SBC **Brompton Split Banc Corp.**

Portfolio Manager Commentary - December 31, 2024

Global Markets Review

Global equity markets finished the year with another year of strong performance bolstered by a combination of moderating inflationary pressures, easing monetary policy, and resilient corporate earnings. Enthusiasm over the artificial intelligence (AI) theme drove significant gains in U.S. indices. Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. election also helped boost the domestic equity markets on the expectations of deregulation and a corporate tax cut despite uncertainties surrounding his proposed tariff and immigration policies. In global equity markets the MSCI World Total Return Index finished the full year with a 19.2% gain, while the S&P 500 Total Return Index rose 25.0%, climbing to all-time high in November. Communication Services (+40.2%) and Technology (+36.6%) were the best-performing sectors. Both sectors benefited from the development of AI themes. The S&P/TSX Composite Total Return Index was up 21.7% buoyed by Technology and Financials. In Europe, the STOXX 600 Total Return Index registered a 9.6% return for 2024. Spain, Italy, and Germany were the best-performing countries, gaining 20.0%, 18.9%, and 18.8%, respectively, while the U.K., Switzerland, and France all finished in positive territory, up 9.6%, 7.5%, and 0.9%, respectively.

Inflation continues to moderate, which has enabled global central banks to shift to accommodative monetary policies. In the U.S., inflation was 2.9% in 2024, while the unemployment rate remained relatively low at 4.1% as of the end of the year. The U.S. economy remains healthy and has managed to avoid a recession. However, the manufacturing PMI remained below 50 in the second half of 2024, which is an indicator of softness in the manufacturing sector. As the inflationary pressure meaningfully abated, the Federal Reserve started its long-awaited cutting cycle in September. The bond market was volatile in Q4 with the U.S. 10-year Treasury yield rising sharply from 3.6% in September (the lowest of the year) to approximately 4.6% by year end, which resulted in a steepening of the yield curve. The rebound in yields raised concerns over inflation returning due to President Trump's tariff and immigration policies, which has resulted in fewer rate cuts being priced into the market for 2025. Global bond markets, such as the U.K. Gilt and the German Bund, mirrored the sell off in U.S. Treasuries. In equities, growth outperformed value for both large cap and small cap, while large cap tech names were the primary contributors to the index performance even though they showed signs of losing momentum during the back half of the year. Strong performance was also seen from a broader group of stocks in 2024 relative to 2023, including strength Financials and Consumer Discretionary.

The Bank of Canada ("BoC") reduced its overnight policy rate to 3.25% after 50 bps cuts in both October and December in 2024. By year end of 2024, the BoC had made 175 bps cuts cumulatively since the start of its rate cutting cycle, which began in June. The BoC noted that the Canadian economy remains in excess supply, with labour market slack rising as population growth outpaced job creation. As for forward rate guidance, the BoC acknowledged that while further rate cuts in the future are expected, the timing and pace will still be guided by incoming data. The central bank signaled it would take a more gradual approach as the policy rate is now at the top end of its 2.25%-3.25% estimated range for the neutral rate. As the policy rates declined faster than in the U.S., the policy divergence resulted in Canadian dollar depreciation against the U.S. dollar. Moreover, rising unemployment rates, muted investment activities, and trade policy uncertainty from the Trump administration continue to weigh on the already fragile economic fundamentals.

We remain cautious on the Canadian economy into 2025 amid weak population growth and uncertain trade policy with the incoming administration in the U.S. In the upcoming months, we believe the divergence between Canada and the U.S. will persist as a result of a less resilient consumer and muted labour market in Canada. In addition, households have remained prudent as elevated interest rates and mortgage renewals weigh on discretionary spending, while business and residential investments have not recovered as economic uncertainty has slowed activity. In light of these factors, we expect the Canadian dollar to remain weak against the U.S. dollar. On the bright side, inflation has fallen meaningfully from its peak and the Bank of Canada will continue easing monetary policy in 2025. This should continue to favour Canadian banks, as their net interest margins are set to improve on steepening yield curve and loan growth, while we should see an improvement in credit off elevated levels in the back half of 2025. An acceleration of capital markets activities will also be positive for the banks. With the S&P TSX Composite Total Return Index rising 21% in 2024, its forward P/E remains near its 10-year average, suggesting a reasonable valuation.

Portfolio Review

Brompton Split Banc Corp. (the "Fund") invests in a portfolio consisting primarily of the six largest Canadian banks. Additionally, up to 10% of the portfolio can be invested, from time to time, in global financial companies through an investment in the Brompton North American Financials Dividend ETF ("BFIN"). BFIN is an exchange-traded fund that invests in the equity securities of North American financial services companies with a market capitalization of at least $5 billion.

