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An MSCI Brand

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2013 Canadian Proxy Voting Guidelines  
TSX-Listed Companies

December 19, 2012

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Institutional Shareholder Services Inc.

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# ISS' 2013 Canadian Proxy Voting Guidelines- TSX Companies

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## 1. Routine/Miscellaneous

### Audit-Related

#### Financial Statements/Director and Auditor Reports

Companies are required under their respective Business Corporations Acts (BCAs) to submit their financial statements and the auditor report, which is included in the company's annual report, to shareholders at every AGM. This routine item is almost always non-voting.



#### Ratification of Auditors

Vote FOR proposals to ratify auditors, unless the following applies:

- Non-audit related fees paid to the auditor exceed audit-related fees.

RATIONALE: Multilateral Instrument 52-110 relating to Audit Committees defines "audit services" to include the professional services rendered by the issuer's external auditor for the audit and review of the issuer's financial statements or services that are normally provided by the external auditor in connection with statutory and regulatory filings or engagements.

The Instrument also sets out disclosure requirements related to fees charged by external auditors. Every issuer is required to disclose in its Annual Information Form with at least a cross-reference in the related Proxy Circular, fees billed by the external audit firm in each of the last two fiscal years, broken down into four categories: Audit Fees, Audit-Related Fees, Tax Fees, and All Other Fees.

In circumstances where "Other" fees include fees related to significant one-time capital structure events: initial public offerings, bankruptcy emergence, and spinoffs; and the company makes public disclosure of the amount and nature of those fees which are an exception to the standard "non-audit fee" category, then such fees may be excluded from the non-audit fees considered in determining the ratio of non-audit to audit/audit-related fees/tax compliance and preparation for purposes of determining whether non-audit fees are excessive.



### Other Business

Vote AGAINST all proposals on proxy ballots seeking approval for unspecified "other business" that may be conducted at the shareholder meeting.



## 2. Board of Directors

### Slate Ballots (Bundled director elections)

Generally WITHHOLD votes from all directors nominated by slate ballot at the annual/general or annual/special shareholders' meetings. This policy will not apply to contested director elections.

RATIONALE: The Toronto Stock Exchange released [amendments to Part IV](#) of the Company Manual, on Oct. 4, 2012. The new rules focus on how a listed issuer elects its board of directors and becomes effective Dec. 31, 2012.

Highlights of the new rules include requirements for the:

- Annual election of directors,
- Election of directors by way of individual resolution rather than single slate ballots
- Public disclosure of the votes received for the election of each director,
- Adoption of a majority voting director resignation policy or explanation of why such policy has not been adopted, and
- Notice to the TSX if a director receives a majority of 'withhold' votes and the issuer has not adopted a majority voting policy.

The updated policy reflects the recent prohibition on single slate ballot election of directors at TSX-Listed issuers, while maintaining flexibility to address specific circumstances that would warrant a case-by-case approach.



### Voting on Director Nominees in Uncontested Elections

The following fundamental principles apply when determining votes on director nominees:

**Board Accountability:** Practices that promote accountability and enhance shareholder trust begin with transparency into a company's governance practices including risk management practices. These practices include the annual election of all directors by a majority of votes cast by all shareholders and provide shareholders with the ability to remove problematic directors, and include the detailed timely disclosure of voting results. Board accountability is facilitated through clearly defined board roles and responsibilities, regular peer performance review, and shareholder engagement.

**Board Responsiveness:** In addition to facilitating constructive shareholder engagement, boards of directors should be responsive to the wishes of shareholders as indicated by majority supported shareholder proposals or lack of majority support for management proposals including election of directors. In the case of a company controlled through a dual-class share structure, the support of a majority of the minority shareholders should equate to majority support.

**Board Independence:** Independent oversight of management is a primary responsibility of the board and while true independence of thought and deed is difficult to assess, there are corporate governance practices with regard to board structure and management of conflicts of interest that are meant to promote independent oversight. Such practices include the selection of an independent chair to lead the board; structuring board pay practices to eliminate the potential for self-dealing, reduce risky decision-making, and ensure the alignment of director interests with those of shareholders rather than management; structure separate independent key committees with defined mandates. Complete disclosure of all conflicts of interest and how they are managed is a critical indicator of independent oversight.

