



# Wealth Insights

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## The Power of Time

When ChatGPT reached 100 million active users in just two months, it highlighted the accelerating pace at which technology is transforming the world. Consider that it took the social media platform Instagram 2.5 years to reach the same user base<sup>1</sup> and the internet 7 years to acquire 50 million users.<sup>2</sup>

Why are things moving so quickly? From a broad perspective, the advances we see today have been made possible by the increasing capacity of computer processing power, which has grown exponentially. One way to help conceptualize the power of exponential growth is through the anecdote that folding a paper 42 times can get you to the moon. At the onset, exponential growth yields insignificant results, but over time it creates impressive outcomes. Consider the insignificance of a piece of paper only 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a millimetre thick: Folding this over seven times will lead to the thickness of a notebook of 128 pages. It takes 24 folds to get you past one kilometre; yet, 30 folds will get you into space — the paper will now be 100 km thick! By 42 folds, it takes you beyond the distance from the Earth to the Moon, which is around 382,500 km.

In investing, the parallel is compounded returns,<sup>3</sup> which can have a profound impact on portfolio values. Similar to the concept of the folding paper, significant outcomes become more likely over time. This is why, as advisors, we often emphasize the principle: *The first rule of compounding is to never interrupt it unnecessarily.* As I show on page 2, if you were to contribute \$6,500 each year for 10 years starting at age 20, compounded at 6 percent per year, the \$65,000 contribution would grow to \$1.7 million by age 80. However, if you were to withdraw funds at age 40, they would have accumulated to only \$172,000. As one investment strategist reminds us: *“Time is the exponent that does the heavy lifting. The common denominator of almost all fortunes isn’t returns; it’s endurance and longevity.”*<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, the same technological advances that have enabled growth may be a countervailing force to compounding returns. One of the most difficult parts of investing is the emotional discipline needed to stick to a wealth plan and allow it the time to grow. What appears to be changing in this modern era is that instant communication and social media seem to have created heightened awareness and sensitivity, which can derail investor focus.

Today’s narrative is no exception. Despite economic resilience and growth that has exceeded expectations, we may be distracted by the challenges and uncertainties of debt and deleverage, deglobalization, slower growth and higher interest rates, to name a handful. But it’s worth a reminder: the world has always been uncertain. Investing is never a smooth road. Even the most respected investors who have delivered outstanding long-term returns have managed through periods of uncertainty and even routinely underperformed the markets. Would you be surprised to learn that over their investing lives, the annual performance of Warren Buffett, John Templeton and Charlie Munger fell short of the markets at least 33 percent of the time?<sup>4</sup> Yet, they endured the short-term bumps and stuck to their approach to outperform the markets over time. The common denominator? Endurance and longevity.

As an advisor, I am focused on managing portfolios to navigate the challenges that come with the changing times. As investors, don’t overlook the importance of a commitment to the longer term. Let time in the markets be one of your keys to success.

1. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/chatgpt-sets-record-fastest-growing-user-base-analyst-note-2023-02-01/>; 2. [www.visualcapitalist.com/how-long-does-it-take-to-hit-50-million-users/](http://www.visualcapitalist.com/how-long-does-it-take-to-hit-50-million-users/); 3. It is acknowledged that the folding paper example of 100% compounded returns is not realistic for investing purposes; 4. Morgan Housel, <https://collabfund.com/blog/keep-it-going/>

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### To My Clients:

*With the rise in rates, more investors have understandably been attracted to low-risk, fixed-income investments. Have you thought about the tax implications? In some cases, there may be opportunities to make investments more tax efficient, such as “shifting” interest-bearing instruments to registered plans or investing in investments taxed more efficiently than GICs. By saving on taxes, these alternatives may end up giving you a higher yield. Call for ideas.*

*The return of cooler, shorter days reminds us that the end of the year fast approaches. Before year end, certain actions can support your 2023 tax position, such as tax-loss selling or charitable donations. I am here to assist. Wishing you the best this season.*

## Wealth Insights

### ■ Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) Benefits: Don't Pass Up

# Are You Overlooking the Tax-Free Opportunity...And More?

## Many Canadians are not fully contributing to their TFSAs — including the most wealthy Canadians.

Have you fully contributed? At last count, only 30 percent of taxpayers earning \$250,000 or more had fully contributed, with an average unused amount of around \$23,000, or 34 percent of total available contribution room (2020 tax year).<sup>1</sup> Beyond the opportunity to grow funds on a tax-free basis, the TFSA can provide benefits across every stage of life:

**Facilitating a “Giving While Living” Strategy** — The TFSA may offer an opportunity for a tax-efficient, albeit gradual, transfer of wealth to adult (grand)children while you are still alive. By gifting funds to contribute to their own TFSAs, these assets can grow tax sheltered in their TFSAs over time. Although you lose control over the funds (as with any gift), you can reduce the value of your own estate by the amounts gifted, ultimately reducing potential tax implications upon death.

