

# The Sandler Quarterly



Wealth Management  
Dominion Securities

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**Global financial markets have delivered mixed results so far this year on the back of decent, if uneven, economic growth. Year to date, U.S. stock markets have performed well while most other global equity markets have posted negative returns (Canada, Europe, China). See Figure 1 below. Bolstered by large scale tax cuts and increased government spending, the U.S. economy and markets have accelerated while others have lost steam.**

Economic data continues to be strong and by some measures the economy is running a little too hot. For this reason, central bankers are pressing on the brake in an attempt to moderate the economy's pace. Our assessment of a variety of indicators lead us to believe the U.S. economy (and by consequence the Canadian economy) is at a fairly late stage in the business cycle. The classic definition of "late-cycle" is an economy in the last year or two of its expansion. To be clear, we are still in a time of coordinated global growth. Corporate earnings continue to strengthen and credit, though tightening, is still historically accommodative.

Multi-decade low unemployment rates and increased demand for goods are finally putting upward pressure on consumer prices after many years of unusually low inflation. In response to strengthening labour markets and firming inflation, central banks have continued a gradual tightening of monetary policy. As

a direct result, interest rates have moved higher across the board and have started to have the expected dampening effect on the economy. Some consumer delinquency rates have started to rise. Auto loan delinquencies have been rising and are now half way back up to financial crisis highs. Credit card delinquency rates are also on the rise in a concerning manner (Figure 2). Of note, mortgage payments continue to be made on schedule for the time being.

For some time now we have used terms such as cautious and vigilant in describing our view of the market. In our opinion, the reason for this vigilance is now coming to pass. To quote RBC Global Asset Management,

*"...gone are the days of dormant inflation, ultra-low interest rates and discounted equities"*

*"...the business cycle is at a late stage with all of the peril that this implies"*



Figure 1: Market Returns (Source: Bloomberg, RBC Wealth Management)

# Quarterly Review

## Q3 2018

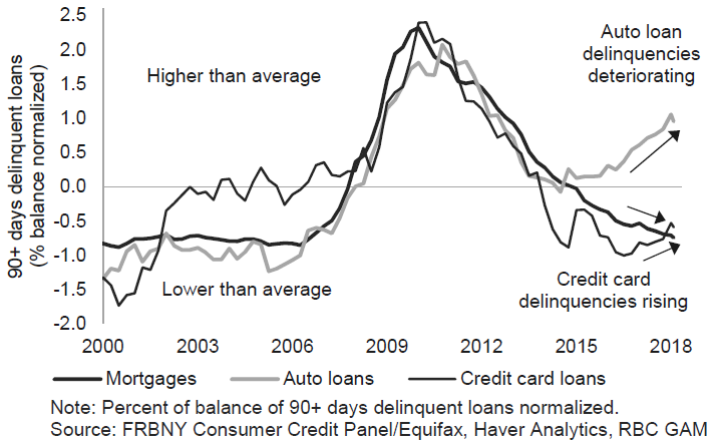


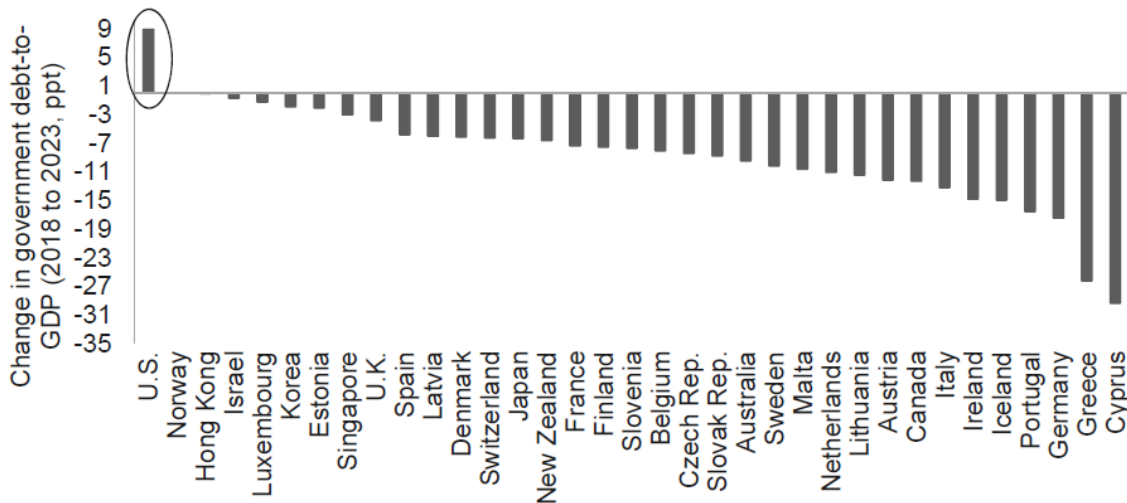
Figure 2: U.S. consumer loan delinquencies (Source: RBC Global Asset Management)