**Board Capability:** The skills, experience and competencies of board members should be a priority in director selection, but consideration should also be given to a board candidate's ability to devote sufficient time and commitment to the increasing responsibilities of a public company director. Directors who are unable to attend board and committee meetings and/or who are overextended (i.e., serving on too many boards) raise concern regarding the director's ability to effectively serve in shareholders' best interests.



## ISS Canadian Definition of Independence

### Inside Director (I)

- Employees of the company or its affiliates<sup>1</sup>;
- Non-employee officer of the company if he/she is among the five most highly compensated;
- Current interim CEO;
- Beneficial owner of company shares with more than 50 percent of the outstanding voting rights.

### Affiliated Outside Director (AO)

- Former executive with the company within the last three years (excluding CEO);
- Former CEO (no cooling-off period);
- Former interim CEO if the service was longer than 18 months or if the service was between 12 and 18 months and the compensation was high relative to that of the other directors (5x their pay) or in line with a CEO's compensation<sup>2</sup>;
- Former executive of the company, an affiliate, or a firm acquired within the past three years;
- Executive of a former parent or predecessor firm at the time the company was sold or split off from parent/predecessor (subject to three-year cooling off other than CEO);
- Executive, former executive within last three years, general or limited partner of a joint venture or partnership with the company;
- Relative<sup>3</sup> of current executive officer<sup>4</sup> of the company;
- Relative of a person who has served as an executive officer of the company within the last three years;
- Currently provides (or a relative provides) professional services to the company or to its officers;
- Currently employed by (or a relative is employed by) a significant customer or supplier<sup>5</sup>;
- Is (or a relative is) a trustee, director or employee of a charitable or non-profit organization that receives grants or endowments from the company;
- Has (or a relative has) a transactional relationship with the company excluding investments in the company through a private placement;
- Has a contractual/guaranteed board seat and is party to a voting agreement to vote in line with management on proposals being brought to shareholders;
- Founder<sup>6</sup> of the company but not currently an employee;
- Board attestation that an outside director is not independent.

### Independent Directors (IO)

- No material<sup>7</sup> ties to the corporation other than board seat.

<sup>1</sup> "Affiliate" includes a subsidiary, sibling company, or parent company. ISS uses 50 percent control ownership by the parent company as the standard for applying its affiliate designation.

<sup>2</sup> ISS will look at the terms of the interim CEO's compensation or employment contract to determine if it contains severance pay, long-term health and pension benefits, or other such standard provisions typically contained in contracts of permanent, non-temporary CEOs. ISS will also consider if a formal search process was under way for a full-time CEO.

<sup>3</sup> Relative refers to immediate family members including spouse, parents, children, siblings, in-laws, and anyone sharing the director's home.

<sup>4</sup> Based on the definition of Executive Officer used in Multilateral Instrument 52-110.

<sup>5</sup> If the company makes or receives annual payments exceeding the greater of \$200,000 or 5 percent of recipient's gross revenues (the recipient is the party receiving proceeds from the transaction).

<sup>6</sup> The operating involvement of the Founder with the company will be considered. Little or no operating involvement may cause ISS to deem the Founder as an independent outsider.

<sup>7</sup> "Material" is defined as a standard of relationship (financial, personal or otherwise) that a reasonable person might conclude could potentially influence one's objectivity in the boardroom in a manner that would have a meaningful impact on an individual's ability to satisfy requisite fiduciary standards on behalf of shareholders.

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on director nominees, examining the following factors when disclosed:

- Independence of the board and key board committees;
- Attendance at board and committee meetings;
- Corporate governance provisions and takeover activity;
- Long-term company performance;
- Directors' ownership stake in the company;
- Compensation practices;
- Responsiveness to shareholder proposals;
- Board accountability; and
- Adoption of a Majority Voting (director resignation) policy.

### Board Structure and Independence

Generally vote WITHHOLD from any insider or affiliated outside director where:

- The board is less than majority independent, OR
- The board lacks a separate compensation or nominating committee.

RATIONALE: The balance of board influence should reside with independent directors free of any pressures or conflicts which might prevent them from objectively overseeing strategic direction, evaluating management effectiveness, setting appropriate executive compensation, maintaining internal control processes, and ultimately driving long-term shareholder value creation. Best practice corporate governance standards do not advocate that no inside directors sit on boards. Company insiders have extensive company knowledge and experience that provides a significant contribution to business decisions at the board level. In order to maintain the independent balance of power necessary for independent directors to fulfill their oversight mandate and make difficult decisions that may run counter to management's self-interests, insiders, former insiders and other related directors should not dominate the board or continue to be involved on key board committees charged with the audit, compensation, and nomination responsibilities.

