



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Glen Cowan, Chief Financial Officer / Treasurer

Date: March 25, 2024

Report No: CORS-007-24

Subject: 2023 Year End Report on Investments

Recommendation: THAT report CORS-007-24 be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a detailed review of the Town's investment portfolio for the twelve months ending December 31, 2023 with the following information of note:

- The average portfolio balance was \$293.8 million.
- The overall portfolio average return was 3.95% on an annualized basis.
- The Town generated \$11.6 million in investment revenue in 2023, which was \$4.8 million higher than 2022 and exceeded budget by \$3.7 million.

REPORT

Background

This report has been prepared to provide an annual update to Council on the 2023 performance of the Town of Milton's investment portfolio as required by Ontario Regulation 438/97 (as amended) of the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Town's policy No. 116 - Financial Management - Treasury.

All investments made by the Town of Milton are in accordance with the approved Investment Policy which has the following basic objectives, in order of priority:

- i. Adherence to statutory requirements;
- ii. Preservation of principal;
- iii. Ensuring availability of cash to meet disbursements and other obligations;
- iv. Maintaining liquidity;
- v. Diversification of the investment portfolio, commensurate with constraints in (i) to (iv);

Background

- vi. Earning a competitive rate of return, commensurate with constraints in (i) to (v);
- vii. Regular review of the effectiveness of the policy in meeting the above objectives;
- viii. Periodic audit of the investment program to ensure adherence to the policy.

In addition, all investments must meet the eligibility requirements set out by Ontario Regulation 438/97 (as amended), which specifies limits for each type of investment that can be held.

Discussion

Interest Rates

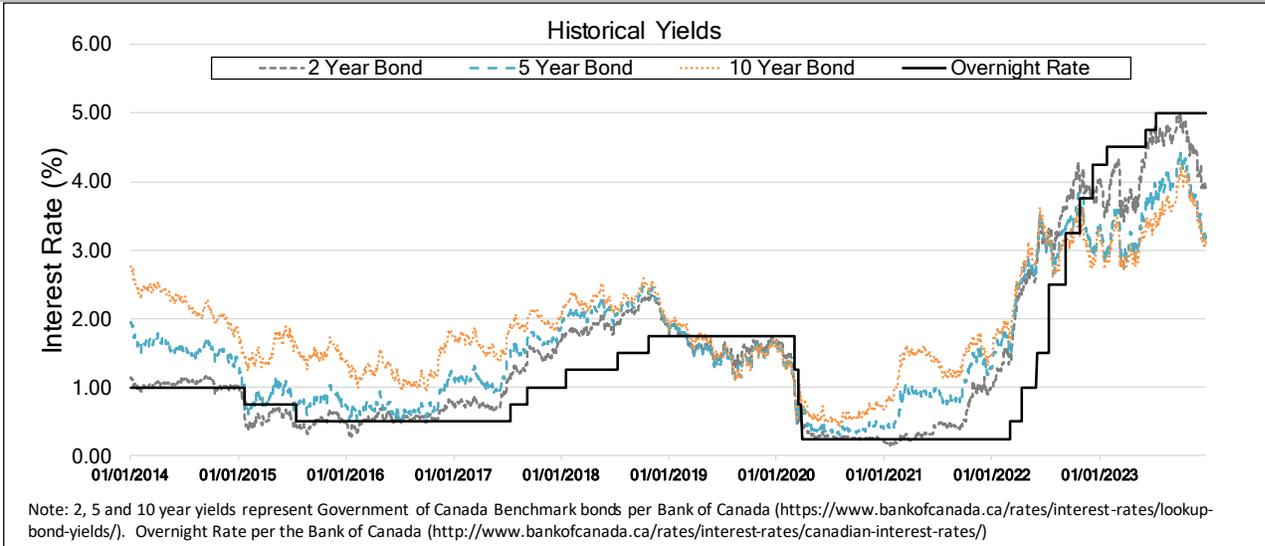
During 2023 the Bank of Canada (BOC) increased the overnight rate by 75 basis points from 4.25% to 5.00% to help address higher levels of inflation which have started to ease from a high of 6.8% in 2022 to 3.9% in 2023. As 2023 progressed, the economy started to slow however it remained more robust than originally anticipated by the BOC due to labour market conditions and sticky levels of inflation. The immediate impact on the Town is the overnight rate directly impacts the return received by the Town on funds in the bank and some short term investments.

