

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# Pension Plan

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# Pension Plan Highlights

December 31, 2023

## Financial Health of the Plan

123%

**Going Concern**

Funding Ratio\*

116%

**Solvency**

Funding Ratio\*

\* Ratios on October 1, 2023; solvency ratio without indexation

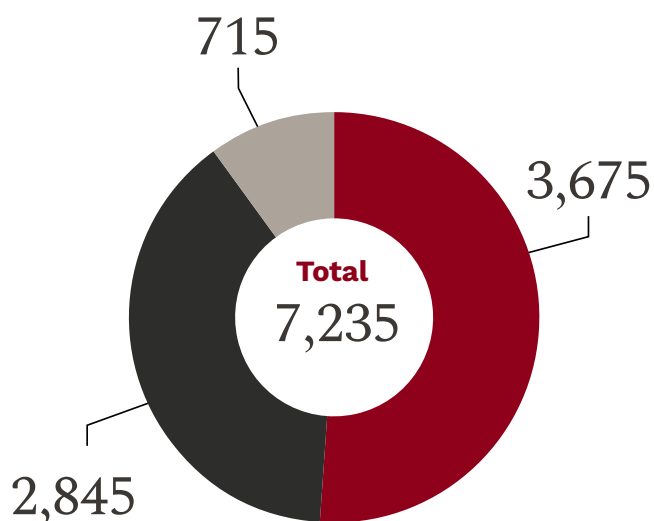
## Net Assets Available for Benefits

\$3.01B

## Total Pension Benefits Paid

\$132M

## Membership



- Active Members
- Retirees and Beneficiaries
- Deferred Members

## Performance

+9.7%

**1-Year Rate of Return (gross)**

+5.2%

**4-Year Annualized Rate of Return (gross)**

+7.1%

**10-Year Annualized Rate of Return (gross)**

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We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their longstanding relationship with this territory, which remains unceded. We pay respect to all Indigenous people in this region, from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home. We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers, both young and old. And we honour their courageous leaders — past, present, and future.

# Overview

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The University of Ottawa (the “University”) is pleased to present the 2023 Pension Plan Annual Report to provide members of the University of Ottawa Retirement Pension Plan (1965) with information about the governance, management, and administration of the pension plan and its related assets. This report includes benefit information as well as highlights of membership and financial statistics, current information on the pension plan’s funded status, and its investment results.


For additional financial details, pension plan members can refer to the audited financial statements as at December 31, 2023 and accompanying notes at [Budget information and financial statements | About us \(uottawa.ca\)](#). 

## Pension Plan Governance


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The University, through its Board of Governors (the “Board”), is the plan administrator. It has the responsibility and authority to administer the plan and invest the pension fund in accordance with pension legislation and the plan text. In addition to acting as administrator, the University is also the sponsoring entity of the plan. To provide oversight and management of the plan, the Board has established a Pension Governance Structure that delegates certain powers with respect to the administration of the plan to committees of the Board and authorized officers.

### The Pension Fund Investment Committee (the “PFIC”)

The PFIC is an expert committee that oversees pension plan investments on behalf of the Board. Key oversight responsibilities include monitoring compliance with the asset mix policy and investment manager guidelines; overseeing the achievement of performance objectives; and establishing strategic investment priorities. For more information on the mandate of the PFIC and other details on committee membership, please refer to our [website](#). 

### The Pension Plan Committee (the “PPC”)

This committee was established to oversee all aspects of pension plan administration on behalf of the Board. Key aspects of this oversight role include monitoring compliance with investment and administrative policies, reviewing proposed plan modifications and making related recommendations, monitoring fees and expenses charged to the plan, and recommending an annual budget for fees and expenses. For more information on the role of the PPC and other details on committee membership, please refer to our [website](#). 

### The Administration Committee (the “AC”)

The AC is composed of the President, who shall act as chair, the Vice-Presidents, and the Secretary-General. With respect to the Pension Governance Structure, the AC recommends on the actuarial strategy as well as the funding strategy and contributions. The AC also recommends on the filing of actuarial valuation reports.

# Pension Plan Investment Management

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The University employs professional investment staff who report to the Chief Investment Officer, Pension Fund and Investment Management (the “CIO”). The CIO is the principal staff resource for the Board and committees and provides advice and recommendations to the PFIC on all investment matters. The CIO is accountable for ensuring that pension plan assets are invested and managed in a manner that is consistent with policies and strategies, and that they meet the University’s obligations to pension plan members.

The investment staff is responsible for oversight of external investment managers, the plan’s custodian, and other external service providers. Manager oversight includes assessing qualitative and quantitative factors to evaluate the team of external professionals, strategy execution, adherence to philosophy and style, performance against objectives, compliance, and firm specific issues. The internal team implements investment strategies, is responsible for all aspects of operational management, liaises with industry contacts and service providers, and acts as a principal resource for the PFIC and the PPC.