Best practice as set out in National Policy 58-201 Corporate Governance Guidelines recommends that the board should have:

- A majority of independent directors.
- A nominating committee and a compensation committee composed entirely of independent directors (Nomination of Directors 3.10; Compensation 3.15).

Guideline Six of the CCGG publication "2010 Building High Performance Boards" indicates that boards "Establish mandates for board committees and ensure committee independence." It is further recommended that key board committees "review committee charters every year and amend or confirm the mandate and procedures based on information received from the board and committee evaluation process."

### Insiders on Key Committees

Vote WITHHOLD from individual directors who:

- Are insiders on the audit, compensation, or nominating committee.

Include cautionary language for all affiliated outside directors who sit on the audit, compensation, or nominating committee, to the effect that corporate governance best practices dictate that such committees should be comprised entirely of independent directors.

**RATIONALE:** In order to promote independent oversight of management, the board as a whole and its key board committees should meet minimum best practice expectations of no less than majority independence. Director elections are seen to be the single most important use of the shareholder franchise.

Multilateral Instrument 52-110 Audit Committees sets out best practice with regard to the composition of the audit committee. The Instrument requires that every reporting issuer, other than an investment fund, issuer of asset-backed securities, designated foreign issuer, SEC issuer, or issuers that are subsidiary entities as long as the subsidiary does not issue securities and the parent is subject to compliance with this instrument, must have an audit committee and that the committee must comprise a minimum of three members and that every audit committee member must be independent.

### Policy Considerations for Majority Owned Companies<sup>8</sup>

ISS policies support a one-share, one-vote principle. In recognition of the substantial equity stake held by certain shareholders, on a CASE-BY-CASE basis, director nominees who are or who represent a controlling shareholder of a majority owned company, who will be designated as controlling insiders, may generally be supported under ISS' board and committee independence policies, if the company meets **all** of the following independence and governance criteria:

- Individually elected directors;
- The number of Related Directors should not exceed the proportion of the common shares controlled by the Controlling Shareholder, to a maximum of two-thirds, however if the CEO is related to the Controlling Shareholder, then at least two-thirds of the directors should be independent of management;
- If the CEO and chair roles are combined or the CEO is or is related to the Controlling Shareholder, then there should be an independent lead director and the board should have an effective and transparent process to deal with any conflicts of interest between the company, minority shareholders, and the Controlling Shareholder; and
- A majority of the Audit and Nominating committees should be either Independent Directors or Related Directors who are independent of management. All members of the compensation committee should be independent of management and if the CEO is related to the Controlling Shareholder, no more than one member of the compensation committee should be a Related Director;
- Prompt disclosure of detailed vote results following each shareholder meeting;
- Adoption of a majority vote standard with director resignation policy for uncontested elections OR public commitment to adopt a majority voting standard with director resignation policy for uncontested elections if the controlling shareholder ceases to control 50 percent or more of the common shares<sup>9</sup>.

ISS will also consider the following:

- The nominating committee's process to receive and discuss suggestions from shareholders for potential director nominees;

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<sup>8</sup> A majority owned company is defined for the purpose of this policy as a company controlled by a shareholder or group of shareholders who together have an economic ownership interest under a single class common share capital structure that is commensurate with their voting entitlement of 50% or more of the outstanding common shares.

<sup>9</sup> On October 4, 2012, the TSX announced a further amendment to proposed listing requirements for TSX listed companies mandating majority voting which may take the form of a policy with a director resignation requirement, and disclosure of detailed vote results for director elections, which are intended to take effect as of December 31, 2013.

- If the CEO is related to the Controlling Shareholder, the board's process to evaluate the performance, leadership, compensation, and succession of management should be led by independent directors;

ISS will also take into consideration any other concerns related to the conduct of the subject director and any controversy or questionable actions on the part of the subject director that are deemed not to be in the best interests of all shareholders.

**RATIONALE:** Canadian corporate law provides significant shareholder protections, for example a shareholder or group of shareholders having a 5 percent ownership stake in a company may requisition a special meeting for the purposes of replacing or removing directors. Directors may be removed by a simple majority vote. Shareholders also benefit from the ability to bring an oppression action against the board or individual directors of Canadian incorporated public companies.

