

# Annual Management Report of Fund Performance

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For the period ended December 31, 2022

# ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT OF FUND PERFORMANCE

For the period ended December 31, 2022

## NBI Exchange-Traded Funds **NBI Active U.S. Equity ETF**

### Notes on forward-looking statements

This report may contain forward-looking statements concerning the ETF, its future performance, its strategies or prospects or about future events or circumstances. Such forward-looking statements include, among others, statements with respect to our beliefs, plans, expectations, estimates and intentions. The use of the expressions "foresee", "intend", "anticipate", "estimate", "assume", "believe" and "expect" and other similar terms and expressions indicate forward-looking statements.

By their very nature, forward-looking statements imply the use of assumptions and necessarily involve inherent risks and uncertainties. Consequently, there is a significant risk that the explicit or implicit forecasts contained in these forward-looking statements might not materialize or that they may not prove to be accurate in the future. A number of factors could cause future results, conditions or events to differ materially from the objectives, expectations, estimates or intentions expressed in such forward-looking statements. Such differences might be caused by several factors, including changes in Canadian and worldwide economic and financial conditions (in particular interest and exchange rates and the prices of other financial instruments), market trends, new regulatory provisions, competition, changes in technology and the potential impact of conflicts and other international events.

The foregoing list of factors is not exhaustive. Before making any investment decision, investors and others relying on our forward-looking statements should carefully consider the foregoing factors and other factors. We caution readers not to rely unduly on these forward-looking statements. We assume no obligation to update forward-looking statements in the light of new information, future events or other circumstances unless applicable legislation so provides.

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This annual management report of fund performance contains financial highlights, but does not contain the complete annual financial statements of the ETF. You can get a copy of the annual financial statements of the ETF at your request, and at no cost, by calling 1-866-603-3601, by emailing us at [investments@nbc.ca](mailto:investments@nbc.ca), by visiting our website at [www.nbinvestments.ca](http://www.nbinvestments.ca), by visiting SEDAR's website at [www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com), or by contacting your advisor. You may also contact us using one of these methods to request a copy of the ETF's proxy voting policies and procedures, proxy voting disclosure record, or quarterly portfolio disclosure.

## Management Discussion of Fund Performance

### Investment Objective and Strategies

The NBI Active U.S. Equity ETF's investment objective is to provide long-term capital growth. It invests, directly or indirectly through investments in securities of other mutual funds, in a portfolio comprised primarily of common shares of U.S. companies.

The ETF's investment process relies on a bottom-up, fundamental-driven investment approach. Securities chosen to compose the portfolio are growth-oriented companies with significant barriers to entry and first-class management teams. In-depth knowledge of companies allows the Portfolio Sub-Advisor to manage risks by not relying on extended diversification, but rather on a quality over quantity selection.

### Risks

The global investment risk of the ETF remains as described in the simplified prospectus or any amendments thereto and ETF Facts.

### Results of Operations

For the twelve-month period ended December 31, 2022, the NBI Active U.S. Equity ETF's units returned -12.21% compared to -12.16% for the ETF's benchmark, the S&P 500 Index. Unlike the benchmark, the ETF's performance is calculated after fees and expenses. Please see the *Past Performance* section for the ETF's returns, which may vary mainly because of fees and expenses.

The Fund's net asset value rose by 1,036.16% over the period, from \$1.31 million as at December 31, 2021 to \$14.85 million as at December 31, 2022.

The increase stemmed mainly from investments in the Fund by other NBI Funds.

U.S. stocks lost ground during 2022 amidst a "perfect storm" of waning U.S. Federal government pandemic spending, advent of a central bank tightening cycle and an increasingly tense geopolitical environment. U.S. economic performance was mixed starting with two consecutive quarters of gross domestic product contraction (which officials have yet to define as a recession) and closing the year with two strong quarters of growth.

Much of the action in equity markets was driven by hard U.S. Federal Reserve tightening to cool rising inflation which many economists had for some time regarded as transitory. The scale of the tightening, which included a series of 0.75% increases—one of the most severe in modern history in relative terms—shocked markets by compressing multiples and hitting capital intensive sectors ranging from housing to real estate and business equipment. The only mild consolation that equity investors had was that bond investors fared much worse.

Tough times on the home front meshed into a "new world disorder" after America weaponized the U.S. dollar and seized Russian assets alongside that country's special military operation in Ukraine. This in turn further incentivized moves by key economies into trading blocks. Domestically politicians, who are deeply divided on a range of issues, united to pass spending measures ranging from the CHIPS Act to the Inflation Reduction Act, and a year-end stimulus bill.

