

# ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT OF FUND PERFORMANCE

# GUARDIAN SHORT DURATION BOND FUND

**DECEMBER 31, 2022** 

This annual management report of fund performance contains financial highlights, but does not contain either the annual financial report or annual financial statements of the investment fund. You can obtain a copy of the annual financial report or annual financial statements at your request, and at no cost, by calling 1-866-383-6546, by writing to us at Guardian Capital LP, Commerce Court West, 199 Bay Street, Suite 2700, P.O. Box 201, Toronto, Ontario, M5L 1E8, or by visiting our website at www.guardiancapital.com/investmentsolutions or SEDAR at www.sedar.com.

Securityholders may also contact us using one of these methods to request a copy of the investment fund's proxy voting policies and procedures, proxy voting disclosure record, or quarterly portfolio disclosure.



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### MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION OF FUND PERFORMANCE

### **Investment Objective and Strategies**

Guardian Short Duration Bond Fund (the "Fund") seeks current interest income while at the same time preserving capital and seeking opportunities for capital appreciation, while maintaining relatively short portfolio duration. This is accomplished through investment in bonds, debentures, notes or other evidence of indebtedness. The Manager uses a proactive, disciplined management approach while employing various analytical tools to identify investments that offer value on a relative basis. The risk management process is designed to limit total exposure to individual issuers, diversify exposure to various credit risks, and maintain portfolio liquidity.

#### Risk

The risks associated with investing in the Fund remain as discussed in the prospectus. The Fund may be suitable for investors with a low tolerance for risk, particularly those who are looking for a core Canadian fixed-income fund, but who are concerned about the risk of rising interest rates and will accept lower interest income in exchange for the lower volatility of shorter-term bonds.

# **Results of Operations**

(This commentary is based on the performance of Series I units of the Fund. Returns for other Series of units may vary, largely due to differences in fees and expenses. Please refer to the Past Performance section for specific Series level performance details.)

The Fund's net asset value decreased by 16% to \$56.5 million at December 31, 2022 from \$67.4 million at December 31, 2021. Of this change, a decrease of \$2.1 million was due to investment performance and a decrease of \$8.8 million was attributable to net redemptions.

Series I units of the Fund posted a return of -4.2% for the year. The Fund's benchmark, the FTSE Canada Short Term Overall Bond Index, returned -4.0% for the same period. The Fund's return is after the deduction

of fees and expenses, where applicable for the Series, unlike the benchmark's return.

Fixed income markets globally experienced one of the worst years, on a total return basis, in decades. The FTSE Canada Universe Bond Index (Index) ended the year down, while returning 0.10% in the fourth quarter. It has been the worst year on record since the inception of the Index, and this is the first time in its history that we have witnessed two consecutive years of negative returns. FTSE Canada Short-, Midand Long-term indices returned -4.04%, -10.29% and -21.76%, respectively. Provincial bonds (overall) returned -15.05% and Corporate bonds (overall) returned -9.87%.

The Bank of Canada (BoC) raised its key policy rate by 50 bps in its year-end meeting on December 8, 2022. With this seventh consecutive increase in the overnight rate this year, the BoC has raised its policy rate by a cumulative of 400 bps in 2022. The US Federal Reserve (Fed) policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), on December 14, 2022, raised its target range for the fed funds rate by 50 basis points to an upper bound of 4.50%, bringing the cumulative increase to 425 basis points for the year. During the past year, we have witnessed extensive curve flattening and inversion in some yield curve relationships, a measure of the relationship between short- and long-term interest rates on the back of central bank efforts to control rising inflation. To put the current inversion/flattening into perspective, the last time we saw these levels in 10-year vs. 2-year (-75 bps) bond yields was in the 1990s.

In Canada, the non-seasonally adjusted year-onyear Consumer Price Index (CPI) declined by 0.1% on a month-over-month basis in November. This is the lowest reading since May 2022. Coming into 2022, corporate bonds significantly outperformed government bonds, as spreads tightened to a multidecade low since reaching the highs during COVID-19. The credit market, however, since the beginning of 2022, sold off massively, as risk-off sentiments (concerns around global growth slowdown) and geopolitical tensions all weighed on the asset class.

Credit spread widening and sector allocation were the two main contributors to the Fund's



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underperformance in the past 12 months, relative to the benchmark. The Fund's underweight exposure to short-term Federal bonds and to the Provincial sector positively contributed to performance, while an overweight exposure to the Financial sector and a modest overweight exposure in the Communication sector each detracted from performance.