Over the course of 2023 yields on longer dated bonds were fairly flat for the first six months of the year. As the market started pricing in decreases in the overnight rate the longer term investment yields declined starting in the Fall of 2023, resulting in an inverted yield curve (short term rates are higher than long term rates). Overall, returns were higher in 2023 than in 2022, for reference, the return on a 5 year Government of Canada bond averaged 3.56% in 2023 (2022 average: 2.78%) and 10 year Government of Canada yields averaged 3.36% in 2023 (2022 average: 2.77%)¹.

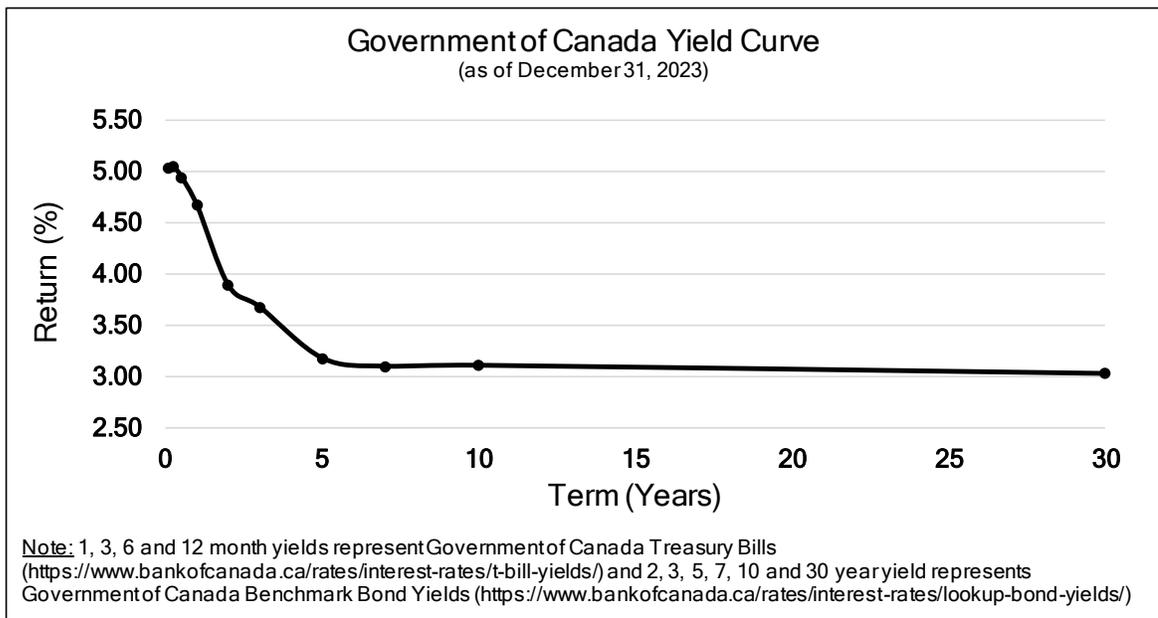
Historical overnight rates and bond yields are illustrated in the graph below which also shows that in 2023 yields increased to the highest levels in the previous ten years.

¹ Bank of Canada. Canadian Bond Yields: 10 Year Lookup table, V39059 Government of Canada Marketable Bonds Average Yield 1 to 3 Year and V39055 Government of Canada Benchmark Bond Yields 10 Year. <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/interest-rates/lookup-bond-yields/>. Accessed February 7, 2023.

Discussion



The chart below shows investment yields at the end of 2023 were inverted (downward sloping) where short term investments have a higher yield than long term investments, assuming the same credit quality, decreasing the financial benefits associated with long-term investment opportunities as compared to short-term.





Discussion

Investment Portfolio

2023 year-end cash and investment holdings for the Town, excluding the Town's investment in Milton Hydro, were as follows:

Investment Holdings (\$ Millions) as of December 31, 2023

Investment Type	Book Value	Market Value	Return in 2023
Cash	\$56.9	\$56.9	5.28%
Short Term	\$0.0	\$0.0	4.00%
Long Term	\$218.3	\$216.3	3.37%
Total	\$275.2	\$273.2	3.95%

Cash

The Town's 2023 year-end cash balance was \$56.9 million, and had an average balance of \$85.3 million. The average yield on cash balances for 2023 was 5.28% generating \$4.5 million in interest.

