

# AGF Canadian Stock Fund

FUND COMMENTARY SECOND QUARTER 2017

FOR ADVISOR USE WITH INVESTORS

## FUND FACTS

<b>FUND CATEGORY:</b> Canadian focused equity	<b>BENCHMARK INDEX:</b> S&P/TSX Composite Total Return Index	<b>DATE OF INCEPTION:</b> October 1969	<b>INVESTMENT STYLE:</b> Bottom-up GARP	<b>PORTFOLIO MANAGER:</b> AGF Investments Inc. Peter Frost, MBA, CFA
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## Market overview

During the second quarter of 2017, global equities continued to move higher, following a rally that followed the U.S. election in early November of last year. Secular growth sectors such as Information Technology continued to provide market leadership, a trend that began in the first quarter. As such, portfolios with growth investment styles generally outperformed value, as opposed to 2016 when growth severely underperformed value.

From a macroeconomic perspective, data remained supportive and in some cases, saw acceleration. In the U.S., though non-farm payrolls trended lower than the first two months of 2017 which saw an average of 231,000 gains per month, the unemployment rate remained at cycle lows of 4.3%. Meanwhile, the ISM Manufacturing Index continued to accelerate well into expansion territory, hitting a high of 57.8 in June, a level not reached in three years. Similarly, the services sector remained robust, with the ISM Non-Manufacturing PMI at 56.9, signalling continued strong expansionary conditions. In response to the strong macroeconomic data, the U.S. Federal Reserve raised the Fed Funds rate in June, the second hike this far in 2017.

In Canada, equity markets slumped in sympathy with weakness in oil prices. During the quarter, WTI oil prices fell after OPEC and other major exporters extended their current deal to limit oil production for nine months. This disappointed investors, who expected deeper cuts. Macroeconomic data, however, remained supportive during the quarter, showing that the Canadian economy grew at a 3.7% annualized rate in the first quarter, with consumer spending more than making up for a slide in exports. The Canadian labour market also remained robust, with job growth accelerating in May to its fastest pace in eight months and continuing to top consensus estimates in June. With the strong macroeconomic data, the Bank of Canada began to signal a more hawkish posture with a possible rate hike coming as early as the third quarter. As such, investors began to price in a greater likelihood of rate hikes, and the Canadian dollar rallied towards the end of the quarter, from 72 cents USD to 77 cents USD between May and the end of June.

## Fund overview

As at June 30, 2017	3 mo.	1 yr.	3 yr.	5 yr.	10 yr.	PSD*
AGF Canadian Stock Fund (%) (MF Series, net of fees)	-1.8	11.7	-0.7	5.6	0.4	4.1
AGF Canadian Stock Fund (%) (F Series)	-1.5	13.1	0.5	6.8	1.6	5.3
S&P/TSX Composite Total Return Index (%)	-1.6	11.1	3.1	8.7	3.9	7.1

Source: AGF Investment Operations, Morningstar.

\* Performance start date (PSD): MF Series - July 9, 2001

For the quarter ending June 30, 2017, the Fund slightly underperformed the benchmark, returning -1.8% versus -1.6% for the benchmark. The Fund outperformed the benchmark on a gross of fees basis, and slightly underperformed net of fees. During the quarter, the Fund maintained its currency hedge on its U.S. dollar exposure. This helped protect U.S. equity returns, as the Canadian dollar appreciated during the period.

Overall sector allocation effect contributed to relative performance as the Fund benefitted from overweight allocations to Health Care, Consumer Discretionary, and Information Technology. Security selection was relatively neutral, as strong selection in Materials and Financials was offset by negative security selection in Energy and Industrials.

In terms of individual holdings, the top contributors during the period were Lam Research Corp., Zoetis Inc. and Croda International PLC, while the top detractors were Shawcor Ltd., CES Energy Solutions Corp. and LyondellBasell Industries.

The top contributor during the period was Lam Research Corp. Lam Research is a supplier of etch, deposition and clean equipment serving the semiconductor industry. The company is the overall leader in the etch market. Companies providing capital equipment to the semiconductor sector have had a strong run this year, driven by continued investments in 3D NAND, which involves stacking cells on chips, reaching a much higher storage density. Though we like the company's prospects, we decided to take profits towards the end of the quarter given the strong run the company's shares have had year to date.

The top detractor during the period was Shawcor Ltd. Shawcor is a leader in pipeline coating materials and applications which includes engineering design, fabrication, logistics support, and plant and field coatings. Shawcor provides its services to both onshore and offshore energy markets. Shawcor's shares

declined during the quarter amidst weakness in global oil prices, though the company reported an in-line quarter and announced an additional coating contract in Thailand. We continue to hold the company given that it is now trading at low valuations, has a stable backlog and is well positioned to generate cash flow in a range-bound crude oil price environment.

## Outlook

Since the U.S. election, we have seen a remarkably rally in global equity markets, reflecting a more business-friendly policy environment as well as stronger global economic growth. Indeed, we have seen both Canadian, U.S. and global economic data accelerate throughout the first half of 2017. With the exception of a few emerging market economies, global real GDP is expanding year over year, and manufacturing PMIs are expanding.

Energy has been a source of detraction for our portfolios this quarter, as this year has seen the Energy sector underperform the broader market by one of the largest margins in history. Energy equities have disconnected from oil prices, however, as WTI oil prices remain in a trading range. We remain of the view that over time, supply and demand balance will return to the market and oil prices should drift moderately higher. Within the sector, we continue to endeavour to own companies that can remain profitable at the current range-bound oil price environment.

With respect to bond yields, last quarter we wrote about our expectation that the secular low in bond yields may already be behind us, given the acceleration in economic growth that we expect. This remains true, as we have seen U.S. 10-year bond yield break their multi-year downward trend line, and we are seeing inflation increasing (which we expect to continue). We continue to expect that yields will slowly drift higher, and that low growth, long duration assets to continue to be pressured. As such, we are favouring companies that are demonstrating secular earnings growth momentum.

Overall, despite the assortment of global economic risks, we remain relatively optimistic and constructive on equities. Our view is that both Canada and the U.S. have emerged from recession-like conditions last year, and have accelerated in the first half of 2017. While we believe the cyclical market upturn may pause given the strong run we have already had, we believe it is likely not over, and would view any corrections as potential buying opportunities.

We continue to be focused on picking what we deem to be high-quality stocks with quality assets, high return on investment, strong balance sheets and sustainable and growing dividends. We believe this approach will endure and over time will prove to outperform through all economic scenarios.

Commissions, trailing commissions, management fees and expenses all may be associated with mutual fund investments. Please read the prospectus before investing. The indicated rates of return are the historical annual compounded total returns including changes in share and/or unit value and reinvestment of all dividends and/or distributions and do not take into account sales, redemption, distribution or optional charges or income taxes payable by any securityholder that would have reduced returns. Mutual funds are not guaranteed; their values change frequently and past performance may not be repeated. The information contained herein is designed to provide you with general information related to investment alternatives and strategies and is not intended to be comprehensive investment advice applicable to the circumstances of the individual. We strongly recommend that you consult with a financial advisor prior to making any investment decisions.

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