**Approaching Retirement** — As retirement nears, if you are in a lower tax bracket now than you anticipate in the future, you can draw down your RRSP/RRIF\* funds and contribute them to a TFSA (subject to available room). Funds can then grow tax free in the TFSA and serve as a future tax-free source of income to supplement/replace RRIF withdrawals and other taxable income sources later in retirement. At death, residual TFSA amounts can pass to heirs tax free. In contrast, residual RRSP/RRIF values at death are generally taxable as income to your estate.\*\*

**Enhancing Retirement Income** — The TFSA can help enhance retirement income and cash-flow streams. TFSA withdrawals are not taxable and won't affect income-tested benefits such as Old Age Security (OAS). The TFSA can also supplement cash flow if a retiree chooses to defer OAS and/or Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits. A TFSA may also help with tax planning. If generating RRIF income will push you into a higher tax bracket, you may be able to minimize tax by withdrawing only the required RRIF amount and using TFSA withdrawals to supplement income. On the other hand, if your marginal tax rate is lower than you expect in the future or at death, engaging in a “melt-down strategy” (see above) may help reduce an overall lifetime tax bill.

**Your Estate** — While income or gains earned in the TFSA at the date

of death can pass tax free to beneficiaries, the way beneficiaries are named/structured may impact tax results. For example, if a spouse/partner is named as “successor holder,” they can continue operating the account going forward. By naming a spouse as “beneficiary,” additional administration may be required to maintain a tax-exempt status.

\*Registered Retirement Savings Plan/Registered Retirement Income Fund. \*\*Unless transferred to a surviving spouse, minor/disabled child; 1. [www.canada.ca/content/dam/cra-arc/prog-policy/stats/tfsa-cel/2020/table1c-en.pdf](http://www.canada.ca/content/dam/cra-arc/prog-policy/stats/tfsa-cel/2020/table1c-en.pdf)

### Winning the Retirement “Lottery”: A Lesson for the Next Generation

**\$1.7 million:** This is the amount of savings many Canadians believe is needed to retire. And though this figure is large, it is within reach for many younger folks today — and it doesn't involve winning the lottery, though a survey less than 10 years ago suggested that one-third of Canadians hoped to fund retirement through such means!<sup>1</sup>

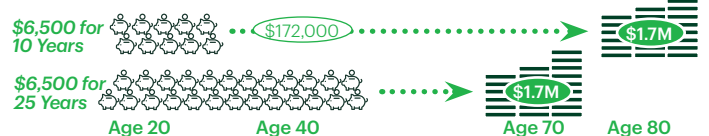
Instead, with a bit of discipline, a consistent savings and investing program that relies on relatively modest contributions each year could steadily progress towards achieving this retirement goal over time. The figures below are just one example of what a commitment to retirement funding can do. The TFSA is one of the best tax-advantaged ways to accumulate assets for the future.

*In a TFSA, contributing \$6,500 per year at a rate of return of 6 percent...*

- Starting at age 20, contributing for just 10 years, the TFSA will grow to \$1.7 million by age 80. If funds are withdrawn at age 40, the TFSA will be worth only \$172,000.
- Contributing for 25 years, the TFSA will grow to \$1.7 million by age 70.
- Starting late? Investing a lump sum of \$88,000 today, you'll need to contribute \$6,500 for 38 years to achieve \$1.7 million.

1. <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2014/02/03/many-canadians-hope-to-win-the-lottery-to-fund-retirement/>

#### Graphic: Investing in a TFSA with a 6% Annual Rate of Return



## Canada/Quebec Pension Plan\* Reforms: Be Prepared to Pay More

If you earn employment income, you may have noticed more of your paycheque going towards CPP/QPP contributions. For higher-income earners, expect to pay even more.

