



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: February 13, 2024

---

**SUBJECT:** 2023 investment Performance Review  
**PREPARED BY:** Mark Visser, Senior manager, Financial Strategy & Investments x. 4260

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) THAT the report dated February 13, 2024 entitled “2023 Investment Performance Review” be received;
- 2) AND THAT staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Not applicable

**PURPOSE:**

Pursuant to Regulation 438/97 Section 8, the Municipal Act requires the Treasurer to “prepare and provide to the Council, each year or more frequently as specified by Council, an investment report”.

The investment report shall contain,

- (a) a statement about the performance of the portfolio of investments of the municipality during the period covered by the report;
- (b) a description of the estimated portion of the total investments of a municipality that are invested in its own long-term and short-term securities to the total investment of the municipality and a description of the change, if any, in that estimated proportion since the previous year’s report;
- (c) a statement by the Treasurer as to whether or not, in his opinion, all investments were made in accordance with the investment policies and goals adopted by the municipality;
- (d) a record of the date of each transaction in or disposal of its own securities, including a statement of the purchase and sale price of each security;
- (e) such other information that the Council may require or that, in the opinion of the Treasurer, should be included.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The 2023 budget for Income Earned on Investments was \$14.479 million based on an estimated average general portfolio balance of \$450.0M invested at an average rate of 3.22%. The 2023 budget was increased by \$3.479 million over the 2022 budget amount, and was set based on what was deemed to be sustainable over the next several years. As discussed during past budget processes, any 2023 interest earned in excess of \$14.479 million will be transferred to reserves.

For the year ending December 31, 2023, the City of Markham's Income Earned on Investments was \$30.959 million, representing a \$16.480 million favourable variance to budget.

Both the actual average portfolio balance and average rate of return were higher than budgeted. The details of these two factors will be discussed below.

### **Interest Rate**

Since March 2022, the Bank of Canada have raised interest rates multiple times. In 2023, the Bank of Canada raised interest rates by 75 basis points, increasing the Prime Rate to 7.2%.

In 2023, the City's investments had an average rate of return of 5.15%, 193 basis points higher than the budgeted rate. Furthermore, the City earned \$5.289 million in capital gains, thereby increasing the annual rate of return to 6.21%, 299 basis points higher than the budgeted rate.

The difference in the rate of return accounts for a favourable variance of \$14.907 million.

### **Portfolio Balance**

The forecasted average portfolio balance for 2023 was \$450.0 million. The actual average general fund portfolio balance (including cash balances) for 2023 was \$498.9 million. The higher portfolio balance accounts for a favourable variance of \$1.573 million.

### **Variance Summary**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Portfolio Balance	\$450.0m	\$498.9m	\$49.8m
Interest Rate	3.22%	6.21%	2.99%
Investment Income	\$14.479m	\$30.959m	<b>\$16.480m</b>
Portfolio Balance Variance Impact			<b>\$1.573m</b>
Interest Rate Variance Impact			<b>\$14.907m</b>

### **Portfolio Composition**

All investments made in 2023 adhered to the City of Markham Investment Policy. At December 31, 2023, 37% of the City's marketable securities portfolio was comprised of government issued securities and 63% of the portfolio was made up of instruments issued

by Schedule A Banks. All of these levels are within the targets established in the City's Investment Policy. (Exhibit 1).

The December 31, 2023 marketable securities portfolio was comprised of the following instruments: Bonds 41%; GICs 19%; and Principal Protected Notes 40%. (Exhibit 2)

At December 31, 2023, the City's portfolio balance (all funds excluding Development Charges) of \$355.0 million was broken down into the following investment terms (Exhibit 3):

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Under 1 month	37.8%	24.1%
1 month to 3 months	2.7%	4.1%
3 months to 1 year	4.6%	6.5%
Over 1 year	54.8%	65.2%
Weighted average investment term	2,143 days	2,574 days
Weighted average days to maturity	1,265 days	1,572 days

### **Money Market Performance**

The City of Markham uses the 3-month T-bill rates to gauge the performance of investments in the money market. The average 3-month T-bill rate for 2023 was 4.74% (source: Bank of Canada). Non-DCA Fund money market investments held by the City of Markham in 2023 (including bank balances) had an average return of 4.91%. Therefore, the City's money market investments outperformed 3-month T-Bills by 17 basis points. See Exhibit 4 for all Money Market securities held by the City of Markham in 2023.

### **Bond/Principal Protected Notes Market Performance**

At December 31, 2023, the City held 24 bonds and 23 Principal Protect Notes in the general fund portfolio. The amortized value of these investments at year-end was \$229.9 million. The market value of these investments at December 31, 2023 was \$232.6 million. This translates into \$2.7 million of unrealized gains at year end.