Against this legal backdrop, Canadian institutions have taken steps to acknowledge and support the premise that a shareholder who has an equity stake in the common shares of a reporting issuer under a single class common share structure has a significant interest in protecting the value of that equity stake in the company and is therefore deemed to have significant alignment of interests with minority shareholders. This policy firmly supports the one-share, one-vote principle and is intended to recognize the commonality of interests between certain shareholders having a majority equity stake under a single class share structure and minority shareholders in protecting the value of their investment. This policy will not be considered at dual class companies having common shares with unequal voting or board representation rights.

### Audit Fee Disclosure

Generally vote WITHHOLD from the members of the audit committee as reported in the most recently filed public documents if:

- No audit fee information is disclosed by the company within a reasonable period of time prior to a shareholders' meeting at which ratification of auditors is a voting item.

**RATIONALE:** In addition to audit fee disclosure by category now being a regulatory requirement, such information is of great importance because of the concern that audit firms could compromise the independence of a company audit in order to secure lucrative consulting services from the company.

### Excessive Non-Audit Fees

Generally vote WITHHOLD from individual directors who are members of the audit committee as constituted in the most recently completed fiscal year if:

- Non-audit fees (Other Fees) paid to the external audit firm exceed audit and audit-related fees.

**RATIONALE:** Part 2 of Multilateral Instrument 52-110 Audit Committees states that the audit committee must be directly responsible for overseeing the work of the external auditor and the audit committee must pre-approve all non-audit services provided to the issuer or its subsidiary entities by the issuer's external auditor. It is therefore appropriate to hold the audit committee accountable for payment of excessive non-audit fees.

### Meeting Attendance

Vote WITHHOLD from individual director nominees if:

- (i) The company has NOT adopted a majority voting policy and (ii) the individual director has attended less than 75 percent of the board and committee meetings<sup>10</sup> held within the past year without a valid reason for these absences;
- (i) The company has adopted a majority voting policy and (ii) the individual director has attended less than 75 percent of the board and committee meetings held within the past year without a valid reason for the absences AND a pattern of low attendance exists based on prior years' meeting attendance.

The following should be taken into account:

- Valid reasons for absence at meetings include illness or absence due to company business;
- Participation via telephone is acceptable;
- If the director missed one meeting or one day's meetings, votes should not be withheld even if such absence dropped the director's attendance below 75 percent;
- Board and committee meetings include all regular and special meetings of the board duly called for the purpose of conducting board business;
- Out of country location or residence is not a sufficient excuse not to attend board meetings, especially given technological advances in communications equipment.

RATIONALE: Corporate governance best practice supports board structures and processes that promote independent oversight and accountability. Nominating competent, committed, and engaged directors to the board also necessitates full participation in the conduct of board business in order to fulfill the many responsibilities and duties now required to meet requisite standards of care. A director who commits to serve on a public company board should be prepared and able to make attendance at and contribution to the board's meetings a priority. A pattern of absenteeism may be an indicator of a more serious concern with a director's ability to serve, warranting a board review and potentially the director's resignation.

### Overboarded Directors

Directors are overboarded if they sit on a number of boards which could result in excessive time commitments and an inability to carry out their oversight duties. Cautionary language will be included regarding the number of additional public company board seats held by directors if:

- The director is a CEO and sits on more than **2** outside public company boards in addition to his/her own company.
- The director is an outside professional director and sits on more than **6** public company boards in total.

National Policy 58-201 Corporate Governance Guidelines, state that they are not meant to be prescriptive and that issuers are encouraged to consider the guidelines in developing their own corporate governance practices. Further that "The Policy provides guidance that has been formulated to be sensitive to the realities of the greater numbers of small companies and controlled companies in the Canadian corporate landscape." NP 58-201 does not address the number of boards appropriate for directors but simply instructs that the board should appoint a nominating committee and that one of the committee's duties should be to "consider whether or not each new nominee can devote sufficient time and resources to his or her duties as a board member."

2010 Building High Performance Boards published by the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance indicates that, "directors who hold a full-time executive position should have only one or two outside public company directorships ... and that directors who are not employed full time should generally hold no more than four outside corporate directorships that take up a significant amount of time."

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<sup>10</sup> Where a WITHHOLD is based on meeting attendance for board meetings only due to lack of disclosure on committee meeting attendance, particulars will be provided in the analysis.