Recently, the IMF issued a warning for the global economy, revising down its global growth forecast from a healthy 3.9% to a still impressive 3.7%. Positive features that drove economic momentum in 2017 are ebbing and financial markets have not yet reflected the rise in threats to the world economy, the report said. They went on to say that President Trump's fiscal policy was "unsustainable" and that the U.S. should instead concentrate on stabilizing and reducing the level of public debt (Figure 3).

Protectionism and its threat to global trade has become a major concern. It seems futile to weigh-in on specific developments since our comments will likely be outdated by the time you read this. That said, restricting trade between the world's two largest economies is not positive for global growth. For the record, we believe that the U.S. and China will reach a positive result to their current standoff. Closer to home, NAFTA negotiations seem to have found a resolution, and whether good or bad for Canada, the market should welcome the reduced uncertainty.

As you can likely tell, our outlook for equity markets has moved further into defensive territory. We are currently underweight equities versus your asset allocation target. After almost 10 years of expansion, we are surely getting closer to the late innings of the economic cycle and a market correction. The S&P500 is currently above fair value and in a valuation zone historically consistent with lower returns and higher volatility. See Figure 4 on the following page.

The media makes it easy to focus solely on movements in the stock market. It is important to remember that your portfolio is made up of various asset classes, not just equities. All of our client portfolios include fixed income investments in bonds and preferred shares as well as a healthy cash balance. Many clients also have exposure to alternative investments that have an objective to be uncorrelated to the stock market.



Note: Based on IMF latest forecasts. Source: IMF, Haver Analytics, RBC GAM

Figure 3: US government debt is expected to increase (Source: RBC Global Asset Management)

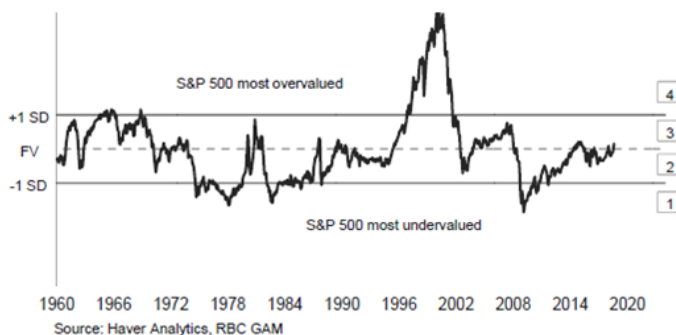
# Quarterly Review

## Q3 2018

From a fixed income perspective it is exciting to watch interest rates lift up from the generational lows that we have lived with for many years. Central banks in Canada and the U.S. have continued to raise rates and this has improved yields across the fixed income spectrum (*Figure 5*). From interest paid on cash balances to corporate bonds, we are improving our income with each maturity rollover and preferred share reset. By design, we have maintained short-dated maturities on our bonds to take advantage of rising rates; locking into longer bonds in a rising rate environment is not smart. Also, the vast majority of our preferred shares have features that provide for the dividend to periodically reset. In the current environment, this feature is a benefit as we see increasing yields on those reset dates.

The current outlook is for interest rates to proceed higher. We eagerly look forward to next year and the time when we might own fixed income for an investment return rather than pure capital preservation (as has been the case for a number of years). Retirees and conservative investors have been waiting on this for a long time.