The last strategic asset allocation (“SAA”) review was completed in 2022 to assess the asset mix policy and long-term strategic targets; this review was performed to ensure continued adherence to good governance practices and to factor in the significantly changed macro-economic environment since the last SAA in 2018. The resulting asset mix has a slightly higher future risk and return profile, aimed to enhance the affordability and sustainability of the plan for stakeholders over time.

## Key accomplishments and activities in 2023 included:

- Led the 2023 actuarial valuation update and the October 1, 2023 actuarial valuation filing.
- Continued implementation of the 2022 SAA, including deployment into private market investments in the areas of Real Estate, Infrastructure, and Private Debt.
- Completion of strategic reviews for identified asset classes (including Equities, Private Debt, Real Estate, and Infrastructure)



# Pension Benefit Administration

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The Associate Vice-President, Human Resources (the “Associate Vice-President”) is responsible for pension administration. This includes ensuring compliance with the pension plan bylaws and regulatory filing requirements, management of pension and membership data, record maintenance, plan member communications, contribution remittances, and pension benefit payments.

Pension benefit administration functions are carried out by the staff in the Human Resources, Pension Plans and Benefits Sector. Key responsibilities of the sector include liaising with the pension plan actuary, external benefit service providers, and representatives of the various employee groups; processing plan member entitlements; managing administrative requirements; and submitting annual regulatory filings. The Pension Plans and Benefits Sector is also the central communication point for pension plan members, providing information sessions and advising employees regarding retirement.

## **Key accomplishments and activities in 2023 included:**

- Implemented the actuarial valuation as of October 1, 2023 and retroactively adjusted the employer contributions.
- Transitioned to a new payroll administration system (Workday).
- Implemented various process/system optimization initiatives to better serve members.
- Produced and distributed annual statements to all active, deferred, and retired members.
- Hosted retirement planning sessions for active members and information webinars for recently hired employees.

# Benefit Security

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The University of Ottawa Retirement Pension Plan (1965) is a contributory defined benefit plan. A defined benefit plan means that retired, deferred, and active plan members are guaranteed retirement benefits by the employer. Ontario pension plans are supervised by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario (“FSRA”) and retired plan members’ benefits are fully protected under existing legislation.

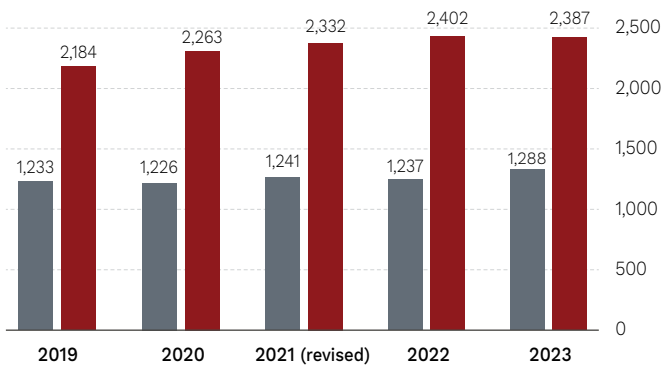
The employer is responsible for funding the pension plan and ensuring that employee and employer contributions comply with pension legislation and actuarial standards. Furthermore, pension plan assets must be held in a trust fund that is separate from the assets of the employer. Therefore, the assets of the pension plan cannot be seized by an employer’s creditors.

# Pension Plan Information

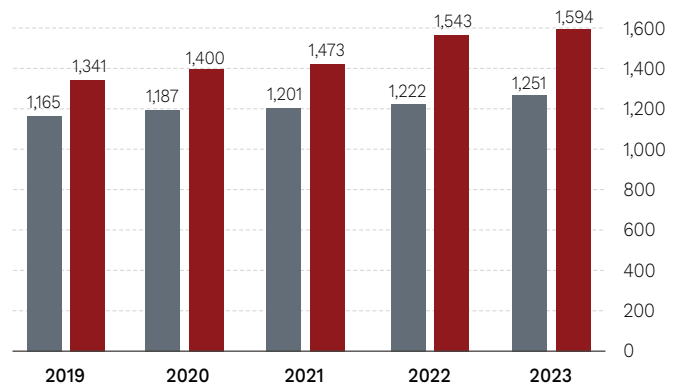
For the University’s pension plan, normal retirement age is 65 but with options for both early retirement and postponed retirement. Retirement benefits, adjusted to reflect indexation, are based on years of pensionable service and the best 60 months of pensionable earnings at retirement.

If an active plan member leaves the University before age 55, the plan member may elect to transfer the commuted value of the pension benefits already earned or, subject to plan restrictions, leave his or her earned benefits in the plan. Earned benefits left in the plan are called deferred pensions.