Short Term Investments

The balance in short term investments (securities with a holding period of one year or less) was \$0.0 at year end as funds were re-invested into longer term investments upon maturity to take advantage of favourable long term rates. During 2023 the average balance was \$11.9 million which generated \$0.5 million in investment income and returned an average yield of 4.00%. The lower overall short term return compared to cash is related to short term deposit notes that were purchased through 2022 at lower rates of return which have now matured in 2023.

Long Term Investments

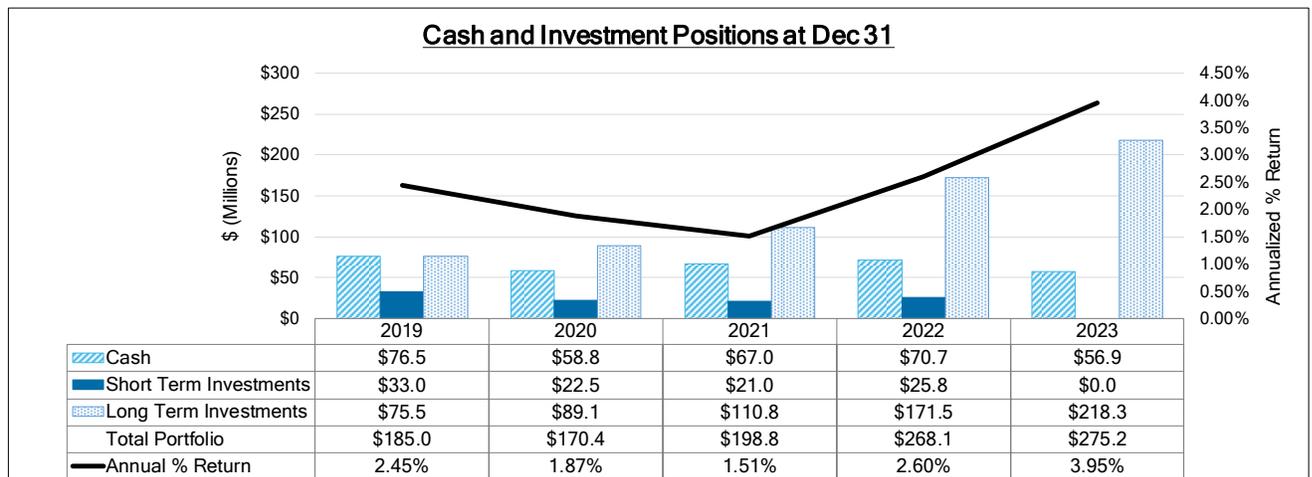
Long term investments had an average balance of \$196.5 million during 2023, generated \$6.6 million in investment income and returned an average yield of 3.37%. At year-end, the Town held 82 securities with a book value of \$218.3 million and a market value of \$216.3 million. This translates into \$2.0 million in unrealized losses due to the rapid rise in interest rates (bond prices decline as yields increase). Consistent with prior years the unrealized losses have not been included in the investment return figures as the Town generally holds investments until maturity and, therefore, the unrealized book losses will have no impact on investment earnings.

