April 19, 2021 and before 2024. There may be tax benefits achieved by immediately expensing certain assets so please consult a tax professional as it relates to your situation.

For greater detail on the initiatives proposed, see the Government of Canada website: budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html

1. theglobeandmail.com/business/article-whatever-we-may-think-of-modern-monetary-theory-its-day-in-the-sun-has/; 2. Budget 2021: A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth and Resilience, Government of Canada, page 166. *At the time of writing, the budget proposals had not been passed into law.

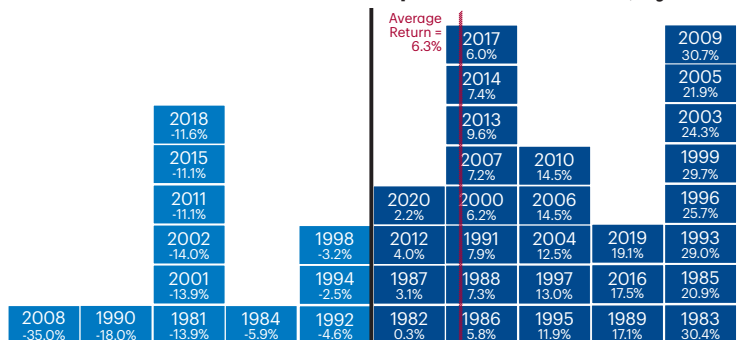
Stock Market Returns: Never a Constant

During buoyant market times, it may be easy to forget that advances in the equity markets often do not happen at a constant rate.

The chart to the right shows the annual returns of the S&P/TSX Composite Index over the past 40 years. It’s worth pointing out how the distribution of returns has significantly varied over this period. In fact, only 20 percent of annual returns fall within the long-term average return of 6.3 percent over the past four decades.

Most of us are longer-term investors and will invest over multiple market cycles. While we should enjoy the market’s advances, we shouldn’t forget that patience, through time in the markets, is often key in helping to provide predictability in investment returns over the longer term.

Annual Returns of S&P/TSX Composite 1981 to 2020, By Year



Source: S&P/TSX Composite Index annual returns, 1981 to 2020, not including dividends reinvested.

Estate Planning: Preparing for a Wealth Transfer

With over one trillion dollars of inheritances expected to be passed along over the next decade, taking action to preserve wealth across generations has never been more important¹. Does your estate plan protect this wealth transfer? Here are some considerations:

Preventing Your Estate from Being Contested

It isn't uncommon for disputes to arise during the estate settlement process, especially for families with complex dynamics. In some cases, these disputes can escalate to litigation. While court battles are not only time consuming and stressful, they can also end up being very costly, which can significantly erode family wealth. Perhaps worst of all, they can tear families apart. The reasons are many, including outdated documentation, poorly drafted documents, poorly chosen executor(s) and lack of communication about estate plans with beneficiaries.

There may be ways to minimize this risk. Communicating with heirs about your intentions while you are alive can help to prevent surprises. Importantly, estate documents should be drafted using a reputable professional and should include specific instructions to eliminate doubt. Documents should be reviewed and updated as circumstances require. Care should also be taken when choosing an executor(s), as poor actions by executors can lead to litigation.

Helping Beneficiaries Manage a Wealth Transfer

In some cases, beneficiaries may need support to manage wealth. Young beneficiaries or those with disabilities may not be financially responsible; spouses may need help managing assets such as investments or a business. Beneficiaries may also need to be protected against potential current or future creditors, such as business partners,

customers or former spouses.

One of the more common tools used to support beneficiaries is a testamentary trust to hold and manage assets for their benefit. This can help to limit access and manage assets by specifying the timing and amount of distributions to be made.



Accounting for Divorce or Blended Family Dynamics

The transfer of family wealth may need to be protected to account for a complex family structure. In some cases, the way in which assets are currently structured may not be meeting your objectives. For instance, having assets jointly held in a current relationship may unintentionally put children from a previous marriage at risk. An unintended division of assets may also occur if a current spouse becomes a primary beneficiary, when assets were intended for children from a previous marriage. In some provinces, a new marriage can potentially revoke an existing will and the instructions leaving assets to children from a previous marriage would be invalidated. As such, the advice of a lawyer who understands complex family structures can ensure that assets are passed along as intended.

If you have the desire to leave a lasting legacy, planning ahead can help protect family wealth. Given our familiarity with your financial position, we can act as a resource. We recommend the support of tax and legal professionals as it relates to your particular situation.

1. financialpost.com/personal-finance/retirement/canadian-inheritances-could-hit-1-trillion-over-the-next-decade-and-both-bequeathers-and-beneficiaries-need-to-be-ready

Tax Planning: A Spousal Rollover May Not Always Make Sense

In married or common-law partnerships, using a spousal rollover¹ has become a conventional strategy for many estate plans. Under a spousal rollover, any associated capital gains on certain capital property or registered plan income that transfers to a surviving spouse will be deferred until the spouse disposes of, or is deemed to have disposed of, those assets or withdraws them (in the case of registered plans).