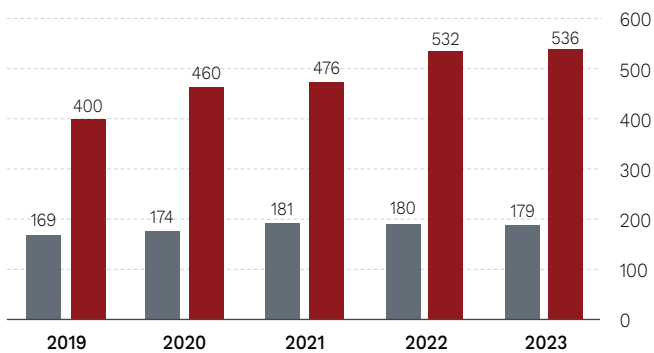
## Active Members



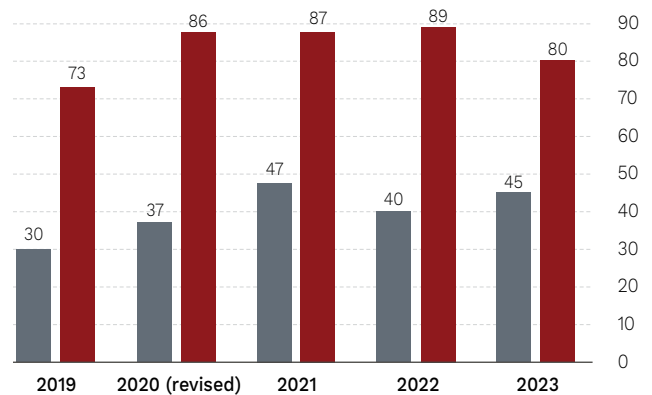
## Retirees and Beneficiaries



## Deferred Members



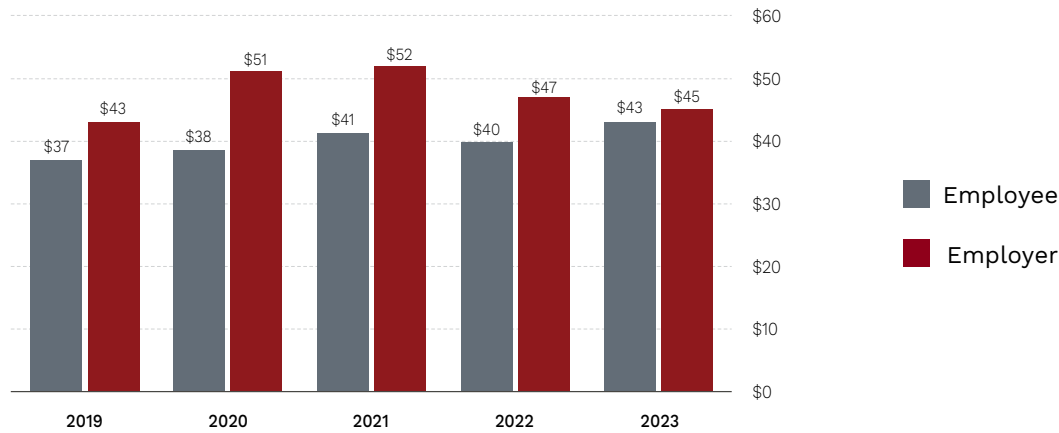
## Number of New Pensioners per Year



■ Academic Staff ■ Administrative Staff

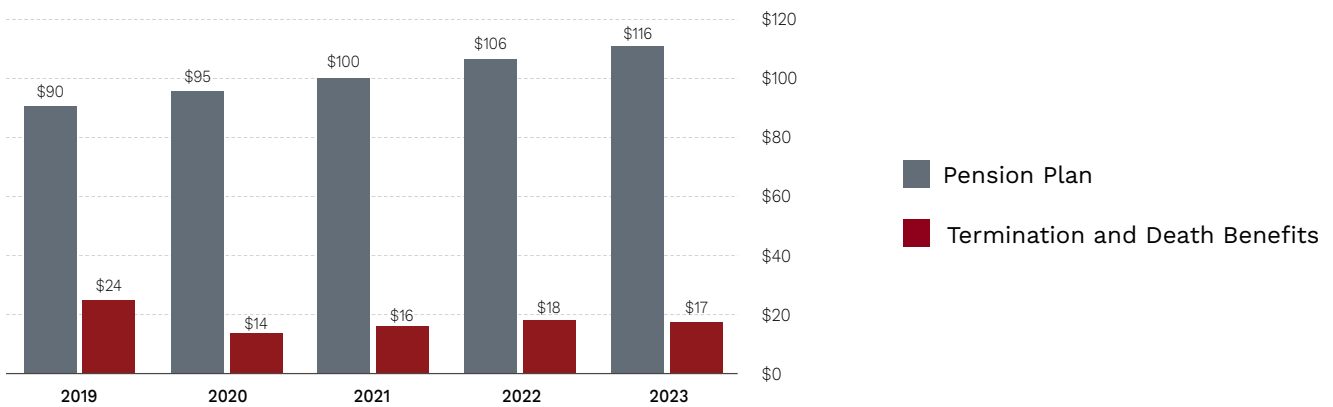
Active employees contributed at the rate of 7.15% for salaries up to the integration level of \$43,490 (customized form of federal yearly maximum pensionable earnings) as defined in the pension plan text. Above that amount, employees contributed 10.95% of salary up to a maximum of \$249,013. The employer’s contribution rate was 7.85% (January 1 to September 30, 2023) and 7.30% (October 1 to December 31, 2023) for salaries up to the integration level; of salaries above this amount, it was 12.00% (January 1 to September 30, 2023) and 11.30% (October 1 to December 31, 2023), including the provision for adverse deviations (the “PfAD”). These rates were determined by the most recent actuarial valuation filed with regulatory authorities, which is the valuation effective October 1, 2023. The employer’s rate is the difference between the total current service cost (including the PfAD) and the employees’ contributions.