Discussion

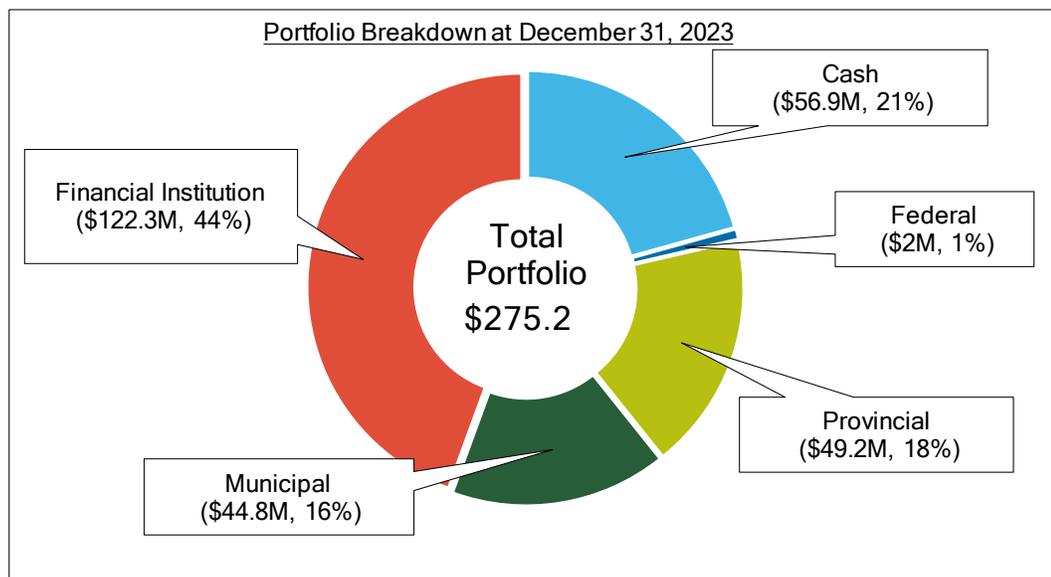
Overall Portfolio

The average rate of return for the year for the entire portfolio was 3.95%, generating \$11.6 million in investment income (includes interest income and amortized premiums or discounts) which is an increase of \$4.8 million when compared to 2023. Due to the rapid increase in interest rates throughout 2023 the overall results were \$3.7 million favourable to budget.

Holdings at year-end and historical returns are compared over the past five years in the following table:



Portfolio Breakdown and Policy Limits





Discussion

The Town's Treasury Policy outlines limitations on holdings, expressed as a percentage of the total portfolio as well as identifying the minimum credit rating for securities based on the classification of the issuing organization and the form of investment. A detailed table showing investment portfolio holding by category as compared to policy limitations is included in Appendix 1. Through report CORS-024-22, Council approved an expansion to the list of eligible investments for the Town that would allow for exposure to the equity market through the ONE equity fund. Given the current market conditions, no investments have been made in that fund. It is expected that when the introduction of that investment product does occur, it will be undertaken on a phased basis.

All securities held in 2023 satisfied the credit rating requirement. In May 2023 the Town purchased a \$2.1 million Region of Halton debenture at a price of \$99.93 bringing the total holdings in Region of Halton Debentures to \$4.1 million, representing approximately 1.5% of the overall portfolio.

Comparisons

Direct comparator information and benchmarking is not easily available due to differing calculation methods for investment returns, different portfolio compositions, term structures and investment strategies.

One alternative that is available to municipalities is products offered by the One Investment Fund. Below are the returns for those funds as noted in their December 2023 Performance Report, noting that the gains experienced in 2023 helped several of the funds recover from the losses that were experienced in 2022.

One Investment Fund Returns for the Period Ending December 31, 2023

Portfolio	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year
Money Market Portfolio	4.65%	N/A	N/A
Canadian Government Bond Portfolio	4.61%	1.34%	1.36%
Canadian Corporate Bond Portfolio	6.25%	1.42%	2.36%
Canadian Equity Portfolio	17.22%	10.41%	9.04%