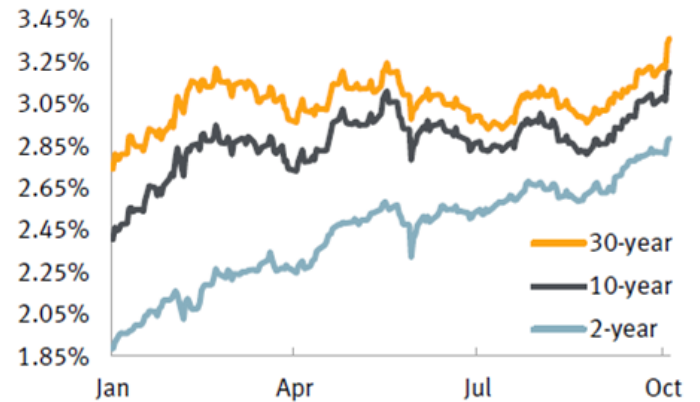
Another consequence of higher rates is the moderating effect it should have on the real estate market. Increased interest rates have translated into more expensive mortgage renewals for the first time in a decade at the same time that new regulations in Canada make it harder to obtain a mortgage. Accordingly, the level of resale activity and rate of home price growth have fallen. Construction of single family homes in Canada and the U.S. has weakened and continues to disappoint versus estimates. The real estate investments that we own have done a great job by locking into low interest rates for extended periods.



*Figure 4: Standardized S&P 500 fair-value bands*

### Longer-dated Treasury rates finally start to rise

U.S. Treasury rates, year to date



Source - RBC Wealth Management, Bloomberg; data as of 3:30 pm GMT 10/4/18

*Figure 5: US Treasury Yields (source: RBC)*

Year to date we have generated relatively flat returns. A weak TSX and the temporary drag of rising rates have resulted in performance that lags the strength of previous years. Please refer to the enclosed quarterly review for your personal rates of return. We believe your portfolio is very well positioned for what we view as the latter part of this cycle. In our opinion, this is not the time to be reaching for returns by being overweight equities or chasing high value technology and marijuana companies.

Our strategy remains the same:

- Establish an asset allocation target that suits your investment goals
- Buy high quality companies that have proven themselves through the business cycle
- Seek companies that pay an income and buy them at fair or undervalued prices; hold plenty of cash, bonds and preferred shares
- Rebalance back to the target asset allocation when necessary

Adhering to a disciplined process, such as this, has been shown to reduce risk and enhance returns over time.

# Quarterly Review


Q3 2018

## Our Team is Growing Again!

Please join us in welcoming Tiffany Kee to the Sandler Wealth Management Group. Tiffany comes to us from Royal Bank where she was a senior administrator in the transfers department. She can be reached for administrative matters at 416-842-6677 or [tiffany.kee@rbc.com](mailto:tiffany.kee@rbc.com).

Please contact us at any time to discuss how the above developments affect the outlook for your investment portfolio and finances. We always love to hear from you.

Sincerely,



**Scott Sandler**  
Vice President & Portfolio Manager



**Ronan Clohissey, CIM**  
Vice President & Portfolio Manager

	YTD**	1 Year**
<b>Indices</b>		
<b>S&amp;P/TSX</b>	-0.84%	2.80%
<b>Dow Jones</b>	7.04%	18.09%
<b>S&amp;P 500</b>	8.99%	15.66%
<b>Nasdaq</b>	16.56%	23.87%
<b>Euro Stoxx</b>	-2.99%	-5.44%
<b>Japan Nikkei</b>	5.95%	18.49%
<b>India Sensex</b>	6.37%	15.80%
<b>VIX Volatility</b>	9.78%	27.44%

<b>Commodities</b>		
<b>Gold</b>	-8.59%	-6.94%
<b>Silver</b>	-13.47%	-12.01%
<b>Copper</b>	-13.09%	-2.62%
<b>Oil</b>	21.23%	41.77%
<b>Natural Gas</b>	-13.95%	5.54%

<b>Currency</b>		
<b>CAD</b>	-3.62%	-4.39%
<b>EUR</b>	-3.03%	-1.78%
<b>JPY</b>	-0.62%	-1.02%
<b>AUD</b>	-7.70%	-7.79%
<b>GBP</b>	-3.21%	-2.74%

\*\* ending September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

P.S. At time of writing, October is living up to its reputation as a volatile month for the markets. Please find attached a report from RBC Wealth Management that gives context to current events.