### Contributions to Pension Fund (\$ millions)



The chart above includes annual PfAD payments in the employer contribution of \$5.3 million (2019), \$10.8 million (2020), \$8.2 million (2021), \$6.0 million (2022), and \$5.5 million (2023). All required contributions were met as of December 31, 2023.

### Contributions to Pension Fund (\$ millions)





# Benefits for Retired Members

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The pension plan benefits are established in the plan text, which provides for automatic annual indexation of pensions according to the following formula:

- If the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is less than 2% CPI
- If the CPI is between 2% and 3% 2%
- If the CPI is greater than 3% CPI - 1% (maximum of 8%)

The percentage increase in the CPI, based on the prescribed period under the plan (12 months ending September 30, 2023), was 4.73%.

In accordance with the above formula, the indexation would be limited to 3.73% (4.73% minus 1%) but the plan text allows for the portion not granted under the above formula to be provided subject to supplementary indexing tests with respect to plan surplus and investment income. One of these tests was not met; therefore, pensioners received a 3.73% increase on January 1, 2024.

## Most Recently Filed Actuarial Valuation

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An actuarial valuation report must be filed with the regulators at least once every three years. The most recent actuarial valuation filed with the Canada Revenue Agency (the “CRA”) and FSRA was effective October 1, 2023.

The funding valuation of the plan on October 1, 2023 showed a going concern surplus before PfAD of \$571 million (or a ratio of 123%) and after PfAD of \$408 million (or a ratio of 116%). The funding valuation also indicated a solvency surplus of \$404 million (or a ratio of 116%), excluding the value of future indexation. In accordance with the provincial funding regulations, a going concern

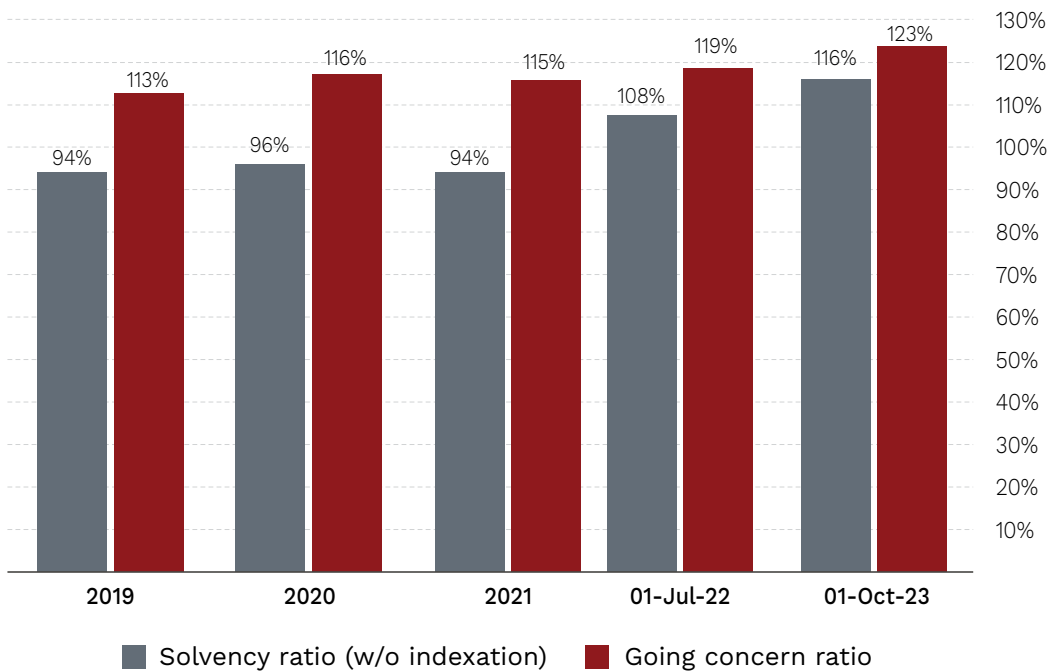
deficit must be funded over ten years, and a solvency deficit must only be funded over five years to bring the solvency back to 85%. Given the going concern and solvency surpluses as of October 1, 2023, no annual special payments are applicable for the pension plan.