The Fund's underweight position in the 5-year key rate node (Canada Federal 2026 bonds) on the yield curve, as well as its overweight positions in Canadian Imperial Bank 2032 (Callable 2027) bonds and National Bank of Canada 2032 (Callable 2027) bonds all positively contributed to performance. The Fund's overweight position in Manulife Financial 2030 (Callable 2025) bonds, Hyundai Capital Canada 2026 bonds and Bank of Nova Scotia 2024 bonds each detracted from performance

The Fund held a substantial overweight position in the Financials sector throughout the year, and moved from being modestly overweight in the Industrials sector to a slight overweight by year-end. The Fund still maintains an underweight position in the Provincial and Federal bond sectors relative to the benchmark.

At year-end, the Fund was overweight in the Financials sector, underweight in the Federal and Provincial bond sector relative to the benchmark (MV%).

The Manager integrates ESG considerations into its investment analysis and stewardship activities with the objective of enhancing long-term investment performance. Active engagement and proxy voting are a core part of the Manager's stewardship approach, and the Fund's investment team participates in these activities in a manner suitable to the asset class and Fund. Our investment teams focus on ESG and other issues which they believe could be financially material and/or impact the long-term sustainability of the company. The consideration of ESG issues is one of a number of elements in the portfolio construction process and, may or may not have a material influence on portfolio composition at any given time. For more information, the Manager posts its annual proxy voting activities and an annual Responsible Investing report on its website: https://www.guardiancapital. com/investmentsolutions/

### **Recent Developments**

With global monetary policy tightening throughout the last calendar year, the material adjustment to higher yields, wider credit spreads, and extremes in many yield curve relationships provide relative value opportunities.

Central banks across the globe, particularly in North America, have been aggressive with their interest rate policies, driving interest rates higher. This has resulted in yield curve inversions in shorter tenors not seen in decades. The Manager expect central banks to pause in the not-too-distant future as they near the end of their current tightening cycle. One of the key drivers for the aggressive hiking is the exceptionally strong inflation data. However, inflation and inflation expectations, have turned in the past few months, and are now either steady or increasing at a slower pace, i.e. while inflation is still positive; it is rising to a lesser extent. Despite slowing inflation, employment metrics in Canada and the US are still strong, and wage gains represent a wildcard to price stability in the near future. Under a scenario where North American central banks decide to halt their key policy rates at their current levels, the degree of quantitative tightening, both by the Fed and the BoC, represents another layer of risk to concerns regarding growth slowdown. Given the delayed impact of monetary policy adjustments, we believe it prudent for North American central banks to allow time to assess the impacts of recent rate increases on economies.

Canadian Investment Grade (IG) bond spreads volatility continued in the last quarter of 2022, and reached their year-to-date high near the end of October, which coincided with increased concerns of inflation and its impact on monetary policy going forward. Starting in November though, the US Federal Reserve ("Fed") started sounding slightly less hawkish and subsequent inflation data started to inflect lower. This reversed markets' fears about tighter monetary policy and spreads tightened significantly and retraced almost all of the widening in October.

The Manager continues to expect interest rates and credit spreads to be volatile in 2023, however, with Canadian IG spreads still at elevated levels relative to history, the increased yield carry provides a



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significant support to total returns if there is further spread widening, especially for corporate bonds with maturities of 10-years or less.

In 2023, the Manager expects there to be at least some deterioration in corporate fundamentals as tighter labour markets and still persistent inflation keep costs high while weakness in economic growth will result in lower revenue growth; while this would argue for wider credit spreads, most corporates have relatively strong balance sheets so we would expect this to limit spread widening. We continue to expect IG credit spreads to be rangebound during 2023. Any break-out wider from here due to a continued too hot economy with the Fed having to tighten monetary policy further or a severe recession ("hard landing") resulting in a flight to quality into federal government bonds and any further significant tightening will be due to a "soft landing" scenario and with evidence that the Fed will not need to continue tightening. To summarise, the Manager believes the risk reward appears quite compelling in Canadian IG space.