CPP/QPP reforms were put in place to address the decline in workplace pension plans, amending the CPP/QPP in two ways: i) increasing the income replacement level to 33.33 percent from 25 percent of eligible earnings, and ii) increasing the upper limit for eligible earnings. The first phase began in 2019, when the contribution rate gradually increased by one percentage point from 2019 to 2023 on earnings between \$3,500 and the maximum pensionable earnings (MPE) limit. The second phase, which will affect higher-income earners, will begin on January 1, 2024. Employees and employers will each be required to contribute an additional four percent on earnings between the MPE and a new ceiling. Based on the 2023 MPE of \$66,600, the new ceiling will be \$71,200 in 2024 and \$75,900 in 2025.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that these reforms are expected to make material changes to the benefits Canadians receive at the end of their working lives. However, it will take time before this becomes noticeable. Those retiring in the near term will only see modest enhancements since CPP/

QPP is generally based on an average of the best 40 years of earnings.

What is the potential impact of the reforms? Under the old rules, those retiring in 2023 at age 65 could receive a maximum amount of around \$15,460<sup>2</sup> per year. Under the enhanced benefit, that same individual could receive around \$23,490,<sup>3</sup> an increase of almost 52 percent compared to today.

Consider also that these outcomes don't account for the 0.7 percent per month enhancement for those who defer payments beyond age 65, which would further increase the benefit. Fewer than one percent of retirees delay benefits despite actuarial studies showing that deferring CPP/QPP to the age of 70 may be one of the more financially prudent decisions if you live beyond average life expectancy.<sup>4</sup>

For more information, please see the following — for CPP: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/publicpensions/cpp/cpp-enhancement.html> or for QPP: [https://www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/en/programmes/regime\\_rentes/Pages/regime-supplementaire.aspx](https://www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/en/programmes/regime_rentes/Pages/regime-supplementaire.aspx)

\*CPP/QPP; 1. For 2024, it will be 107% of MPE; for 2025, it will be 114% of MPE; 2. For Q1 2023, \$1,306.57 under the old regime less \$18.24 enhanced benefit = \$1,288.33. [www.advisor.ca/tax/tax-strategies/what-clients-should-know-about-the-cpp-reforms/](http://www.advisor.ca/tax/tax-strategies/what-clients-should-know-about-the-cpp-reforms/); [www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/2023/05/the-canada-pension-plan-enhancement-business-individuals-and-self-employed-what-it-means-for-you.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/news/2023/05/the-canada-pension-plan-enhancement-business-individuals-and-self-employed-what-it-means-for-you.html); 3. [www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/en/programmes/regime\\_rentes/Pages/regime-supplementaire.aspx](http://www.rrq.gouv.qc.ca/en/programmes/regime_rentes/Pages/regime-supplementaire.aspx); 4. [www.fpcanada.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fpw/globe-article-delay-cpp.pdf](http://www.fpcanada.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/fpw/globe-article-delay-cpp.pdf)

## ■ Back-to-School Season

# The RESP: Would You Turn Down “Free Money”?

### Education Costs by the Numbers

<b>\$30,000</b>	Estimate annual cost for undergraduate university study: tuition, supplies, room & board <sup>1</sup> (higher end of estimate)
<b>\$28,000</b>	Average student debt at graduation (university, bachelor's) <sup>2</sup>
<b>\$7,076</b>	Average Canadian undergraduate university tuition <sup>3</sup>
<b>\$2,023</b>	Average tuition cost 30 years ago in 1993/1994 <sup>4</sup>
<b>250%</b>	% Increase in tuition since 1993
<b>+47% to 58%</b>	Additional annual earnings for those with a tertiary degree <sup>5</sup>

1. Sample budgets: single dorm: www.auesnsu.ca/registrat/tuition-fees/expenses-budgets; 2. www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl/en/tvaction?pid=3710003601; 3. Statistics Canada Table: 37-10-0003-01; 4. Statistics Canada Table: 37-10-0150-01; 5. Average: www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-repensement/2016/bis-sq/98-200-x/2016024/98-200-x2016024-eng.cfm, Table 1, bachelor's degree.