The solvency basis excludes the value of future indexation, which is for funding purposes only and does not change the obligations of the pension plan in an actual wind-up situation. The wind-up deficit, or the solvency deficit including the value of future indexation, was \$568 million (or a ratio of 84%) as of October 1, 2023.



## Pension Plan Financial Position

(as of January 1 unless otherwise indicated)

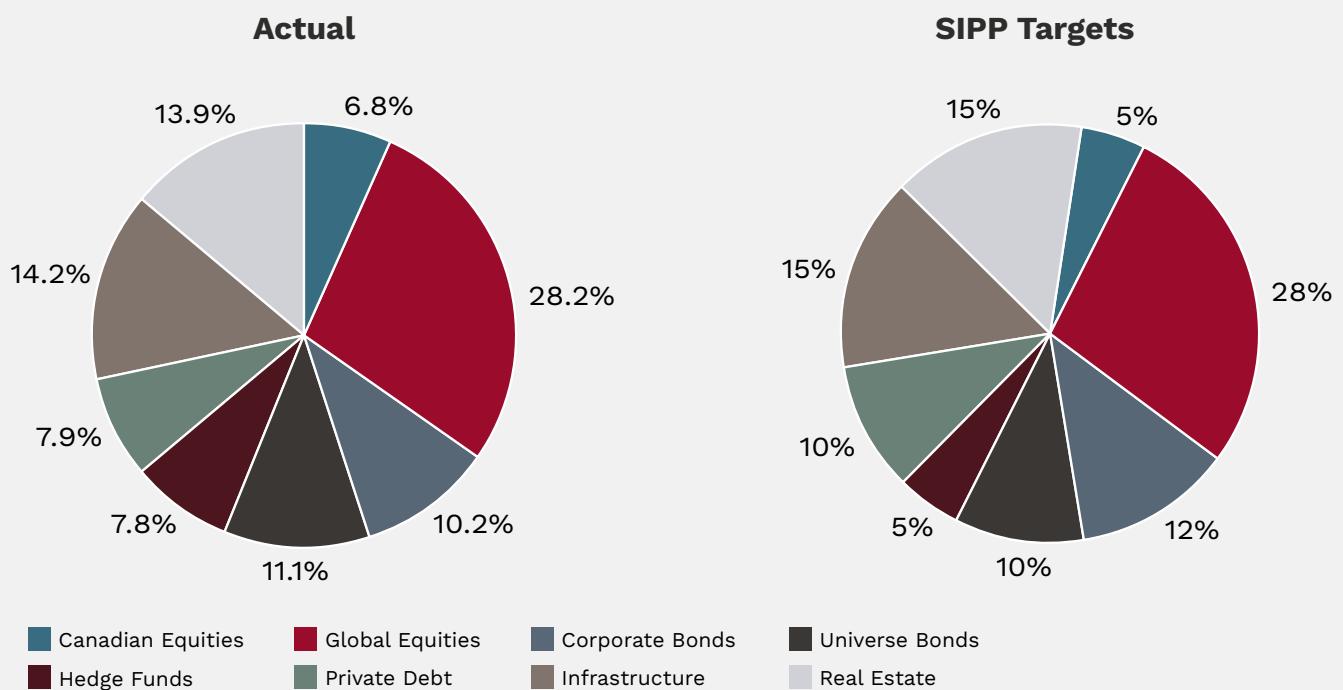


The next required filing date is as of October 1, 2026, at the latest. To monitor the financial position of the pension plan on a regular basis, an actuarial valuation update is prepared on an annual basis.

# Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures

The Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures (the “SIPP”) provides the objectives, guidelines, and procedures to manage the assets of the pension plan. Investment objectives and risk tolerance are reflected in the asset mix, strategic ranges for asset classes, as well as the risk mitigation and diversification policies.

The outcome of the strategic asset allocation review in 2022 resulted in a number of asset mix changes in the SIPP. As a result, differences between the actual weights and policy targets are expected to occur due to a gradual transition to the new asset mix, tactical decisions, and market value fluctuations. The table below illustrates the actual and strategic asset mixes.



As an important risk mitigation strategy, to reduce the volatility from the plan’s holdings due to currency fluctuations, a portion of the foreign currency exposure is hedged. This is because a significant component of the pension plan’s assets is denominated in foreign currencies; as such, the impact of the currency overlay can be significant in periods of extreme market movements for the Canadian dollar.