# **Related Party Transactions**

Guardian Capital LP, the Manager of the Fund, is considered to be a "related party" of the Fund. The Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Fund and also acts as the portfolio manager, managing the investment portfolio of the Fund. These services are in the normal course of operations and the Fund pays a management fee to the Manager for these services, as detailed in the Management Fees section below. The Manager also receives an Administration Fee from the Fund, amounting to 0.04% of the average daily net asset value of the Fund, in return for the payment by the Manager of all the variable operating expenses of the Fund. The Independent Review Committee ("IRC") has approved the Manager's Policy for this item and the Manager relies on this approval as a standing instruction from the IRC. The Manager received the Administration Fee and paid Fund expenses in accordance with this Policy during the year. The Manager is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Guardian Capital Group Limited, a publicly traded firm listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

The Fund may invest some of its available shortterm cash in units of Guardian Canadian ShortTerm Investment Fund, another investment fund managedby Guardian Capital LP and a related issuer, which invests its assets in high-quality short-term fixed-income securities. As at December 31, 2022, the Fund had invested \$2,099,648 or 3.7% of its net assets, in units of the Guardian Canadian Short-Term Investment Fund. With respect to investments in related issuers, the Manager has relied on the approval that it has received from the IRC. The approval requires the Manager to comply with its current policy and procedures regarding investments in related issuers and to report periodically to the IRC. The Manager will not duplicate management fees paid to an underlying fund that is a related issuer.

### **Management Fees**

No management fees are payable or collected for Series I units of the Fund. Series A and Series F units are subject to a management fee which is based on a percentage of the average Series NAV during each month, calculated and accrued daily, and payable monthly. The Series A management fee is 0.80% per annum. The Series F management fee is 0.30% per annum. The table below provides a breakdown of services received in consideration of the management fees, as a percentage of the management fees, for the year.

	Series I	Series A	Series F
Investment management and other general administration	n/a	37.5%	100%
Trailer Commission	n/a	62.5%	0.0%



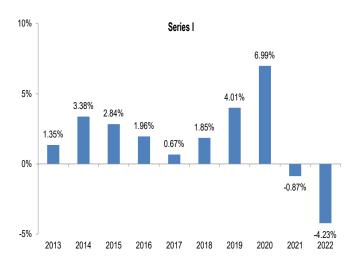
#### **Past Performance**

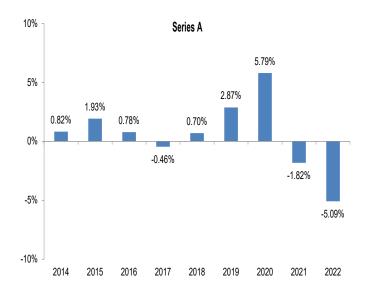
The performance information shown below assumes that all distributions made by the Fund in the periods shown were reinvested in additional units of the Fund. This performance information does not take into account sales, redemption, distribution or other optional charges that would have reduced returns or performance. Past performance of the Fund does not necessarily indicate how the Fund will perform in the future.

The performance shown for Series I below includes results prior to April 24, 2014, when the Fund was not a reporting issuer. Had the Fund been subject to the additional regulatory requirements applicable to a reporting issuer during such period, the expenses of the Series I units of the Fund would likely have been higher. The financial statements for the period when the Fund was not a reporting issuer, are available on the Manager's website at www.guardiancapital.com or upon request.

### Year-by-Year Returns

The bar charts show the Fund's performance for the period from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, and annual performance for each of the prior years shown, and illustrates how the Fund's performance has changed from year to year. The chart shows in percentage terms, how much an investment made on the first day of each financial year would have grown or decreased by the last day of that financial year.





# **Annual Compound Returns**

The tables below shows the historical compound returns of the Fund's Series I and Series A units for the periods indicated, as at December 31, 2022. The returns of a broad based market index are also shown.

	1 Yr	3 Yrs	5 Yrs	10 Yrs	Since Inception*
Series I (%)	-4.23	0.52	1.48	n/a	1.88
FTSE Canada Short-Term Overall Bond Index (%)	-4.04	0.03	1.01	n/a	1.38

<sup>\*</sup> Inception date - August 29, 2013.

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	1 Yr	3 Yrs	5 Yrs	10 Yrs	Since Inception*
Series A (%)	-5.09	-0.47	0.42	n/a	0.60
FTSE Canada Short-Term Overall Bond Index (%)	-4.04	0.03	1.01	n/a	1.21

<sup>\*</sup> Inception date - April 30, 2014.

The FTSE Canada Short-Term Overall Bond Index is designed to be a broad measure of the Canadian investment grade short-term fixed income market.

For Series F units, please note that it has not yet been 12 consecutive months since the start date of this Series and so in accordance with regulatory requirements, investment performance cannot be shown.



#### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The following tables show selected key financial information about the Fund and are intended to help you understand the Fund's financial performance for the periods indicated. The information is derived from the Fund's audited annual financial statements.