The Pension Investment Association of Canada's Corporate Governance Principles state more generally that "In order for directors to devote the required amount of time to their board responsibilities, they must limit the number of other directorships that they accept." But PIAC does not specify what an acceptable number might be, presumably in recognition of Canada's more flexible comply-or-explain governance regime.

### Former CEO/CFO on Audit/Compensation Committee

Generally vote WITHHOLD from any director on the audit or compensation committee if:

- The director has served as the CEO of the company at any time;
- The director has served as the CFO of the company within the past three years.

RATIONALE: Although such directors are designated as affiliated outsiders under ISS policy, a WITHHOLD vote will be recommended as if they were insiders on these key committees due to concerns of independent oversight of financials for which they were previously responsible or compensation arrangements that they may have orchestrated and over which they may still wield considerable influence thus potentially compromising the Audit or Compensation Committee's independence.

### Voting on Directors for Egregious Actions

Under extraordinary circumstances, vote WITHHOLD from directors individually, one or more committee members, or the entire board, due to:

- Material failures of governance, stewardship, risk oversight or fiduciary responsibilities at the company;
- Failure to replace management as appropriate; or
- Egregious actions related to the director(s)' service on other boards that raise substantial doubt about his or her ability to effectively oversee management and serve the best interests of shareholders at any company.

RATIONALE: Director accountability and competence have become issues of prime importance given the failings in oversight exposed by the global financial crisis. There is also concern over the environment in the boardrooms of certain markets, where past failures appear to be no impediment to continued or new appointments at major companies and may not be part of the evaluation process at companies in considering whether an individual is, or continues to be, fit for the role and best able to serve shareholders' interests.

Under exceptional circumstances that raise substantial doubt on a director's ability to serve as an effective monitor of management and in the best interests of shareholders including past performance on other boards, we may consider a negative recommendation on directors.



## Other Board-Related Proposals

### Classification/Declassification of the Board

Vote AGAINST proposals to classify the board.

Vote FOR proposals to repeal classified boards and to elect all directors annually.



### Independent Chairman (Separate Chairman/CEO)

Generally vote FOR shareholder proposals seeking separation of the offices of CEO and chair if the company has a single executive occupying both positions.

**RATIONALE:** The separation of the positions of chairman and CEO in favour of an independent chairman of the board is superior to the lead director concept. The positions of chairman and CEO are two distinct jobs with different job responsibilities. The chairman is the leader of the board of directors, which is responsible for selecting and replacing the CEO, setting executive pay, evaluating managerial and company performance, and representing shareholder interests. The CEO, by contrast, is responsible for maintaining the day-to-day operations of the company and being the company's spokesperson. It therefore follows that one person cannot fulfill both roles without conflict. An independent lead director may be an acceptable alternative as long as the lead director has clearly delineated and comprehensive duties including the full authority to call board meetings and approve meeting materials and engage with shareholders. A counterbalancing lead director alternative must be accompanied by majority independence on the board and key committees, and the absence of any problematic governance practices.

Best practice as set out in National Policy 58-201 Corporate Governance Guidelines recommends that:

- The chair of the board should be an independent director or where this is not appropriate, an independent director should be appointed as "lead director."



### Majority of Independent Directors/Establishment of Committees

Vote FOR shareholder proposals asking that a majority or up to two-thirds of directors be independent unless:

- The board composition already meets the proposed threshold based on the ISS definition of independence.

Vote FOR shareholder proposals asking that board audit, compensation, and/or nominating committees be composed exclusively of independent directors unless:

- The board's committees already meet that standard.



### Majority Vote Standard for the Election of Directors

Vote FOR resolutions requesting that: (i) the board adopt a majority vote standard and director resignation policy for director elections or (ii) the company amend its bylaws to provide for majority voting, whereby director nominees are elected by the affirmative vote of the majority of votes cast, unless:

- A majority voting policy is codified in the company's bylaws, corporate governance guidelines, or other governing documents prior to an election to be considered, and;

- The company has adopted formal corporate governance principles that provide an adequate response to both new nominees as well as “holdover” nominees (i.e., incumbent nominees who fail to receive 50 percent of votes cast).



## Proxy Contests - Voting for Director Nominees in Contested Elections

Vote CASE-BY-CASE in contested elections taking into account:

- Long-term financial performance;
- Board performance;
- Management’s track record and compensation;
- Qualifications of director nominees (both slates); and
- Evaluation of what each side is offering shareholders.