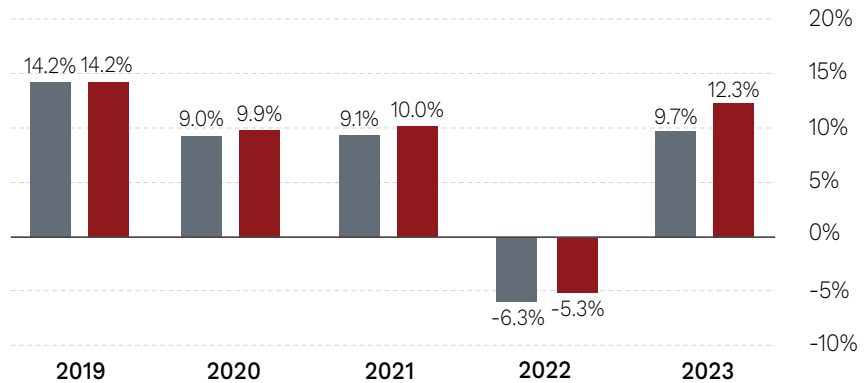
Investment risk exposures are largely comprised of price, currency and interest rate risks, credit risk, and liquidity risk. These risk exposures as at December 31, 2023 (and steps taken to mitigate these risks) are provided in the audited financial statements of the pension plan and its accompanying notes.

# Investment Performance

Investment performance is evaluated against a benchmark that is comprised of a combination of market indices on a 4-year and 10-year basis. Achievement of the investment performance objectives is evaluated after the impact of the currency overlay used for risk mitigation.

## Annual (gross)

■ Total Fund  
■ Benchmark



## Annualized (gross)



After a difficult year in 2022, financial markets rebounded in 2023, helped in large part by the public equity and fixed income markets which posted strong returns. As a result, investment performance in the past year (at 9.7%) was above the 4-year annual average of 5.2% as well as the 10-year annual average of 7.1%.

On a longer-term basis, such as rolling four-year and ten-year periods, strong annualized investment returns continued to be observed for the overall investment portfolio and across most asset classes. The 2023 annual return was ranked close to median on a four- and ten-year basis when compared with a peer group universe of other Canadian pension plans.

# Investment Objectives

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The expected return objectives of the pension plan outlined in the SIPP are to:

- a) Earn a minimum real rate of return, after expenses paid from the plan, of 4.00% over ten-year moving periods. This objective was met at December 31, 2023 with the pension plan generating a ten-year annualized real return, after expenses, of 4.02%.
- b) Achieve a minimum absolute rate of return, after expenses paid from the plan, which exceeds the benchmark return by 0.26% over four-year moving periods. This objective was not achieved at December 31, 2023 based on the interim asset mix, with the plan generating a return on a four-year annualized basis, after expenses, of -1.69%.

The expected return objectives are reviewed from time to time in consultation with the actuaries and as part of the annual SIPP review. The PFIC establishes long-term investment strategies and evaluates results versus the expected return objectives. Due to the long-term nature of the investment strategies, periods of extreme market volatility may result in a divergence between investment expectations and results.

All individual investment managers have performance objectives tailored according to the unique aspects of their respective investment mandates. Performance is monitored on an ongoing basis and appropriate actions are taken to address any shortfall in meeting established objectives.

# Responsible Investing

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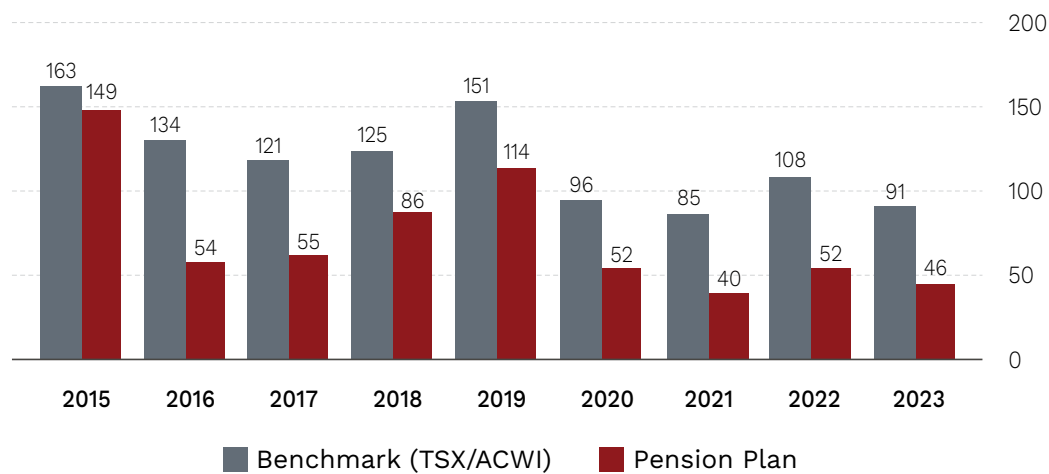
A responsible investment approach, aligned with the industry best practices framework established by the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (“UN PRI”), is being deployed for the pension plan’s investments.

Responsible investment integrates environmental, social, and governance (“ESG”) criteria in the investment decision-making and monitoring process based on the belief that these criteria can influence long-term performance of an underlying investment. As such, the consideration of ESG factors is consistent with the goal of the plan to meet its commitment to provide members with a defined level of retirement income.

