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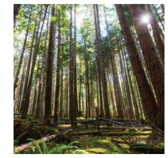

Wealth Insights

TD Wealth Private Investment Advice

Spring 2021

In This Issue

Will Markets Continue Their Climb?

"It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future." These are the words of baseball Hall of Famer, Yogi Berra. Even if you aren't a baseball fan, Berra's wit can be appreciated for being as astute as it is funny — and his words may carry some good lessons for investing.

In the middle of a public health pandemic, equity markets have continued their advance. The S&P/TSX Composite and S&P 500 indices have posted record highs. By a variety of measures, many stock valuations have been looking stretched. The S&P 500 CAPE ratio is at its highest level since the dot-com bubble years — when it peaked at 44.2X. At the start of February it hovered around 34X.[1]

While it may seem like exuberance to some degree, markets tend to be forward looking in nature: economic recovery is expected as economies reopen. There are other reasons: persistently low interest rates, and the pledge by central banks to hold them at these levels, has led investors to equity markets as — "TINA" — there is no alternative. Bank deposits and guaranteed investment certificates pay measly returns and bond yields are low. Stimulus measures have helped to inflate asset prices as well. There has also been a significant influx of new investors into the stock markets during the pandemic.

Will the markets continue their climb? As Berra perhaps most famously said, "it ain't over till it's over." We may not know what inning we're in because markets can often advance further than one thinks. During the dot-com years, even after then-Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's infamous "irrational exuberance" speech in 1996, the markets continued their rise for more than three years. Today, while there is a considerable amount of excess, some argue that there isn't the same magnitude of financial leverage that accompanied past exuberance. And, certain areas of the markets are still expected to benefit from continued economic recovery as things return to normal.

Regardless, focusing on how far the markets have advanced can be counterproductive. Berra once said, "baseball is 90 percent mental; the other half is physical." Questionable math aside, the same principle can hold true in investing. Our challenge as investors is to ignore the noise. When times are difficult, it can hinder positive action: "it's not a good time to buy now because..." Or, when the market progresses, it may raise anxiety levels: "how high can it go?" And, when there may be temptation to chase the markets, Berra's words offer sage advice: "Don't always follow the crowd, because nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded."

This often involves a longer-term commitment to a plan that has been constructed to help achieve your goals. Along the way, there may be limited value in trying to predict the direction of the markets — your overall success isn't dependent on calling the top of any cycle. For most longer-term investors, the road ahead will bring both ups and downs. Success is likely to be achieved by those investors who have confidence in that plan and maintain discipline in good times and in bad, regardless of whatever pitches may be thrown.

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To Our Clients:

For many of us, spring couldn't have come sooner. At the time of writing, volatility has returned to the equity markets. Seasoned investors will remember that it plays a common role in the markets and, after many months of market advances, should be expected. It may also provide opportunities to put capital to work as we continue to build portfolios for the future.

Enjoy the warmer and longer days ahead and please don't hesitate to call for any investing matters.

— Suzanne, Paula and Kerrie

1. CAPE ratio = cyclically-adjusted price-to-earnings ratio, which measures a stock price by the average of earnings for the last 10 years, adjusted for inflation. The current value is for the S&P 500 at 2/1/21; Source: ycharts.com/indicators/cyclically_adjusted_pe_ratio

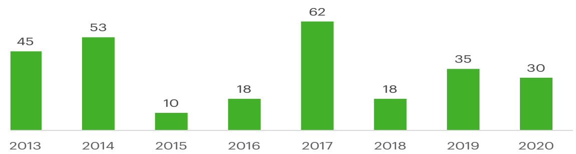
Investing Perspectives

Investing During Buoyant Market Times

Many market observers may feel as though we've been debating a stock market bubble for at least a decade. In December 2013, a headline in the popular press read: "Nobel prize winner warns of US stock market bubble."[1]

Since that time, the markets have reached multiple new highs and the bubble headlines have continued.