There are many reasons to consider a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) to help save for a child's future education: tax-deferred growth within the plan, earnings taxed at the child's tax rate when eventually withdrawn and, of course, the Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG). The CESG consists of funds paid into the plan by the federal government in the form of a 20 percent matching grant, to an annual maximum of \$500 (\$1,000 if there's unused grant room from a previous year) and a lifetime maximum of \$7,200 per beneficiary. There are no annual limits on RESP contributions but the lifetime limit is \$50,000.

Conventional wisdom suggests that we should try and take advantage of the CESG — after all, it is essentially ‘free’ money. But, is this always the right decision? One way to maximize the CESG involves contributing \$2,500 per year over 15 years to receive the full \$7,200 in grants. However, will this achieve the greatest outcome for the RESP?

To answer this question, let's compare Investor 1, who gradually contributes and maximizes the CESG, and Investor 2, who contributes a lump sum amount and doesn't maximize the CESG. The outcome may be surprising. Both investors are assumed to earn an annual rate of return of 5 percent. Investor 1 contributes \$2,500 each year starting in the first year of the child's life, until year 20, to a maximum contribution of \$50,000, and receives the full \$7,200 CESG grant. After 20 years, the RESP produces \$43,655 of growth, resulting in a value of \$100,855.

Investor 2 contributes a lump sum of \$50,000 — the full RESP limit — in the first year of the child's life, so the RESP receives only \$500 of the CESG. Yet, the RESP will grow to \$133,992 over the same period.

This demonstrates the impact that compounding can have over time. Front loading the initial RESP contribution yields a greater outcome, even though the full CESG is not received, all else being equal. Despite lower contributions for Investor 2 over the life of the RESP, or \$6,700 less, Investor 2 still ends up with around \$33,000 more after 20 years.

### A Lesson for the RESP — And, Investing in General

Of course, not many investors have \$50,000 of discretionary funds at the start of a child's life. As such, maximizing the CESG where possible is a prudent strategy. However, this example illustrates why, as advisors, we often remind investors not to overlook the impact that compounding can have on any investment, not just the RESP, over time. One takeaway? The sooner you start, the more time funds have to grow and, when it comes to growth, the larger the initial investment, the better!

### Illustrative: RESP Gradual vs. Lump Sum Contribution

Year	Investor 1 – Gradual Contributions			Investor 2 – Lump Sum Contribution		
	Annual Contribution	CESG Received	RESP End Amount	Annual Contribution	CESG Received	RESP End Amount
1	\$2,500	\$500	\$3,150	\$50,000	\$500	\$53,025
2-20	\$2,500	\$6,700	\$100,855	--	--	\$133,992
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$7,200</b>	<b>\$100,855</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$500</b>	<b>\$133,992</b>

\*Assumes 5 percent annual compounded growth.

### RESP Changes as a Result of Budget 2023

Planning a first withdrawal from the RESP? The federal budget increased the limit on allowable educational assistance payments (EAPs) from \$5,000 to \$8,000 in the first 13-week period (full-time programs; \$2,500 to \$4,000 for part-time programs). If you are planning to open the RESP, budget changes now permit divorced/separated parents to open joint RESPs for children or move an existing joint RESP to another promoter.

## RRIF Withdrawals: Planning Ahead Can Have Benefits

The final months of the year are when many retirees take RRIF withdrawals. Don't forget that an “in-kind withdrawal” can satisfy part or all of the minimum requirement. A common misconception is that shares must be sold.

There may be good reasons for an in-kind withdrawal, which involves transferring investments directly to a non-registered account or TFSA. Most apparent, you will maintain ownership of the shares and it may minimize trading costs. Consider that an in-kind withdrawal from the RRIF to a TFSA, subject to available TFSA contribution room, could allow for the future tax-free growth of the securities transferred. If you do an in-kind withdrawal from the RRIF, the fair market value (FMV) of the shares at the time of the transfer will be added to your taxable income and the adjusted cost base (ACB) of the transferred shares will become the FMV at that time. For example, for an in-kind withdrawal and transfer of 100 shares of XYZ stock trading at \$50, the RRIF withdrawal will be valued at the FMV of the shares, which is \$5,000. This amount will be added to your taxable income. The ACB of the transferred shares will now be \$5,000, regardless of the price paid when originally acquired. If transferred to a non-registered account, the ACB will be used when the shares are sold to calculate the capital gain/loss. Keep in mind that if the transfer value is greater than the minimum withdrawal requirement, the excess amount will be subject to withholding tax.