**Responsible investing commitments and actions by the University include the following:**

- Signatory to the Investing to Address Climate Change: A Charter for Canadian Universities in 2020, whereby signatories adopt a responsible investing framework – in line with recognized standards such as the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (UN PRI) – to guide investment decision-making.
- Signatory and committed to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UN PRI). The University is ranked in the median range of all respondents and is aligned with its peers in this leading global survey.
- Signatory to the Montréal Carbon Pledge. The University of Ottawa was the first university in Canada, and only the second in the world, to sign.
- Committed to regular progress reports outlining its efforts to address global warming.

**Reduced Carbon Output (t CO2e / \$M Invested) by the Pension Plan Equities Portfolio**



**Net Assets Available for Benefits**

The net assets available for benefits to pension plan members as at December 31, 2023 were \$3,015 million (December 31, 2022 - \$2,810 million).

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

The information in this report is as of December 31, 2023, unless indicated otherwise.

# Glossary of Terms

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**Active (plan) member:** An eligible employee who has completed the necessary enrolment forms and is entitled to benefits or rights under the University of Ottawa Pension Plan (the “UOPP”).

**Actuarial value:** A figure used to calculate transfer-out/-in estimates or final transfer amounts. It is based on factors like your pension plan provisions, projected mortality rates, inflation rates, and market interest rates.

**APUO:** The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa.

**Asset smoothing:** Asset smoothing is the partial recognition of asset gains or losses over a defined period as a mechanism to dampen asset volatility. If a pension plan’s assets have a bad year in the market, instead of recognizing the full loss in the year it occurred, it can be spread over a period of years. The same is true for gains. Asset smoothing produces a figure called the actuarial value of assets.

**Commutated value:** Means the “converted” or “adjusted” value of a person’s pension benefits and other benefits under the UOPP, determined according to bases adopted by the administrator and in compliance with the Pension Benefits Act.

**Credited service:** Refers to the days, months, and years that you contribute to the UOPP, including service you transferred from a previous employer, or service you accumulated while receiving benefits from the University’s long-term disability plan.

**Currency overlay:** Currency overlay is a financial trading strategy or method conducted to manage the pre-existing exposure to foreign currencies, by seeking to limit the risk from adverse movements in exchange rates (i.e., hedge)

through taking the opposite positions in currency instruments such as forward contracts.

**Deferred (plan) member:** A former University of Ottawa employee who has left their pension rights in the UOPP.

**Defined-benefit pension plan (DB):** In a DB pension plan, the pension benefit you receive at retirement is determined or “defined” by a formula usually based on years of service and/or earnings.

**Going concern funded position:** Going concern is a term for an organization that has the resources to continue as an ongoing entity without the threat of liquidation for the foreseeable future. As such, the going concern funded position looks at the pension plan’s funded status on the basis that the plan will continue to operate indefinitely. A deficit occurs where a plan’s going-concern liabilities, plus a provision for adverse deviations determined in accordance with the Pension Benefits Act, exceeds its assets, and the plan sponsor is obliged to make special payments sufficient to amortize the deficit over a 10-year period.

**Indexation:** A percentage increase in your pension benefits granted on January first (1st) each year to reflect changes in the Canadian Consumer Price Index and as published by Statistics Canada. The increase for the UOPP is determined in accordance with section 8.5 in the plan text.

**Interest:** An amount added to the value of your contributions to the UOPP. The rate of interest credited in each year, from 1987 on, is at least equal to the rate prescribed under the Pension Benefits Act. Interest on contributions accrues from the end of the month following the month in which the contributions were made.

**IUOE:** The International Union of Operating Engineers representing this bargaining unit.

**Locked-in:** Refers to the portion of the available transfer amount that can be used solely for a retirement benefit, meaning it can never be commuted, surrendered, assigned, or alienated (transferred) during the member's lifetime.

**Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU):** A trade union representing public sector employees in the province of Ontario, Canada.

**Pension adjustment (PA):** A formula established by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and used to estimate the value of the benefits you accumulate under the UOPP each year. This value appears on your taxation slip and reduces your annual Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contribution limit.

**Pensionable earnings:** Means the compensation of the plan member recognized by the University, in respect of service rendered to the University, which the Board of Governors classifies as Pensionable Earnings for purposes of this plan and which is in accordance with subsection 147.1(1) of the Income Tax Act.

**Pensionable service:** See subparagraph 7.2 of the UOPP plan text.

**PIPSC:** The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada for the Group of Information Technology Professionals of the University of Ottawa (ITPUO).

**Provision for adverse deviations (PfAD):** The PfAD is an amount that provides for an additional level of funding on top of existing normal cost and going concern funding requirements of the plan. The PfAD is based on a number of factors, including the asset allocation of the plan, the discount rate, and the open or closed status of the plan.

**Service with a prior employer:** Any period of pensionable service under a registered pension plan of a previous employer.

**Solvency funded position:** The solvency funded position is a hypothetical calculation that measures whether or not all the benefits owed to the plan's members could be paid if the pension plan was wound down on the valuation date. Pension standards legislation includes minimum funding rules for defined benefit plans to provide assurance that adequate funds will exist to pay for defined benefits with due regard to stability of contribution levels and the possibility of unfavorable outcomes now and in the future.