**Wealth Management**  
Dominion Securities

# Global Insight

## Weekly



A closer look

## Don't be shaken by the shakeout

Kelly Bogdanova – San Francisco; Tom Garretson, CFA & Ben Graham, CFA – Minneapolis

A number of factors reached critical mass, driving U.S. equities and other markets sharply lower. But investors shouldn't overreact to this overdue pullback. We don't think there is an existential threat to the U.S. bull market, and we look at how the Fed and bond markets fit into all of this.

Pullbacks and corrections are routine when it comes to investing, but they rarely feel that way when they arrive.

The U.S. equity market sold off on Wednesday and Thursday, marking six straight declines for the S&P 500. The NASDAQ stumbled more than the broader indexes. As Technology shares corrected sharply, the NASDAQ posted its second-biggest single-session selloff in seven years, falling 4.1% on October 10, behind only the Brexit-induced selloff in mid-2016. All total, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, S&P 500, and NASDAQ have declined 6.6%, 6.9%, and 9.6%, respectively, from their recent all-time highs.

Equity markets worldwide followed the U.S. lower, adding to their previous losses. Asian and emerging markets have borne the brunt of the global correction.

The U.S. fixed income market hasn't been immune to the selling. Treasury prices fell and the 10-year Treasury yield climbed to 3.23% at one point, the highest level since 2011. The spike in yields spooked global equities.

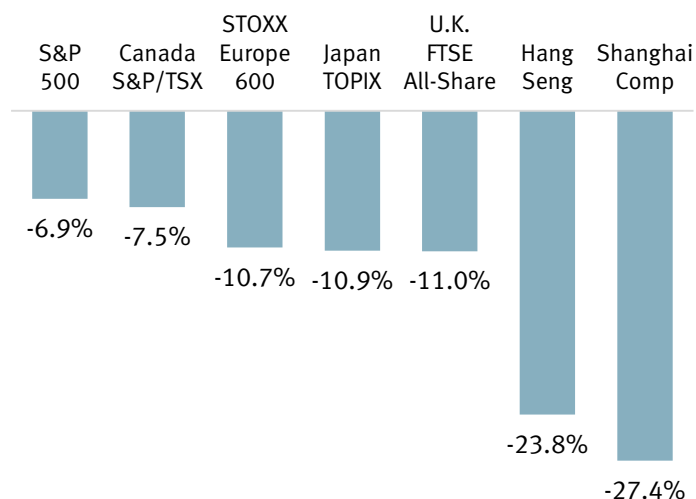
### Pointing the finger

Corrections typically have multiple culprits, and this episode is no exception. Equity markets are primarily being held back by:

- the run-up in Treasury yields and related concerns about a higher interest rate regime;
- perceptions by some that the Federal Reserve may shift to an unnecessarily aggressive rate hike pace (we disagree);
- a fierce decline in global Tech stocks primarily due to tariff risks, regulatory threats, above-average valuations, and signs of peak activity in bellwether semiconductors;

### The correction is weighing more heavily on Asia ex-Japan

Percentage decline of select equity indexes from 2018 highs\*



\*Four of the seven indexes reached all-time highs in 2018: S&P 500, S&P/TSX, FTSE All-Share (U.K.), and Hang Seng  
Source - RBC Wealth Management, Bloomberg; data through 10/11/18; data in local currencies

Click [here](#) for authors' contact information.

Priced (in USD) as of 10/11/18 market close, EST (unless otherwise stated).

For important disclosures and required non-U.S. analyst disclosures, see [page 8](#).



Wealth  
Management

- the increasing likelihood the U.S.-China trade dispute will intensify, and the ratcheting up of overall tensions between the two countries;
- concerns about China's slowing economic momentum;
- potential wrinkles in the U.S. Q3 earnings season related to margin pressure, tariff angst, and the strong dollar; and,
- the coming transition to a slower, more normal U.S. corporate earnings growth rate in 2019.

Data from RBC Capital Markets indicates global investors had crowded into the U.S. over the summer as tariff risks were hitting other markets with greater force. Technology and Communication Services have become particularly over-owned, and have underperformed during the market pullback. Another growth sector, Consumer Discretionary, has lagged as well.