The Fund's Net Assets per Unit (Series I)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2021	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2020	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2018
Net Assets per unit, Beginning of Period <sup>[1]</sup>	\$10.16	\$10.46	\$10.01	\$9.84	\$9.86
Increase (decrease) from operations per unit: [1]					
Total revenue	0.27	0.24	0.24	0.22	0.21
Total expenses	0.00	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Realized gains (losses)	(0.40)	0.04	0.17	0.13	(0.14)
Unrealized gains (losses)	(0.30)	(0.35)	0.26	0.05	0.11
Total increase (decrease) from operations per unit	(0.43)	(0.07)	0.67	0.40	0.18
Distributions per unit from: [1] [2]					
Income (excluding dividends)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.21)
Canadian dividends	-	-	-	-	-
Capital gains	-	-	-	-	-
Return of capital	-	-	-	-	-
Total Distributions per unit	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.21)
Net Assets per unit, End of Period [1]	\$9.47	\$10.16	\$10.46	\$10.01	\$9.84

<sup>[1]</sup> Net assets per unit and distributions per unit are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase (decrease) from operations per unit is based on the weighted average number of units outstanding over the financial period.

#### Ratios and Supplemental Data (Series I)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2021	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2020	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2018
Total net asset value (000's) [1]	\$56,253	\$67,320	\$48,784	\$55,564	\$67,780
Number of units outstanding [1]	5,942,662	6,626,712	4,661,697	5,551,965	6,887,341
Management expense ratio [2]	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.04%
Management expense ratio before waivers and absorptions	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.05%	0.04%
Trading expense ratio [3]	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Portfolio turnover rate [4]	120.51%	119.28%	84.17%	87.19%	141.16%
Net asset value per unit [1]	\$9.47	\$10.16	\$10.46	\$10.01	\$9.84

<sup>[1]</sup> This information is provided as at the end of each period indicated.

<sup>[2]</sup> Substantially all distributions were reinvested in additional units of the Fund.

<sup>[2]</sup> The management expense ratio is based on total expenses (excluding commissions, other portfolio transaction costs and withholding taxes) of the Fund and its proportionate share of the total expenses of the Underlying Funds, where applicable, for the stated period and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the period.

<sup>[3]</sup> The trading expense ratio represents total commissions and other portfolio transaction costs of the Fund and its proportionate share of the Underlying Funds' portfolio transaction costs, where applicable, expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value for the period.

<sup>[4]</sup> The Fund's portfolio turnover rate indicates how actively its portfolio advisor trades portfolio investments. A portfolio turnover rate of 100% is equivalent to the Fund buying and selling all of the securities in the portfolio once in the course of a year. The higher a fund's portfolio turnover rate in a year, the greater the trading costs payable by the fund in the year, and the greater the chance of an investor receiving taxable capital gains in the year. There is not necessarily a relationship between a high turnover rate and the performance of a fund.



### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The following tables show selected key financial information about the Fund and are intended to help you understand the Fund's financial performance for the periods indicated. The information is derived from the Fund's audited annual financial statements.

The Fund's Net Assets per Unit (Series A)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2021	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2020	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2018
Net Assets per unit, Beginning of Period [1]	\$10.02	\$10.31	\$9.86	\$9.70	\$9.71
Increase (decrease) from operations per unit: [1]					
Total revenue	0.12	0.23	0.24	0.22	0.21
Total expenses	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Realized gains (losses)	(0.11)	0.04	0.16	0.12	(0.14)
Unrealized gains (losses)	(0.40)	(0.38)	0.29	0.05	0.07
Total increase (decrease) from operations per unit	(0.48)	(0.21)	0.57	0.28	0.03
Distributions per unit from: [1] [2]					
Income (excluding dividends)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.08)
Canadian dividends	-	-	-	-	-
Capital gains	-	-	-	-	-
Return of capital	(0.03)	-	-	-	-
Total Distributions per unit	(0.14)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(80.0)
Net Assets per unit, End of Period [1]	\$9.38	\$10.02	\$10.31	\$9.86	\$9.70

<sup>[1]</sup> Net assets per unit and distributions per unit are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase (decrease) from operations per unit is based on the weighted average number of units outstanding over the financial period.

#### Ratios and Supplemental Data (Series A)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2021	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2020	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2019	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2018
Total net asset value (000's) [1]	\$63	\$63	\$69	\$69	\$67
Number of units outstanding [1]	6,759	6,295	6,704	6,993	6,913
Management expense ratio [2]	0.95%	1.01%	1.17%	1.14%	1.18%
Management expense ratio before waivers and absorptions	0.95%	1.01%	1.17%	1.14%	1.18%
Trading expense ratio [3]	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Portfolio turnover rate [4]	120.51%	119.28%	84.17%	87.19%	141.16%
Net asset value per unit [1]	\$9.38	\$10.02	\$10.31	\$9.86	\$9.70

<sup>[1]</sup> This information is provided as at the end of each period indicated.