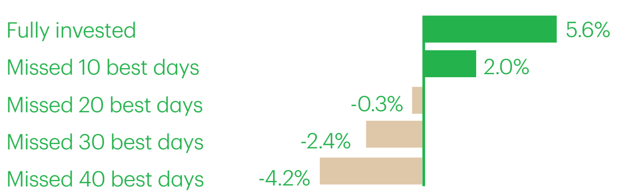
Chart: Number of Times the S&P 500 Index Closed at All-Time Highs[2]



For some, this has been cause for discomfort. After all, while markets can climb, they can also fall. But here are some considerations to keep perspective:

Timing the markets is difficult — While avoiding a market fall is ideal in theory, accurately timing the markets is a difficult, if not impossible, task. And, it's not just about protecting your investments from market drops; equally important is ensuring you benefit from market gains. After the markets fell last spring, many were surprised at the speed in which they reversed their course. Consider the consequences of missing the best days of performance in the markets.

Chart: Impact of Missing Best Days of Performance, S&P 500 Index



Source: S&P 500 Total Returns, 1/1/1999 to 1/1/2019. Data accessed from Yahoo Finance.

Remember your time horizon — With many of us spending extended periods of time at home, it may be easy to pay greater attention to the daily market movements. Yet, many of us are longer-term investors with a time horizon that extends well beyond today. As such, movements over the short term should matter less. History has shown that the longer your time horizon, the greater the possibility of positive outcomes. As longer-term investors, we will see numerous peaks — and troughs — as we invest across the market cycles.

Table: Likelihood of Positive Outcomes Based on Time Frame

Time Frame	Positive	Negative
Daily	56%	44%
1 Year	75%	25%
5 Years	88%	12%
10 Years	95%	5%
20 Years	100%	0%

Source: S&P/TSX Composite Index, 1/1/1985 to 1/1/2020. TMX data.

Avoid liquidating: rebalance — If gains in your portfolio make you want to take action, consider making adjustments to your portfolio diversification or asset mix. When we think about the process of reallocation, we often look for opportunities to adjust into areas that stand to benefit in changing environments or pare back positions that have exposure to negative dynamics. Rebalancing, to get your portfolio diversification or asset mix back to its targets, may be one way to take gains while keeping invested for the future.

Rely on professional support — The high valuations of current markets may make it difficult to see opportunity. Yet, there are areas of the markets that haven't experienced the same acceleration in performance. For example, at the time of writing, many value stocks have had a sharp run over the past seven months, but not the extended gains of growth stocks. One of our roles is to critically assess the potential opportunities that may exist, or are to come, while managing risks in a challenging landscape.

Continue to look forward and leave the day-to-day worries of your portfolio to the professionals who are here to help manage it.

1. cnbc.com/2013/12/02/nobel-prize-winner-warns-of-us-stock-market-bubble.html; 2. S&P 500 Index 2013 to 2020.

It Starts with Saving...

How Much is $30 Per Week Worth?

Success in building wealth can start with saving. What may seem like a little can make a big difference over time if you're able to stick to a regular savings plan.

If you have (grand)children learning about finances, the table below may be a worthwhile share. It shows the potential impact that just $30 per week of savings — or $1,560 per year — can have down the road based on various rates of return. It's a good reminder of the considerable power of time and compounding.

Table: How Much is $30 Per Week Worth?

	Annual Return		
Years	4%	5%	6%
30	$90,226	$108,194	$130,587
40	$153,655	$198,383	$258,894
50	$248,216	$346,925	$492,335

Compounded monthly at annual rate. No taxes, fees, inflation included. For illustrative purposes only.

For those wanting to save more, it may be as simple as making moderate lifestyle changes like reducing impulse purchases or giving up the daily designer coffee. In the words of an old English proverb: "mighty oaks, from little acorns grow," and it all starts with saving.

Teaching kids about compounded growth?

Here is a fun play on numbers that demonstrates the magic of compounding:

Q: Would you rather have $50,000 per year for 30 years or a penny[1] that doubled in value every year for 30 years?

A: With the doubling penny, you would have over $10.7 million after 30 years, versus $1.5 million with the first option. Although a 100 percent annual rate of return is unrealistic, the example shows the profound effect of compounding over time.[2]

1. The penny is no longer in circulation but considered legal tender and will retain its value indefinitely; 2. Does not include the effect of any taxes or fees.

Personal Income Tax Season is Here

Working From Home? Don't Forget to Claim Home Office Expenses

Did you work from home last year? As a result of Covid-19, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has made changes to the rules surrounding home office expense claims for employees.