### Overall Approach

When analyzing proxy contests, ISS focuses on two central questions:

1. Have the dissidents met the burden of proving that board change is warranted? And, if so;
2. Will the dissident nominees be more likely to affect positive change (i.e., increase shareholder value) versus the incumbent nominees?

When a dissident seeks a majority of board seats, ISS will require from the dissident a well-reasoned and detailed business plan, including the dissident’s strategic initiatives, a transition plan and the identification of a qualified and credible new management team. ISS will then compare the detailed dissident plan against the incumbent plan and the dissident director nominees and management team against the incumbent team in order to arrive at our vote recommendation.

When a dissident seeks a minority of board seats, the burden of proof imposed on the dissident is lower. In such cases, ISS will not require from the dissident a detailed plan of action, nor is the dissident required to prove that its plan is preferable to the incumbent plan. Instead, the dissident will be required to prove that board change is preferable to the status quo and that the dissident director slate will add value to board deliberations including by, among other factors, considering issues from a different viewpoint than the current board members.

### Reimbursing Proxy Solicitation Expenses

Vote CASE-BY-CASE taking into account:

- Whether ISS recommends in favour of the dissidents, in which case we may recommend approving the dissident’s out of pocket expenses if they are successfully elected and the expenses are reasonable.



### 3. Shareholder Rights & Defenses

#### Advance Notice Requirement

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on proposals to adopt an Advance Notice Board Policy or to adopt or amend bylaws containing or adding an advance notice requirement, giving support to those proposals which provide a reasonable framework for shareholders to nominate directors by allowing shareholders to submit director nominations as close to the meeting date as reasonably possible and within the broadest window possible, recognizing the need to allow sufficient notice for company, regulatory, and shareholder review.

To be reasonable, the company's deadline for notice of shareholders' director nominations must not be more than 65 days and not less than 30 days prior to the meeting date. If notice of annual meeting is given less than 50 days prior to the meeting date a provision to require shareholder notice by close of business on the 10<sup>th</sup> day following first public announcement of the annual meeting is supportable. In the case of a special meeting, a requirement that a nominating shareholder must provide notice by close of business on the 15<sup>th</sup> day following first public announcement of the special shareholders' meeting is also acceptable.

In general, support additional efforts by companies to ensure full disclosure of a dissident shareholder's economic and voting position in the company so long as the informational requirements are reasonable and aimed at providing shareholders with the necessary information to review any proposed director nominees.

**RATIONALE:** All shareholders should be provided with sufficient disclosure and time to make appropriate decisions on the election of their board representatives. Advance Notice Requirement Policies typically provide a transparent, structured and fair director nomination process, whereby all shareholders, irrespective of whether they are voting by proxy or attending the meeting, are made aware of potential proxy contests in advance of the meeting. Shareholders are also provided with important information pertaining to proposed dissident director nominees within a specified time frame, allowing shareholders to fully participate in the director election process in an informed and effective manner.



#### Appointment of Additional Directors Between Annual Meetings

Generally vote FOR these resolutions where:

- The company is incorporated under a statute (such as the CBCA) that permits removal of directors by simple majority vote;
- The number of directors to be appointed between meetings does not exceed one-third of the number of directors appointed at the previous annual meeting; and
- Such appointments must be approved by shareholders at the annual meeting immediately following the date of their appointment.



## Bylaw Amendments

Generally vote FOR proposals to adopt or amend Articles/Bylaws unless the resulting document contains any of the following:

- The quorum for a meeting of shareholders is set below two persons holding 25 percent of the eligible vote (this may be reduced to no less than 10 percent in the case of a small company that can demonstrate, based on publicly disclosed voting results, that it is unable to achieve a higher quorum and where there is no controlling shareholder);
- The quorum for a meeting of directors is less than 50 percent of the number of directors;
- The chair of the board has a casting vote in the event of a deadlock at a meeting of directors;
- An alternate director provision that permits a director to appoint another person to serve as an alternate director to attend board or committee meetings in place of the duly elected director;
- Other corporate governance concerns, such as granting blanket authority to the board with regard to future capital authorizations or alteration of capital structure without further shareholder approval.

**RATIONALE:** Alternate directors have neither been elected nor has their appointment been ratified by shareholders. As such, the use of a director substitute or replacement to fill in for a duly elected board representative raises serious concerns, including whether an alternate may be bound to serve in the best interests of shareholders. Also, regular directors must be willing to earmark sufficient time and effort to serving on the board, once they have accepted the responsibility entrusted to them by shareholders.