Under these circumstances, the Fund underperformed its benchmark.

Top contributing sectors to the Fund's relative performance during 2022 included Consumer Staples, Information Technology, and Consumer Discretionary. Bottom contributors included Energy, Health Care and Communication Services.

Top individual contributors to relative performance included Lamb Weston, EOG Resources, and AMGEN. Lamb Weston outperformed consensus expectations due in part to increased consumer traffic in restaurants that buy its processed food and potato products, favourable weather which fostered a high-yielding potato growing season, and its ability to protect margins by passing along inflationary pressures to its end clients. EOG Resources, an American hydrocarbon energy and exploration company performed well alongside strong prices for West Texas Intermediate crude oil throughout much of the year. Amgen outperformed after investing efforts in new product development, particularly of a potential obesity drug, acquisition of Horizon Therapeutics and the build-out of its biosimilars portfolio. The California-based biotech also benefitted from general outperformance in the counter-cyclical pharmaceutical sector, and from having beat volume-related expectations as patients moved to a post-Covid hospital environment.

Detractors from the Fund's relative performance during the year included Meta Platforms, Workday, and Charles River Laboratories. Meta Platforms' stock lagged as the operator of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other core businesses faced multiple headwinds. These ranged from Apple's iOS privacy changes (which hurt ad measurement and targeting), a macroeconomic slowdown in advertising spending, and large FX headwinds. Investors also took a dim view of the company's investments in its metaverse division, which is expected to see increasing operating losses during 2023. Workday, a high valuation business software provider, underperformed despite delivering strong results throughout the year, due in large part to the multiple compressions which proved to be a bane of much of corporate America. Charles River Laboratories also underperformed despite meeting market expectations regarding key metrics throughout the year, alongside concerns surrounding low funding levels within the biotechnology space. Charles River Laboratories provides preclinical, and clinical laboratory and gene and cell therapy services to the entire pharmaceutical industry and its revenues are heavily tied to overall R&D spending.

### Recent Developments

During the year, the Fund took a new position in Public Storage and Walmart Inc. Public Storage, a California-based self-storage provider, was added on the thesis of under-appreciated potential amidst strong occupancy rates across the industry and a tight housing market which drives demand for, and thus the pricing power of the company's self-storage offerings. Walmart, a high-quality omni-channel retailer, is well positioned to take market share in an inflationary environment amidst increased reinvestment in core business lines.

The Fund divested its position in D. R. Horton Inc. and PepsiCo Inc. The recent increases in U.S. mortgage rates and a resulting slowdown in projected demand for new homes suggest that the D. R. Horton may no longer be able to meet the Fund's growth hurdle requirements. The valuation of PepsiCo had become elevated and saw better upside elsewhere and as such we decided to book profits to reinvest in a better investment idea.

The Fund's deviations from its benchmark in terms of sector allocations remained negligible as we focus on security selection to add value through different market environments.

Lost production volumes and the effects of sanctions amidst Russia's invasion of Ukraine are complexifying numerous existing inflationary drivers. These include aging demographics, a labour force reassessing its work/life balance, Covid-related production hurdles, and regionalization trends. Consequently, we are focused on business models that have strong pricing power.

The uncertainty surrounding changes in supply chains, consumer behaviours, digitization and rising wages will have a lasting impact on business models.

The Fund continues to identify relative valuation dislocations caused by rapidly shifting market narratives that are offering compelling opportunities to book profits and reinvest in misunderstood and therefore mispriced stocks.

On April 30, 2022, the ETF's independent review committee (the "IRC") was reduced to three members when Robert Martin resigned as IRC member. On May 1, 2022, the Fund's IRC was increased to four members when Line Deslandes was appointed as IRC member. However, on September 30, 2022, the ETF's IRC was reduced to three members when Line Deslandes resigned as IRC member.

## Related Party Transactions

National Bank Investments Inc. (the "manager") is the manager and promoter of the ETF. Accordingly, it is entitled to receive, in exchange for the services that it provides to the ETF, management fees paid to it by the ETF (see "Management Fees" below).

From time to time, the manager may, on behalf of the ETF, carry out transactions or sign agreements to involve certain persons or companies related to it, to the extent that these transactions or agreements are, in its opinion, in the interest of the ETF. The description of the transactions or agreements between the ETF and a related party is provided in this section.

Members of the manager's group may earn fees or spreads in connection with services provided to, or transactions with, the NBI ETF, including in connection with brokerage and derivatives transactions.