The CRA has introduced two simplified methods for claiming home office expenses on your 2020 personal income tax return:

New Temporary Flat Rate Method — A simplified flat rate method to calculate the home office expense deduction has been introduced for those eligible for the 2020 tax year. If you worked from home more than 50 percent of the time, for at least four consecutive weeks in 2020 due to Covid-19, you may claim $2 for each day worked from home, to a maximum of $400 per individual. This method can be used by those claiming eligible home office expenses, not any other employment expenses, as long as you were not reimbursed by an employer for all of your home office expenses.[1] Under the temporary flat rate method, you do not have to get a signed form (*T2200 or T2200S*) from your employer to support the requirement to work from home.

Simplified Detailed Method — If you expect your home office expense claims to exceed the temporary flat rate maximum of $400, the CRA requires individuals to use a "detailed method." The CRA has created simplified forms for the detailed method (*T2200S & T777S*). While *Form T2200S* does not have to be attached to the tax return, it should be saved for auditing purposes. Under this method, the employee will need to calculate the size of their work space, as a proportion of the home, and detail the hours per week that the space was used for work. The CRA has provided an online calculator to help perform this calculation.

In both simplified processes, employees must complete and attach *Form T777S*[1], *Statement of Employment Expenses from Working at Home Due to Covid-19*, to their tax return. For 2020, the CRA will accept an electronic employer signature on *Form T2200S or T2200*.

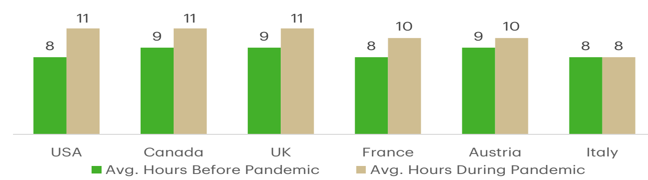
Changes to Eligible Expenses

The CRA has also expanded the list of claimable expenses. As a result, reasonable home internet access fees may now be claimed. Detailed information regarding allowable expenses and claims can be found at the Government of Canada website: canada.ca/cra-home-workspace-expenses

1. For expense claims other than home office expenses, *Form T777* will need to be completed.

Chart: Working From Home May Mean Working More...

A recent study suggests working from home has led to a 2.5 hour increase in the average working day globally, and a working day that is two hours longer in Canada. The only nation that hasn't increased its hours? Italy.



Source: forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2020/03/24/coronavirus-work-from-home-longer-hours-more-distractions-and-this-surprising-privacy-threat/

Macroeconomic Perspectives

Interest Rates, Inflation and the Risk of Doing Nothing

In 1981, Pierre Trudeau was prime minister, Terry Fox ended his run and "Celebration" by Kool & the Gang made best performing single. It was also a time when a five-year mortgage rate hovered around 21.5 percent and inflation hit a high of over 12 percent.[1]

For most of the 1970s and early 1980s, inflation ran rampant. This led to a period of stagflation. At one point, an Anti-Inflation Board was set up to control wages and prices. Since then, it has been widely recognized that the central banks are responsible for keeping inflation in check as part of their policy objectives.[2]

For many years, the Bank of Canada and U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) have targeted a two percent core inflation rate.[3] Over the last decade, inflation has generally hovered close to this target, due to monetary policy actions as well as persistently low price and wage increases. It should be noted that the measure of core inflation doesn't include some of the more volatile components of our goods and services, such as food and gas. Many Canadians would argue that food costs have largely outpaced core inflation rates!

Today's Realities: Low Interest Rates, Low Inflation

Of course, it is unlikely that we will see the return of the inflation rates of the 1970s and early 80s, but even moderate inflation can have a significant impact over time. The chart (below) shows the erosion of purchasing power of $100 with just moderate inflation rates.

Table: Erosion of Purchasing Power of $100 with Moderate Inflation

	Inflation Rate		
Year	1%	2%	3%
0	$100	$100	$100
10	$90.53	$82.03	$74.41
20	$81.95	$67.30	$55.37
30	$74.19	$55.21	$41.20

This should also remind us of the value of investing funds for the future. With interest rates at near-zero levels, many savings accounts yield paltry returns. Add in the subtle effects of inflation and doing nothing with your money can have its own risks.