If you have yet to open the RRIF, consider planning ahead. Here are four withdrawal practices that may require forethought.

**1. Waiting to make withdrawals to allow greater potential tax-deferred compounding.** Making the required withdrawals closer to year end may allow for greater potential tax-deferred compounding within the plan.

For those who convert the RRSP to the RRIF at age 71, mandatory withdrawals aren't required until the year after the plan is opened.

**2. Varying RRIF withdrawals with your tax bracket.** For years in which you will be in a lower income tax bracket, consider the opportunity to make greater withdrawals than the minimum requirement to take advantage of the lower tax rate (subject to withholding tax).

**3. Converting a small portion of the RRSP to the RRIF before age 71.** The pension income tax credit generally begins at age 65, so this may be one way to take advantage of this non-refundable credit. You may also be able to split pension income with a spouse/partner, which can reduce taxes or improve access to income-tested government benefits.

**4. Using a younger spouse's age to determine the minimum.** A younger spouse's age can minimize withdrawal amounts and maximize flexibility since you can always withdraw more than the required minimum if you need it (subject to withholding tax). However, you must elect to use a spouse's age when first setting up the RRIF.



## ■ Thinking Ahead & Your Finances

# Time to Plan for the Final Months of the Year

With just a few months remaining in the calendar year, are there actions that you can take before year end to impact your financial position?

Don't look now, but the end of 2023 is quickly approaching! As such, now may be a good time to consider taking certain actions before year end that can impact your financial position. Here are some ideas:

**Realize capital losses to offset capital gains.** For tax purposes, 50 percent of a capital loss can be used to offset taxable capital gains realized during the year. If you do not have sufficient capital gains to offset the losses, you can carry the net capital loss back for three tax years to recover taxes paid on taxable capital gains or carry it forward to use against future capital gains. Be aware of the superficial loss rules, which deny the capital loss if you or anyone affiliated with you acquired the same security within the period 30 days before or after the date of the loss transaction. There may also be opportunities to transfer capital losses between spouses. This should be done well before year end as it can take time for transactions to settle.

**Split income, save tax.** There are a variety of ways to split income. For example, you may elect to split eligible pension income with your spouse (partner) on your tax return. Spouses may also apply for CPP pension sharing. There may be an opportunity to open a spousal RRSP. Business owners may consider paying reasonable salaries to spouses/children for services provided to a self-employed business or private company. For greater details, contact the office.

**Contribute to your RRSP.** While you have until February 29, 2024, to make a contribution to impact your 2023 taxes, contributing now can get funds working hard for you as soon as possible.

**Make RESP contributions.** If you hold a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP), consider contributing before year end to benefit from the Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) for 2023.

**Don't forget the pension income tax credit.** If you are 65 years of age or older and do not have eligible pension income, purchase an annuity or open a small Registered Retirement Income Fund (RRIF) before year end to enable you to claim the federal pension income tax credit.

**Convert your RRSP if you turned 71 in 2023.** If you have turned 71 this year, you have until December 31<sup>st</sup> to make any final



contributions to your RRSP, and not the regular February 29, 2024 deadline, before converting it to the RRIF or a registered annuity.

**Review asset location.** If you have earned some highly taxed interest income in a non-registered account, there may be an opportunity to review asset location. Or, consider whether a different type of fixed-income asset can reduce your tax bill while still meeting your risk tolerance and personal objectives. For instance, with increased interest in Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs), as an alternative to GICs some investors have considered high-quality bonds trading at a discount, which have both an income and more-favourably taxed capital gains component. We can help.

**Withdraw from a TFSA before year end.** If you need to access funds and are looking to withdraw from the TFSA, consider doing so before year end. Contribution room resets itself at the start of the calendar year, so withdrawing after the new year would mean that this contribution room will not be available until the start of 2025.

**Consider charitable donations.** Make eligible charitable donations before December 31<sup>st</sup> to benefit your 2023 taxes. Gifting publicly-traded securities with accrued capital gains to a registered charity not only entitles you to a tax receipt for its fair market value, but also eliminates the associated capital gains tax. However, the shares must be donated "in kind" — do not sell them first and donate the proceeds or part of the tax benefit will be lost. For securities that have depreciated, consider selling them and donating cash. You will be entitled to the capital loss, as well as a donation tax credit.

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