However, in some cases, there may be reasons why it may not make sense. Why? While deferring tax is often beneficial, it can also result in unintended consequences. Take, for example, a situation in which a surviving spouse rolls their deceased spouse's Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF) to their own RRIF. This increases their RRIF minimum annual withdrawal requirements. The higher income results in a higher marginal rate of taxation, and the spouse is now subject to the Old Age Security clawback.

Some forward planning could have potentially reduced the overall tax-related burden. For instance, it may have been better for the deceased spouse to bleed down their RRIF in the years in which they had a lower marginal tax rate. Or, it may have made sense for the RRIF to be partially converted to cash upon death, with only a portion transferred to the surviving spouse's RRIF.

Electing to Not Use the Spousal Rollover

Be aware that an automatic rollover of capital property occurs, for tax purposes, upon the death of the first spouse. As such, an election will need to be made to not use the spousal rollover on a property-by-property basis. Here are some other situations in which electing to not use the spousal rollover may make sense:

- The deceased's marginal tax rate is low on the date-of-death return.
- The deceased has capital losses carried forward from previous years that can be used to offset realized capital gains.
- The deceased owns qualified small business corporation shares with unrealized capital gains or an unused lifetime capital gains exemption.
- The deceased has property with an accrued loss, which may be used to offset accrued capital gains on other properties.

Having flexibility in tax planning by using — or not using — the spousal rollover may have its benefits. Seek the advice of a tax-planning expert as you plan ahead for your particular situation.

1. For tax purposes, a person is generally deemed to have disposed of capital property at fair market value immediately before death. While there may not have been an actual sale, there may be associated gains or losses realized for tax purposes. Unless a rollover is available, the fair market value of a registered plan is included in the deceased's income in the year of death. A spousal rollover is available where such property is transferred to a surviving spouse/common-law partner.

Talking to Adult Children: The Hot Housing Market

For those of us who can remember, the average cost of a Canadian home was around \$164,000 when we started the millennium.¹ In just over 20 years, this has risen to around \$716,000 — and, what you get for that price can vary depending upon your location.²

What is driving these increases? Lack of supply in some markets has helped push prices higher. As prices continue to increase, many buyers have entered the markets feeling a sense of urgency and fear of missing out. Low borrowing costs have also prompted some to take on mortgages beyond their means. With prices at all-time highs, there has also been increasing speculation.

The situation is especially discouraging for the younger generation who may feel as though home ownership is quickly becoming out of reach. In a recent interview, Robert Kelly, former Chair of the Canadian Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC), suggested that we have a problem and better education is needed.³ He is an advocate for stiffening the current mortgage rules and suggests that the federal government needs to provide support to increase the housing supply across many markets.

For the younger generation still hoping to enter the housing market, Kelly suggests keeping these four considerations in mind:

Consider that a house is not a guaranteed investment. While we may have become used to a hot housing market, it hasn't always been this way. Kelly points to U.S. housing data over 100 years, which shows an average increase in value of around one percent per year. Buyers need to consider that there are many hidden costs associated with home ownership and, unlike other investments, it often involves a significant up-front cost.

Focus on needs vs. wants. Focusing on what is needed may help buyers to make more prudent decisions. While a 4,000 square foot home may be the aspiration, a smaller footprint is likely to

sufficiently meet an individual's living needs while being more financially achievable.

Factor in the risk of rising interest rates. Consider the impact of a reset in interest rates, one, two or five years down the road. Many mortgage holders may not factor in the likely scenario in which interest rates increase by one percent. Would you still have discretionary income to go on vacation or eat out at restaurants?

Think about absolute debt — and lower it. When holding a mortgage, it is important to consider not just the monthly payments, but also the total amount of debt. The average Canadian household debt-to-income ratio is extremely high at around 175 percent⁴ — the highest of the G7 advanced economies. This puts many individuals at risk of default, such as in the event of a job loss. Kelly suggests that a responsible debt level is around 90 percent, where many G7 countries currently sit.

How About Your Personal Situation?

We have been approached by clients who have asked for perspectives on selling their home. While the gains may be enticing with prices at all-time highs, keep in mind that if you were to sell your home you would still need a place to go — which may incur a financial and perhaps even a lifestyle cost. Care should be taken when evaluating the options. Another option may be to sell a home and then rent, potentially leading to higher discretionary funds to support retirement or to gift to children during your lifetime. Renting may also be more pragmatic for many younger folks, in instances where taking on higher debt loads does not make sense.

1. theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/the-market/canadian-home-value-has-doubled-since-2000-report/article4249097/; 2. cbc.ca/news/canada/photos/canada-real-estate-prices-scroller-16004260; 3. bnnbloomberg.ca/real-estate/video/canada-has-a-problem-former-cmhc-chair-robert-kelly-on-the-nation-s-hot-housing-markets-2160679; 4. ctvnews.ca/business/canadian-households-added-record-mortgage-debt-in-q4-statcan-15344672; <https://data.oecd.org/hha/household-debt.htm>



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