There are differing views on the longer-term path for inflation. With central banks pledging to keep interest rates low for the foreseeable future, there is the potential for rising inflation — traditional economics suggests that when rates are low and the economy grows, inflation generally increases. Last year, the Fed also signaled a major shift in its approach to managing inflation, allowing it to run above the previous two percent target to stimulate growth and tackle unemployment.[3]

1. bankofcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/selected_historical_v122497.pdf; 2. federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-inflation; 3. federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/powell20200827a.htm

Bitcoin as a Store of Value? For Now, Exercise Caution

Bitcoin is arguably one of the hottest topics in finance these days. As it continues to hit record highs, it has garnered much attention and fuelled a new debate: Will bitcoin become the gold of the future?

The current economic environment has helped to support interest in bitcoin as a potential alternative asset in the search for safety. Today, central banks continue to push the limits of monetary policy by expanding their balance sheets, while government stimulus spending has been unprecedented, increasing debt to levels not seen before. As a result, some investors have turned to bitcoin when looking for a store of value — to act as a hedge against uncertainty and the potential for currency depreciation or inflation.

Gold — and Bitcoin? — As a Store of Value

Traditionally, gold has been considered the preeminent safe-haven asset. Its qualities have made it a recognized store of value over time: it is durable, fungible, divisible, portable and scarce. These are the preconditions for a sound, non-fiat money that can maintain value and not depreciate. Proponents of bitcoin would argue that it, too, possesses these qualities. However, while other precious metals, like platinum, may also have these characteristics, what distinguishes gold — and, increasingly, bitcoin — is the collective belief in its shared value.

Bitcoin: The Move to Mainstream

Over recent years, one of the most significant changes has been bitcoin's move into the mainstream. It has had increasing acceptance, perhaps driven by its rise in value. Many high-profile institutional investors and companies now hold and accept bitcoin, which has helped increase its utility. Millennials have been leading the charge to support the adoption of digital currencies[1], attracted by the price gains, but also because of frustration with governments and elitists in a financial system they believe has failed their generation.

As digital payment systems have become more mainstream, even governments and central banks have begun to adopt, accept and develop digital currencies. Bitcoin is now one of hundreds of cryptocurrencies that exist today. While it is likely that cryptocurrencies are not going away any time soon, there are reasons to exercise caution when considering bitcoin as an alternative asset. Here are three risks:

Unclear Valuation — There is considerable debate over what is the fair value of bitcoin, since it is simply the product of open-source software. Some argue that bitcoin lacks an intrinsic value when compared to other assets: stocks represent companies that produce goods and services with tangible value; even gold's physical properties may make it useful outside of being a safe-haven asset, such as utility in jewellery or electronics. However, proponents of bitcoin would argue that its fixed limited supply, decentralized and transparent nature, and acceptance by stakeholders (which continues to grow) has given it relevance as a store of value.

Significant volatility — Since its inception in 2009, bitcoin continues to be subject to unpredictable and drastic price swings, perhaps a consequence of being a relatively new asset. Consider that in January alone, the price of bitcoin dropped by almost 20 percent on two occasions. Some note that in the 1970s, gold experienced significant volatility as it became a trusted store of value, as prices appreciated by 2,300 percent from $35 to almost $850 in that decade.[2]

Security concerns — Like many things of value, bitcoin has been targeted by unscrupulous individuals. Platforms that buy and sell bitcoin are often unregulated. Bitcoin transactions can be subject to fraud and theft, perhaps facilitated by the anonymity of the digital world. In 2014, the world's leading bitcoin exchange was hit by a cyber attack. Customers had a significant amount of bitcoin stolen without recourse and the exchange filed for bankruptcy. Today, the controversial cryptocurrency Tether is under investigation for potentially manipulating the price of bitcoin.

Will Bitcoin Become a Viable Safe-Haven Asset?

For now, the risks we've outlined, among others, are likely to challenge bitcoin's viability as a safe-haven asset. However, as the world continues to quickly change, cryptocurrencies are gaining increasing relevancy. Will bitcoin become the gold of our future?

1. fintechmagazine.com/digital-payments/millennials-are-driving-bitcoin-economy; 2. forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2019/07/29/gold-prices-50-year-price-analysis-and-production-demand-dynamics/

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