There are also signs that computer-driven algorithmic trading may have exacerbated the equity selloffs. This is becoming par for the course during episodes of volatility.

It's important to keep in mind the S&P 500 pullback follows the strongest quarterly performance in almost five years. U.S. equities are usually volatile in October and are often wobbly in midterm election years—typically pulling back within the 12-month period ahead of the election and then rallying after the dust settles.

### Market maintenance

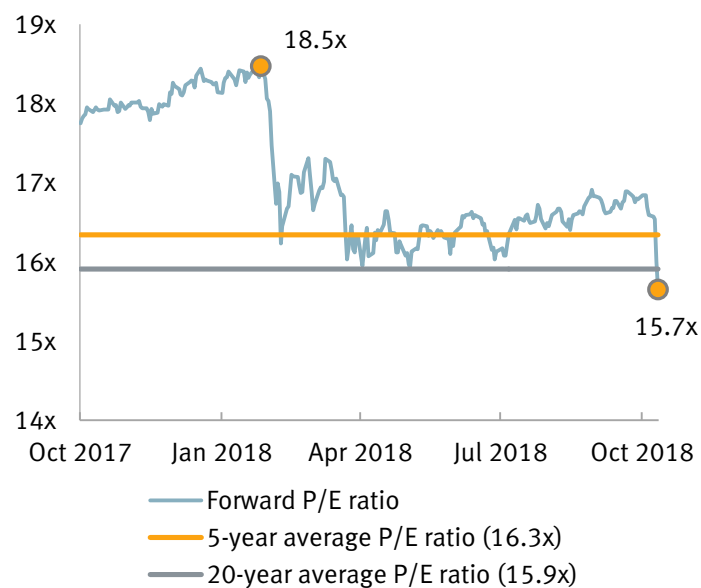
In our view, the entire laundry list of concerns above does not need to be resolved for equity markets to start to regain their sea legs. Our checklist of requirements for calmer conditions includes: Treasury yields settling down, Tech stocks stabilizing, and indications that Q3 U.S. earnings trends will be respectable overall despite some wrinkles by select companies. Some fear and loathing among investors would also help, in our assessment, as these attitudes are almost always contrary indicators. This process will likely take some time.

The immediate risks facing equities have not changed our constructive longer-term view because the two pillars for stocks—economic and earnings growth—are likely to continue to provide a sturdy foundation. We remain Market Weight U.S. equities and slightly Overweight the overall global equity asset class. Forward-looking indicators are still signaling the U.S. economic expansion will persist for the next 12 months, at least, and some of these data points have actually strengthened recently.

While we expect S&P 500 earnings growth to slow from its torrid 2018 pace of 20%+ y/y (including the boost from tax cuts), growth in 2019 should be average to slightly above average, in the high single-digit to low double-digit range.

### The silver lining: Market valuations are easing

S&P 500 forward twelve-month price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio



Source - RBC Wealth Management, FactSet; data through 10/11/18

This should be enough to maintain the long-term bull market streak, in our view.

During market corrections, valuations typically ease when earnings forecasts do not deteriorate. At this stage, earnings growth is still materializing, sales growth is outpacing GDP growth, and valuations are easing. In fact, the S&P 500 forward price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio has declined. After reaching a peak of 18.5x in late January based on the twelve-month forward consensus forecast, the forward P/E has declined more than 15% to 15.7x to trade below longer-term averages. Additionally, measured against the 5- and 20-year averages, the chart shows that the current valuation appears to be relatively benign for a market forecast to grow earnings per share at 20%+ y/y for the second half of 2018 and at roughly 10% in the first half of 2019.

### Passing the gut check

Over the near term, it's likely the issues weighing on U.S. and global equities will take some time for markets to sort through or adjust to, and could involve more downside.

RBC Capital Markets, LLC's Head of U.S. Equity Strategy Lori Calvasina is reluctant to buy the dip at this stage given the risks surrounding Q3 earnings season and the over-ownership of U.S. equities by global investors, and specifically crowding in Tech and Communication Services. We think earnings trends will be respectable overall with some select companies facing challenges related to margins, tariffs, or the dollar. But the process has to work through the system over the coming days and weeks.