### Trustee

The manager has retained the services of Natcan Trust Company to serve as trustee for the ETF and has retained the services of National Bank Trust to serve as portfolio manager.

### Designated Broker

The manager has signed an agreement with National Bank Financial Inc. ("NBF"), a company affiliated with NBI, under which NBF will serve as a designated broker for the ETF. The designated broker agreement signed with NBF is in keeping with market conditions.

### Brokerage Fees

The ETF may pay broker's commissions at market rates to a corporation affiliated with National Bank Investments Inc. The brokerage fees paid by the ETF for the period are as follows:

	Period ended December 31, 2022
<b>Total brokerage fees</b>	3,950.03
<b>Brokerage fees paid to National Bank Financial</b>	1,878.97

### Holdings

As at December 31, 2022, the NBI Global Balanced Growth Fund held approximately 0.84% ownership of the redeemable units outstanding of the ETF. Transactions between the NBI Global Balanced Growth Fund and the ETF were carried out in the normal course of business. The portfolio manager for this Fund is National Bank Trust Inc.

As at December 31, 2022, the NBI Exclusive Income Pooled Fund held approximately 68.77% ownership of the redeemable units outstanding of the ETF. Transactions between the NBI Exclusive Income Pooled Fund and the ETF were carried out in the normal course of business. The portfolio manager for this Fund is National Bank Trust Inc.

## Management Fees

The management fee is payable to the ETF manager in consideration of the services that the manager provides to the ETF in its capacity as manager, such as managing the day-to-day business and affairs of the ETF.

The ETF pays an annual management fee of 0.55% to the ETF manager for its management services. The fees are calculated based on a percentage of the ETF's daily net asset value before applicable taxes and are paid on a monthly basis. The management fees primarily covers investment management and general administration services.

## Past Performance

The performance of the ETF, presented below and calculated as at December 31 of each year, is based on the net asset value of the ETF. It assumes that all distributions made in the periods shown were reinvested in additional units of the ETF. These returns do not take into account sales, redemption charges, distributions, or optional charges that would have reduced returns. Past performance of an ETF does not necessarily indicate how it will perform in the future.

## Year-by-Year Returns

The bar chart indicates the performance of the ETF for each of the years shown and illustrates how the performance has changed from year to year. It shows, in percentage terms, how much an investment made on January 1 (or made commencing from the start of the ETF) would have grown or decreased by December 31 of that year, in the case of the Annual management report of fund performance, or by June 30, in the case of the Interim management report of fund performance.



<sup>(1)</sup> Returns for the period from February 11, 2021 (commencement of operations) to December 31, 2021.

## Annual Compounded Performance

The following table shows the ETF's annual compound returns greater than one year and for each of the periods ended on December 31, 2022, compared with the following benchmark:

- S&P 500 Index

### NBI Active U.S. Equity ETF

	1 year	3 years	5 years	10 years	Since inception
<b>ETF Units<sup>1</sup></b>	(12.21)%	–	–	–	7.78%
<b>Benchmark</b>	(12.16)%	–	–	–	7.80%

<sup>1</sup>Commencement of operations: February 11, 2021

A discussion of the ETF's relative performance in comparison to the index (or indices) can be found in the *Results of Operations* Section of this report.

### Index Description

The **S&P 500 Index** is a float-adjusted market capitalization weighted index composed of 500 companies that measures the performance of the large-cap segment of the U.S. market. It measures the performance of the largest U.S. companies.

## Financial Highlights

The following tables show selected key financial information about the ETF and are intended to help you understand the ETF's financial performance for the accounting periods shown.

Net Assets per Unit<sup>(1)</sup>

Commencement of operations: February 11, 2021

Accounting Period Ended	2022 December 31	2021 December 31
<b>Net Assets, Beginning of Accounting Period Shown</b> <sup>(2)</sup>	32.67	25.00
<b>Increase (Decrease) from Operations (\$)</b>		
Total revenue	0.37	0.24
Total expenses	(0.18)	(0.16)
Realized gains (losses)	0.71	3.30
Unrealized gains (losses)	(1.60)	4.40
<b>Total Increase (Decrease) from Operations</b> <sup>(3)</sup>	(0.70)	7.78
<b>Distributions (\$)</b>		
From net investment income (excluding dividends)	0.12	0.10
From dividends	0.01	0.01
From capital gains	0.41	3.15
Return of capital	—	—
<b>Total Annual Distributions</b> <sup>(4)</sup>	0.54	3.26
<b>Net Assets, End of Accounting Period Shown</b> <sup>(2)</sup>	28.56	32.67