In 2024, the Fund's Units (1 Class A share plus 1 Preferred share) gained 23.1% versus the S&P/TSX Equal Weight Diversified Banks Total Return Index (up 23.1%) and the S&P/TSX Capped Financials Total Return Index (up 30.0%), The Canadian bank index underperformed the broader market as well as U.S. banks in 2024. Despite a broadening out of Canadian bank performance in the second half of the year, U.S peers rallied quickly following Trump's election while Canadian banks lagged.

We believe that the economic environment will become more favorable for Canadian banks in 2025. Canada's GDP growth is forecasted to improve this year with economists projecting 2% GDP growth in Canada compared a 1% gain in 2024. In terms of monetary policy, the Bank of Canada is projected to continue lowering interest rates throughout the year. Currently, the market is pricing in 2 to 3 additional rate cuts in 2025 with the overnight rate settling between 2.50% and 2.75% by year end. At the same time, long rates are expected to stay roughly unchanged this year, leading to a steeper yield curve. As interest rates decline and economic conditions improve throughout 2025, we believe that the credit environment should stabilize, potentially leading to a peak in provision for credit losses (PCLs) during the year (Exhibit 1). As the market starts to gain confidence that credit losses are peaking, this should have a positive impact on bank stock performance. Lending volume is expected to pick up in 2025, particularly in residential mortgages. The housing market recovery, coupled with lower interest rates, is likely to drive increased demand for mortgages.

On the regulatory front, the capital rules for Canadian banks seem to have reached their peak, and there's growing expectation that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (OSFI) may need to adjust its stance in response to developments in the United States. As the U.S. considers softening the final stages of the B3E (Basel III Endgame) rules, we expect OSFI to follow suit directionally in order to maintain competitiveness in the market. This potential easing of capital requirements could provide Canadian banks with more flexibility in their operations and lending capacity.

The Fund was positively affected on a relative basis by its holding in BFIN, which was up 33.9% in 2024 as U.S. financials led the Canadian banks during the year. All sub-industry groups posted positive returns. The economic implications of U.S. tariff threats and an election year in Canada are sources of uncertainties that we will closely monitor.

Annual Compound Returns[1]	1-YR	3-YR	5-YR	10-YR	Since Inception[2]
Brompton Split Banc Corp. - Class A	44.0%	6.5%	15.1%	12.6%	11.8%
S&P/TSX Capped Financials Index	30.0%	10.3%	13.2%	10.8%	9.5%
S&P/TSX Equal Weight Diversified Banks Total Return Index	23.1%	6.0%	10.9%	9.9%	10.1%
S&P/TSX Composite Total Return Index	21.6%	8.6%	11.1%	8.7%	7.6%
Brompton Split Banc Corp. - Unit	23.1%	5.7%	10.2%	9.2%	8.8%
Brompton Split Banc Corp. - Preferred	6.4%	6.0%	5.6%	5.2%	5.2%
S&P/TSX Preferred Share Total Return Index	24.6%	2.7%	6.5%	3.0%	3.0%

(1) Returns are for the periods ended December 31, 2024 and are unaudited. The table shows the Fund's compound return on a Class A share, Preferred share and unit (which consists of one Class A share and one Preferred share) for each period indicated compared with the S&P/TSX Capped Financials Total Return Index ("Financials Index"), the S&P/TSX Equal Weight Diversified Banks Total Return Index ("Banks Index"), the S&P/TSX Composite Total Return Index ("Composite Index") and the S&P/TSX Preferred Share Total Return Index ("Preferred Index") (together the "Indices"). The Financials Index is derived from the Composite Index based on the financials sector of the Global Industry Classification Standard. The Banks Index is the equal-weighted version of the S&P/TSX Diversified Banks Total Return Index, a benchmark including commercial banks whose businesses are derived primarily from commercial lending operations and also have significant activity in retail banking and small and medium corporate lending. The Composite Index tracks the performance, on a market-weight basis and a total return basis, of a broad index of large-capitalization issuers listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange ("TSX"). The Preferred Index tracks the performance, on a market weight basis and a total return basis, of a broad index of preferred shares trading on the TSX that meet the criteria relating to size, liquidity and issuer rating. The Fund is passively managed and consists of six Canadian banks on an approximately equal weight basis with up to 10% of its total assets held directly or indirectly in global financial services companies; therefore, its performance is not expected to mirror that of the Indices. The Indices' performance is calculated without the impact of management fees, fund expenses and trading commissions, whereas the performance of the Fund is calculated after deducting such fees and expenses. Additionally, the performance of the Fund's Class A shares is impacted by the leverage provided by the Fund's Preferred shares. The performance information shown is based on net asset value per Class A share and per unit, or the redemption price per Preferred share and assumes that cash distributions made by the Fund during the periods shown were reinvested at net asset value per Class A share and per unit, or the redemption price per Preferred share in additional Class A shares, units and Preferred shares of the Fund. Past performance does not necessarily indicate how the Fund will perform in the future.

(2) Inception Date November 16, 2005

BROMPTON FUNDS

VALUE
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PERFORMANCE
THE FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENCE

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