RBC Capital Markets, LLC's Technical Strategist Bob Dickey anticipates that once the market finds its footing, perhaps at moderately lower levels, some backing and filling should occur within a trading range over the months ahead as the market consolidates the strong gains of the past two years.

Our view remains that investors should give equities the benefit of the doubt as long as the economic, credit, and earnings cycles remain favorable for stocks. We would not overreact to the recent moves. Corrections usually take some time to play out. They rarely end quickly. We think investors have time to be patient and make portfolio decisions thoughtfully, in line with long-term goals.

### Welcome to the policy error era

The bond markets are again receiving the bulk of the blame for equity market turbulence, and it may not be completely unwarranted. With the Federal Reserve having raised short-term rates to a 2.00%–2.25% range at its September meeting, we are nearing the level where policy rates begin to restrict economic activity—currently estimated by the Fed to be levels higher than 3.00%, or just three rate hikes away.

While the September rate hike had long been anticipated, markets have renewed worry on the back of recent historically strong economic indicators and rising wage pressures that might cause the Fed not only to raise rates toward that 3.00% level more quickly than expected, but to push well beyond it.

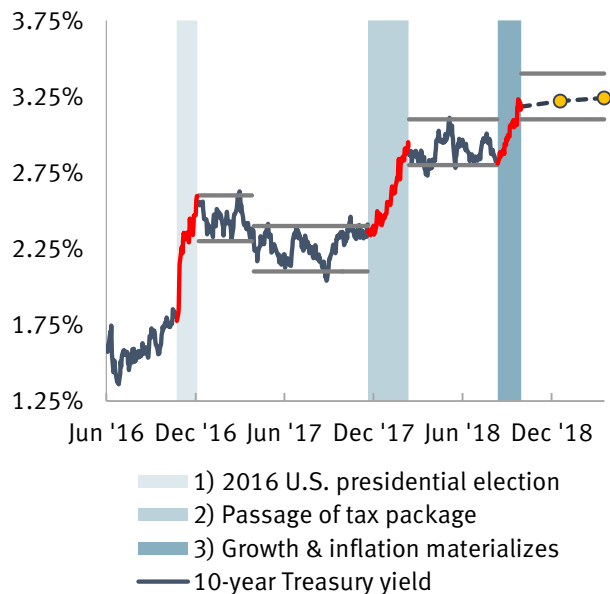
Those fears were sparked in part by Fed Chair Jerome Powell's October 3 comments. "Interest rates are still accommodative, but we're gradually moving to a place where they'll be neutral—not that they'll be restraining the economy," he said. "We may go past neutral. But we're a long way from neutral at this point, probably."

The bond market likely took issue with the Fed's decision, at its September meeting, to remove language characterizing policy as "accommodative" from its official statement as well as with Powell's suggestion that rates remain "a long way from neutral," which raised the possibility that the Fed chair thinks the neutral level could be higher than the Fed's current 3.00% consensus.

But the main problem is that while the Fed may think rates are a long way from neutral, markets continue to see policy rates peaking for the rest of this cycle at just 2.75%, or two rate hikes away.

Looking forward, we believe uncertainty around what each subsequent rate hike means for the economy, and the risk that the Fed will raise rates until something breaks, will keep markets on edge and is likely to keep volatility elevated—as is typical in a late-stage economic cycle environment.

We expect the 10-year Treasury yield to once again steady after latest selloff



Source - RBC Wealth Management, Bloomberg; 10-year Treasury yield forecasts based on futures market data

### But it doesn't have to be this way

The chart shows the story of the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury yield over the last two years, and the three catalysts that have driven market selloffs. As in the past, we expect the 10-year yield to stabilize and find a new 30 basis points trading range, this time between 3.10% and 3.40%. However, we think this is the last hurrah for Treasury yields as we maintain our view that 3.40% is likely to be the speed limit for the 10-year in this economic cycle.

We also continue to see the Fed raising rates, likely twice more to 2.75%, before pausing. Despite recent strong data, RBC Global Asset Management expects economic growth to moderate next year, while the October 11 release of consumer price data showed inflation remains in check. That, combined with recent market action, should only serve to convince the Fed that caution is warranted.