Article or bylaw provisions permitting alternate directors generally indicate that the alternate director will be counted for quorum purposes, may attend and vote on matters raised at board meetings and act on behalf of the regular elected director in all respects, and may act as alternate for more than one director in some cases. As well, this provision may also provide that there is no limit to the number of alternates that may be appointed for any meeting.

Allowing shareholders the opportunity to elect directors is a fundamental shareholder right. As shareholders continue to push for increased rights such as majority voting with a director resignation policy to ensure that they have a meaningful voice in the election of their board representatives, the inclusion of an alternate director provision in a reporting issuer's articles or bylaws runs counter to the higher director accountability being sought by these shareholder rights improvements. Furthermore, based on discussions with several institutional investors, the majority of them raised concerns with alternate director provisions.



## Cumulative Voting

In general, support cumulative voting. However there may be situations where such a structure may be detrimental to shareholder interests.

Generally vote AGAINST proposals to eliminate cumulative voting.

Generally vote FOR proposals to restore or permit cumulative voting but exceptions may be made depending on the company's other governance provisions such as the adoption of a majority vote standard for the election of directors.



## Confidential Voting

Generally vote FOR shareholder proposals requesting that corporations adopt confidential voting, use independent vote tabulators, and use independent inspectors of election, as long as:

- The proposal includes a provision for proxy contests as follows: In the case of a contested election, management should be permitted to request that the dissident group honor its confidential voting policy. If the dissidents agree, the policy remains in place. If the dissidents will not agree, the confidential voting policy is waived for that particular vote.

Generally vote FOR management proposals to adopt confidential voting.



## Poison Pills (Shareholder Rights Plans)

As required by the Toronto Stock Exchange, the adoption of a shareholder rights plan must be ratified by shareholders within six months of adoption.

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on management proposals to ratify a shareholder rights plan (poison pill) taking into account whether it conforms to 'new generation' rights plans and its scope is limited to the following two specific purposes:

- To give the board more time to find an alternative value enhancing transaction; and
- To ensure the equal treatment of all shareholders.

Vote AGAINST plans that go beyond these purposes if:

The plan gives discretion to the board to either:

- Determine whether actions by shareholders constitute a change in control;
- Amend material provisions without shareholder approval;
- Interpret other provisions;
- Redeem the rights or waive the plan's application without a shareholder vote; or
- Prevent a bid from going to shareholders.

The plan has any of the following characteristics:

- Unacceptable key definitions;
- Reference to Derivatives Contracts within the definition of Beneficial Owner;
- Flip over provision;
- Permitted bid period greater than 60 days;
- Maximum triggering threshold set at less than 20 percent of outstanding shares;
- Does not permit partial bids;
- Includes a Shareholder Endorsed Insider Bid (SEIB) provision;
- Bidder must frequently update holdings;
- Requirement for a shareholder meeting to approve a bid; and
- Requirement that the bidder provide evidence of financing.

The plan does not:

- Include an exemption for a "permitted lock up agreement";
- Include clear exemptions for money managers, pension funds, mutual funds, trustees, and custodians who are not making a takeover bid; and
- Exclude reference to voting agreements among shareholders.

RATIONALE: The evolution of “new generation” shareholder rights plans in Canada has been the result of reshaping the early antitakeover provision known as a “poison pill” into a shareholder protection rights plan that serves only two legitimate purposes: (i) to increase the time period during which a Permitted Bid may remain outstanding to a maximum of 60 days in order to give the board of directors of a target company sufficient time over and above the current statutory 35 day limit, to find an alternative to a takeover bid that would increase shareholder value; and (ii) to ensure that all shareholders are treated equally in the event of a bid for their company.

Elimination of board discretion to interpret the key elements of the plan was critical to this evolution. Definitions of Acquiring Person, Beneficial Ownership, Affiliates, Associates and Acting Jointly or in Concert are the terms that set out the who, how, and when of a triggering event. These definitions in early poison pills contained repetitive, circular, and duplicative layering of similar terms which created confusion and made interpretation difficult. Directors were given broad discretion to interpret the terms of a rights plan to determine when it was triggered, in other words, whether a takeover bid could proceed. This in turn, created enough uncertainty for bidders or potential purchasers, to effectively discourage non-board negotiated transactions. It can be seen how the early poison pill became synonymous with board and management entrenchment.