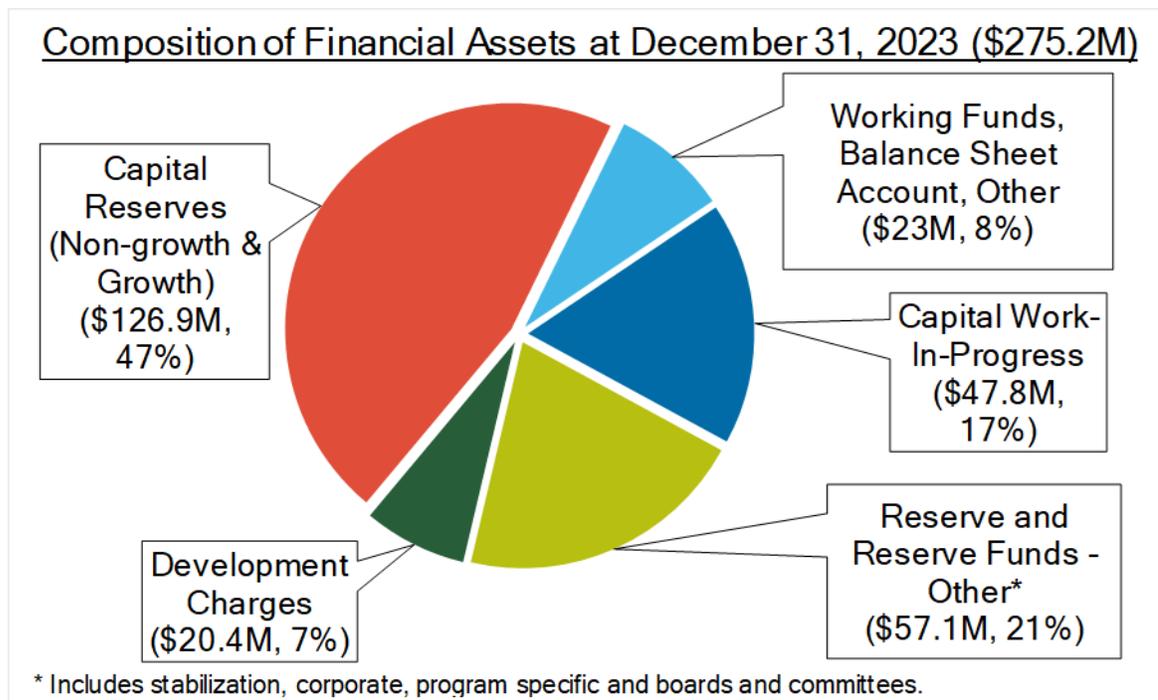
Sources of Funds

The Town's portfolio is comprised of funds held for a variety of purposes, each with its own investment horizon and liquidity needs. As the third priority in Milton's investment policy involves ensuring sufficient cash is available to satisfy the disbursements and obligations of

Discussion

the Town, it is important to remain cognizant of the underlying needs when determining the Town’s investment strategy.

The following table summarizes the primary sources of the Town’s funds at 2023 year end. Although no individual category should be viewed as being entirely correlated to one specific investment timeframe, they have been presented in order of liquidity with the working funds / balance sheet amounts requiring the greatest liquidity (shortest time frame) and the capital reserves generally having a longer investment horizon.



Sinking Fund

In 2015 the Town approved a \$15 million 30 year sinking fund for a portion of the Town’s contribution to the Hospital. The Hospital sinking fund is held and managed by the Region of Halton, for the purposes of retiring the debt at maturity. As a result, the Town’s portfolio balances exclude the sinking fund and the overall investment income excludes any interest income earned on the sinking fund investments.

For 2023, Milton’s contribution to the sinking fund equaled \$302,726 and \$94,088 in return on investment was achieved by the Region of Halton. As such, the year-end value of the fund was \$2,816,716, which exceeds the originally projected year-end balance.



Discussion

2024 Outlook

Since July 2023, the BOC has set the overnight rate at 5.0% and as of January 2024 have communicated they are in a wait and see approach on adjusting the overnight rate further as they believe current policy is tight enough, and may need to continue longer given ongoing inflation pressures. The BOC will continue to monitor economic growth, inflation, labour market, productivity growth and housing before looking at reducing the overnight rate. As of January 2024, the market has priced in approximately three overnight rate cuts for the remainder of 2024. In terms of inflation, the most recent forecasts from the BOC project CPI inflation to decrease to approximately 2.4% at the end of 2024 and 2.1% by the end of 2025. This has led to a decline in long term investment yields since the last quarter of 2023 and it is expected that yields will decline further over the next few years. Staff will continue to monitor market conditions for the purposes of making investment decisions while adhering to the objectives of the Town's Treasury Policy No. 116.

Financial Impact

Of the \$11.6 million realized in investment income in 2023, \$1.9 million was allocated to the Operating budget and the remaining funds of \$9.7 million to reserves and reserve funds in accordance with the 2023 budget allocations and the Town's Treasury Policy No. 116.

The aforementioned \$3.7 million favourable variance is reflected in higher capital reserve and reserve fund balances and has no immediate impact on the operating budget which limits investment earnings in the event of a significant market adjustment (see Financial Principles Policy No. 110). The revised interest earning amounts in those reserve balances will be incorporated into the capital financing and planning exercises undertaken in 2024.

The cost of managing the overall portfolio is in order of 0.05% of the portfolio value and has been included in the 2023 budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Glen Cowan
Chief Financial Officer / Treasurer

For questions, please contact: Brad Schultz, CMA, CPA

905-878-7252
Ext. 2248



Attachments

Appendix 1 - Investment Portfolio Holdings and Limitations

Approved by CAO
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.