#### Principal Protected Notes (PPNs)

Principal Protect Notes are a safe way for municipalities to participate in the equity market. PPNs are notes of indebtedness issued by a bank, which provide a return profile based on an index (i.e. the TSX Low-Volatility index) or basket of equities without requiring direct ownership in the underlying indexes or equities (the underlying holdings are owned by the issuing bank). PPNs are fixed-income securities that guarantee a minimum return equal to the investor's initial investment if held to maturity. In other words, the principal is protected and the City can never lose its initial investment amount.

PPNs often have a low (or no) annual interest component. However, the upside can be quite significant depending on the "participation rate". The participation rate is percentage that the PPN holder receives compared to the overall increase of the underlying indexes or equities. For example, if a \$5 million PPN has a 60% participation

rate, that means if the underlying index increased by 50% over the duration of the investment, the holder would receive \$6.5 million upon maturity, for a \$1.5 million net gain [calculated as: \$5 million \* (1+ (50% increase \* 60% participation rate))].

The participation rate is often determined based on a function of duration and annual coupon payments (i.e. the guaranteed interest amount). The lower the coupon and longer the duration of the note, the higher the participation rate. The highest participation rate of a PPN owned by Markham is 625%.

At December 31, 2023, the City owned 23 PPNs with a combined face value of \$107.0 million. The market value of these PPNs at December 31, 2023 was \$117.5 million. This translates into \$10.5 million of unrealized gains at year end.

See Exhibit 5 for all 2023 Bond/PPN transactions and holdings.

### **Reserve Funds and Other Interest**

The following table outlines the interest earned on investments for all major City funds and reserves.

	<u>Average Balance</u>	<u>Interest Earned</u>	<u>Average Rate</u>
General Portfolio	\$498,800,000	\$30,959,000	6.21%
Reserve Funds (+ve balances)	\$359,000,000	\$17,760,000	4.95%
Reserve Funds (-ve balances)	(\$373,500,000)	(\$25,270,000)	6.77%
Trust Funds	\$2,460,000	\$61,700	2.50%
Alectra Promissory Note	\$67,900,000	\$2,994,000	4.41%
MEC/District Energy Loans	\$16,800,000	\$872,000	5.19%
Development Charge Reserves	\$100,400,000	\$5,248,000	5.23%

Because of the large swing in portfolio balances throughout the year (due to the timing of the collection and disbursement of taxes), there will always need to be a significant portion of the City's funds invested in the money market (i.e., short-term investment window) to ensure access to sufficient cash to meet City needs.

The net negative rate of return on the reserve funds is a combination of two factors:

- 1) The City's Interest Allocation Policy (as approved by Council) stipulates that money market rates be allocated to the interest bearing reserves and bond interest be allocated to the general portfolio. The reasons for this are 1) over the long term, bond rates generally outperform money market rates, therefore the City is able to achieve higher rates of return in its general portfolio and thereby reducing the immediate need for tax increases; 2) bond market rates are more stable which allows for smoother budgeting; and 3) reserves and reserve funds can more easily absorb these money market rate fluctuations as the requirements for these funds are longer term in nature.
- 2) The Interest Allocation Policy also stipulates that "any reserves or reserve funds with negative balances will be charged at a rate of prime."

---

The \$373.5 million of interest bearing reserves with a negative balance were charged \$25.270 million of interest (average interest rate of 6.77%). Note: a negative rate of return simply means that the general portfolio is earning a return by “lending” funds to reserves in a negative balance.

**OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:****Outlook**

It is expected that the Bank of Canada will start cutting interest rates in 2024. The City’s cash balances are expected to be low for most of the year, limiting the ability to take advantage of these rates before they decline further. As was the case in 2023, a large portion of investment income will likely come from interest on internal borrowing.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The 2024 budget for Income Earned on Investments is set at \$17.479 million (an increase of \$3 million over 2023) as that is considered to be a minimum level that will be sustainable in the long term. Any interest income earned over the \$17.479 million budget in 2024 will be transferred to reserves at the end of the year.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Not applicable

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not applicable

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

Joseph Silva, Treasurer

Trinela Cane, Commissioner, Corporate  
Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1:

- Exhibit 1 – Investment Portfolio by Issuer
- Exhibit 2 – Investment Portfolio by Instrument
- Exhibit 3 – Investment Terms
- Exhibit 4 – 2023 Money Market Investments
- Exhibit 5 – 2023 Bond Market Investments
- Exhibit 6 – 2023 DCA Fund Investments