**SSUO-OSSTF:** The bargaining unit affiliated with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation that represents University of Ottawa support staff.

**Wind-up position:** The purpose of a pension plan wind-up, sometimes referred to as a termination, is to determine and actually settle the value of all member entitlements in accordance with the pension plan documents and the applicable legislation and regulations. When a pension plan is in a wind-up surplus/deficit position, it means there are more/less than sufficient assets to settle those entitlements.



# External Service Providers

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## Actuarial Consulting Services

Mercer Canada

## Pension Administration System

Telus Health

## Trustee/Custodian and Securities Lending

RBC Investor & Treasury Services

## External Auditor

KPMG

## Performance Measurement Services

RBC Investor & Treasury Services

## Investment Managers – Public Markets

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Jarislowsky Fraser Ltd.                     | Equities     |
| BlackRock Inc.                              | Equities     |
| William Blair & Company LLC                 | Equities     |
| Mondrian Investment Partners Ltd.           | Equities     |
| Comgest Asset Management International Ltd. | Equities     |
| Walter Scott & Partners Ltd.                | Equities     |
| Canso Investment Counsel Ltd.               | Fixed Income |
| TD Asset Management Inc.                    | Fixed Income |

# Fees and Expenses

|  | Notes    | 2019        | 2020        | 2021        | 2022        | 2023        |
|--|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Investment Management and Advisory         | 1        | 4,880,610   | 5,040,673   | 5,319,562   | 4,778,849   | 4,696,773   |
| Custodian                                  |          | 409,415     | 437,044     | 428,857     | 354,335     | 344,231     |
| Investment Consulting                      | 2        | 136,545     | 184,011     | 182,017     | 284,706     | 236,671     |
| External Audit                             |          | 40,926      | 43,896      | 48,709      | 60,464      | 61,342      |
| Actuarial Services                         | 3        | 360,087     | 357,904     | 444,088     | 234,941     | 277,214     |
| Pension Administration                     | 4        | 228,665     | 207,609     | 197,784     | 205,045     | 220,396     |
| Other Professional                         | 5        | 123,673     | 149,696     | 271,648     | 147,119     | 280,024     |
| Other Administration                       | 6        | 1,471,825   | 1,474,564   | 1,696,048   | 1,858,769   | 1,896,227   |
| HST Previous Years Payments and Recoveries | 7        | 23,600      | -23,600     | -           | 875         | 110,825     |
| Total Fees                                 | 8        | \$7,675,347 | \$7,871,795 | \$8,588,715 | \$7,925,103 | \$7,902,053 |
| Transaction Costs                          |          | 211,349     | 404,103     | 281,132     | 221,557     | 219,787     |
| Total Fees (Net)                           |          | \$7,886,697 | \$8,275,897 | \$8,869,846 | \$8,146,659 | \$8,121,840 |
| <b>Basis Points</b>                        | <b>9</b> | <b>32.2</b> | <b>30.7</b> | <b>30.5</b> | <b>28.1</b> | <b>28.1</b> |

## Notes:

- Investment management fees were lower in 2023, mainly due to timing differences and a somewhat different asset mix than projected for the year. The amount includes investment advisory services for the overall hedge funds and part of the private debt portfolio but excludes fees charged by the individual hedge and private debt fund managers. It also excludes fees for the real estate and infrastructure investments, as the investment income in these asset classes is net of fees.
- Investment consulting includes fees for fund evaluation, performance measurement services, and portfolio and related analytical services.
- These expenses include actuarial valuations, consulting for special projects, as well as ongoing actuarial services. These costs tend to vary from one year to the next.
- Pension administration reflects external fees paid for the external pension administration system, including costs related to producing employee benefit statements.
- Other professional fees include legal fees. These fees tend to vary from one year to the next.
- Other administration includes internal charges from the University of Ottawa and governance costs (pension committee expenses). University of Ottawa internal charges are largely comprised of salaries and benefits for investment management and pension benefit administration staff that is allocated to the pension plan.
- These figures include HST payment adjustments.
- Total administration fees for the year were within the approved budget.
- Basis points: One basis point is 1/100th of one percent.

# Contacts and Additional Information

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019-550 Cumberland Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1N 6N5

## Pension Fund and Investment Management

**Chief Investment Officer:**

Tom Valks

**Director, Investments:**

Jonathan Sum

**Director, Investments:**

Taylor Servais

Telephone: 613-562-5952

## Pension Plan and Benefits

Email: [hrpension@uottawa.ca](mailto:hrpension@uottawa.ca)

Telephone: 613-562-5832

## Additional Information

### [Website and Retirement Planning Tool](#)

The website provides information and resources for active employees as well as retired and deferred pension plan members. Visit the website for plan information, forms, retirement planning, publications, plan management, and contact information.



 uOttawa

[uOttawa.ca](https://uOttawa.ca) 