## Ratios and Supplemental Data

Accounting Period Ended	2022 December 31	2021 December 31
Total net asset value (000's of \$) <sup>(5)</sup>	14,850	1,307
Number of units outstanding <sup>(5)</sup>	520,000	40,000
Management expense ratio (%) <sup>(6)</sup>	0.63	0.64
Management expense ratio before waivers or absorptions (%)	0.66	0.76
Trading expense ratio (%) <sup>(7)</sup>	—	—
Portfolio turnover rate (%) <sup>(8)</sup>	45.97	66.64
Net asset value per unit (\$)	28.56	32.68
Closing market price <sup>(9)</sup>	28.52	32.69

<sup>(1)</sup> This information is derived from the ETF's Annual Audited Financial Statements. The net assets per unit presented in the financial statements might differ from the net asset value calculated for ETF pricing purposes. The differences are explained in the notes to the financial statements.

<sup>(2)</sup> The net assets are calculated in accordance with IFRS.

<sup>(3)</sup> Net assets and distributions are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase or decrease from operations is based on the average number of units outstanding over the accounting period.

<sup>(4)</sup> Distributions were paid in cash or reinvested in additional units of the ETF, or both.

<sup>(5)</sup> This information is provided as at the last day of the accounting period shown.

<sup>(6)</sup> Management expense ratio is based on total expenses including sales taxes for the accounting period indicated (excluding commission, other portfolio transaction costs and withholding taxes) and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net value during the accounting period.

<sup>(7)</sup> The trading expense ratio represents total commissions and other portfolio transaction costs expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the accounting period. The trading expense ratio includes, if necessary, the trading expenses from its underlying funds, as described in Article 15.2 of Regulation 81-106.

<sup>(8)</sup> The ETF's portfolio turnover rate indicates how actively the ETF portfolio's manager manages its portfolio investments. A portfolio turnover rate of 100% is equivalent to the ETF buying and selling all of the securities in its portfolio once in the course of the accounting period. The higher an ETF's portfolio turnover rate in an accounting period, the greater the trading costs payable by the ETF in the accounting period, and the greater the chance of an investor receiving taxable capital gains in the accounting period. There is not necessarily a relationship between a high turnover rate and the performance of an ETF.

<sup>(9)</sup> Closing market price on the last trading day of the year as reported on the TSX.

## Summary of Investment Portfolio

As of December 31, 2022

### Portfolio Top Holdings

	% of Net Asset Value
Microsoft Corp.....	8.1
Danaher Corp.....	6.2
Amazon.com Inc.....	5.4
Waste Connections Inc.....	5.0
CME Group Inc., Class A.....	4.5
Wal-Mart Stores Inc.....	4.4
Envista Holdings Corp.....	4.0
EOG Resources Inc.....	4.0
Amgen Inc.....	3.9
Alphabet Inc.....	3.8
MasterCard Inc., Class A.....	3.6
Apple Inc.....	3.5
Lamb Weston Holdings Inc.....	3.4
Adobe Systems Inc.....	3.0
Analog Devices Inc.....	3.0
Five Below Inc.....	3.0
Meta Platforms, Inc.....	2.9
Public Storage.....	2.9
Workday Inc.....	2.9
Interactive Brokers Group Inc.....	2.8
Linde PLC.....	2.8
Cullen/Frost Bankers Inc.....	2.7
Rockwell Automation.....	2.4
Texas Instruments Inc.....	2.1
Cash, Money Market and Other Net Assets.....	0.7
	<u>91.0</u>

Net asset value..... \$14,849,556

### Asset Mix

	% of Net Asset Value
US Equity.....	91.5
Canadian Equity.....	5.0
International Equity.....	2.8
Cash, Money Market and Other Net Assets.....	0.7

### Sector Allocation

	% of Net Asset Value
Information Technology.....	26.3
Communication Services.....	13.3
Financials.....	12.1
Health Care.....	12.1
Consumer Staples.....	11.8
Industrials.....	9.1
Consumer Discretionary.....	4.9
Energy.....	4.0
Real Estate.....	2.9
Materials.....	2.8
Cash, Money Market and Other Net Assets.....	0.7

The above table shows the top 25 positions held by the ETF. In the case of an ETF with fewer than 25 positions, all positions are indicated.

The Summary of Investment Portfolio may change due to ongoing portfolio transactions of the ETF. A quarterly update is available. Please consult our website at [www.nbinvestments.ca](http://www.nbinvestments.ca).



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