<sup>[2]</sup> Substantially all distributions were reinvested in additional units of the Fund.

<sup>[2]</sup> The management expense ratio is based on total expenses (excluding commissions, other portfolio transaction costs and withholding taxes) of the Fund and its proportionate share of the total expenses of the Underlying Funds, where applicable, for the stated period and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the period.

<sup>[3]</sup> The trading expense ratio represents total commissions and other portfolio transaction costs of the Fund and its proportionate share of the Underlying Funds' portfolio transaction costs, where applicable, expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value for the period.

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#### FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The following tables show selected key financial information about the Fund and are intended to help you understand the Fund's financial performance for the periods indicated. The information is derived from the Fund's audited annual financial statements.

The Fund's Net Assets per Unit (Series F)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	Period from Apr. 30 to Dec. 31, 2021
Net Assets per unit, Beginning of Period [1]	\$9.78	\$10.00
Increase (decrease) from operations per unit: [1]		
Total revenue	0.11	0.15
Total expenses	(0.04)	(0.03)
Realized gains (losses)	(0.10)	0.02
Unrealized gains (losses)	(0.40)	(0.22)
Total increase (decrease) from operations per unit	(0.43)	(0.08)
Distributions per unit from: [1][2]		
Income (excluding dividends)	(0.13)	(0.14)
Canadian dividends	-	-
Capital gains	-	-
Return of capital	-	-
Total Distributions per unit	(0.13)	(0.14)
Net Assets per unit, End of Period [1]	\$9.20	\$9.78

<sup>[1]</sup> Net assets per unit and distributions per unit are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase (decrease) from operations per unit is based on the weighted average number of units outstanding over the financial period.

#### Ratios and Supplemental Data (Series F)

	12 months ended Dec. 31, 2022	Period from Apr. 30 to Dec. 31, 2021
Total net asset value (000's) [1]	\$167	\$5
Number of units outstanding [1]	18,129	507
Management expense ratio [2]	0.38%	0.44%
Management expense ratio before waivers and absorptions	0.38%	0.44%
Trading expense ratio [3]	0.00%	0.00%
Portfolio turnover rate [4]	120.51%	119.28%
Net asset value per unit [1]	\$9.20	\$9.78

<sup>[1]</sup> This information is provided as at the end of each period indicated.

<sup>[2]</sup> Substantially all distributions were reinvested in additional units of the Fund.

<sup>[2]</sup> The management expense ratio is based on total expenses (excluding commissions, other portfolio transaction costs and withholding taxes) of the Fund and its proportionate share of the total expenses of the Underlying Funds, where applicable, for the stated period and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the period.

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### **SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO**

As at December 31, 2022

Portfolio Allocation	% of Net Asset Value
Canadian Federal and Guaranteed Bonds	20.6%
Canadian Corporate Bonds	69.6%
United States Corporate Bonds	5.7%
Short-Term Securities	3.7%
Assets (Liabilities)	0.4%

Top 25 Holdings	% of Net Asset Value
Canada Housing Trust No. 1	16.6%
Bank of Montreal	7.3%
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce	6.4%
Sun Life Financial Inc.	6.4%
The Bank of Nova Scotia	6.0%
Manulife Financial Corporation	5.4%
Royal Bank of Canada	5.2%
Hyundai Capital Canada Inc.	5.1%
The Toronto-Dominion Bank	4.3%
Government of Canada	4.0%
Guardian Canadian Short-Term Investment Fund, Series I	3.7%
Glacier Credit Card Trust	3.5%
JPMorgan Chase & Company	3.5%
National Bank of Canada	3.5%
Federation des caisses Desjardins du Quebec	3.0%
Bank of America Corporation	2.2%
TransCanada PipeLines Limited	2.2%
Daimler Trucks Finance Canada Inc.	1.9%
Inter Pipeline Limited	1.8%
Choice Properties Real Estate Investment Trust	1.7%
Rogers Communications Inc.	1.6%
Ventas Canada Finance Limited	1.6%
Equitable Bank	1.5%
Enbridge Inc.	1.2%

Top 25 Holdings as a percentage of net asset value 99.6%

Total Net Asset Value \$56,482,842

The Summary of Investment Portfolio may change due to ongoing portfolio transactions of the Fund. A quarterly update is available. If the Fund has invested in other investment funds, the prospectus and other information about the underlying investment funds are available on the internet via www.sedar.com.



# GUARDIAN CAPITAL LP

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