“New generation” rights plans have therefore been drafted to remove repetitive and duplicative elements along with language that gives the board discretion to interpret the terms of the plan. Also absent from “new generation” plans are references to similar definitions in regulation. These definitions found in various regulations often contain repetitive elements and references to other definitions in regulation that are unacceptable and not intended to serve the same purpose as those found in a “new generation” rights plan.

A number of other definitions are relevant to the key definitions mentioned above and are therefore equally scrutinized. Exemptions under the definition of Acquiring Person, for example, such as Exempt Acquisitions and Pro Rata Acquisitions, are sometimes inappropriately drafted to permit acquisitions that should trigger a rights plan. In order for an acquisition to be pro rata, the definition must ensure that a person may not acquire a greater percentage of the shares outstanding than the percentage owned immediately prior to the acquisition, by any means. It should also be noted that “new generation” rights plans are premised on the acquisition of common shares and ownership at law or in equity, therefore references to the voting of securities or the extension of beneficial ownership to encompass derivative securities that may result in deemed beneficial ownership of securities that a person has no right to acquire, goes beyond the acceptable purpose of a rights plan.

Equally important to the acceptability of a shareholder rights plan is the treatment of institutional investors who have a fiduciary duty to carry out corporate governance activities in the best interests of the beneficial owners of the investments that they oversee. These institutional investors should not trigger a rights plan through their investment and corporate governance activities for the accounts of others. The definition of Independent Shareholders should make absolutely clear these institutional investors acting in a fiduciary capacity for the accounts of others are independent for purposes of approving a takeover bid or other similar transaction, as well as approving future amendments to the rights plan.

Probably one of the most important and most contentious definitions in a shareholder rights plan is that of a Permitted Bid. ISS guidelines provide that an acceptable Permitted Bid definition must permit partial bids. Canadian takeover bid legislation is premised on the ability of shareholders to make the determination of the acceptability of any bid for their shares, partial or otherwise, provided that it complies with regulatory requirements. In the event that a partial bid is accepted by shareholders, regulation requires that their shares be taken up on a pro rata basis. Shareholders of a company may welcome the addition of a significant new shareholder for a number of reasons.

Also unacceptable to the purpose of a rights plan is the inclusion of a “Shareholder Endorsed Insider Bid” (SEIB) provision which would allow an “Insider” and parties acting jointly or in concert with an Insider an additional less rigorous avenue to

proceed with a take-over bid without triggering the rights plan, in addition to making a Permitted Bid or proceeding with board approval. The SEIB provision allows Insiders the ability to take advantage of a less stringent bid provision that is not offered to other bidders who must make a Permitted Bid or negotiate with the board for support.

Finally, a "new generation" rights plan must contain an exemption for lockup agreements and the definition of a permitted lockup agreement must strike the proper balance so as not to discourage either (i) the potential for a bidder to lock up a significant shareholder and thus give some comfort of a certain degree of success, or (ii) the potential for competitive bids offering a greater consideration and which would also necessitate a locked up person be able to withdraw the locked up shares from the first bid in order to support the higher competing bid.

New generation rights plans are limited to achieving the two purposes identified here. They ensure that shareholders are treated equally in a control transaction by precluding creeping acquisitions or the acquisition of a control block through private agreements between a few large shareholders; and they provide a reasonable time period to allow a corporation's directors and management to develop an alternative to maximize shareholder value.



## Reincorporation Proposals

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on proposals to change a company's jurisdiction of incorporation taking into account:

- Financial and corporate governance concerns, including: the reasons for reincorporating, a comparison of the governance provisions, and a comparison of the jurisdictional laws.

Generally vote FOR reincorporation when:

- Positive financial factors outweigh negative governance implications; or
- Governance implications are positive.

Generally vote AGAINST reincorporation if business implications are secondary to negative governance implications.



## Supermajority Vote Requirements

Vote AGAINST proposals to require a supermajority shareholder vote at a level above that required by statute.

Vote FOR proposals to lower supermajority vote requirements.



## 4. Capital/Restructuring

### Mergers and Corporate Restructurings

#### Overall Approach

For mergers and acquisitions, review and evaluate the merits and drawbacks of the proposed transaction, balancing the various and sometimes countervailing factors including:

- **Valuation** – Is the value to be received by the target shareholders (or paid by the acquirer) reasonable? While the fairness opinion may provide an initial starting point for assessing valuation reasonableness, emphasis is placed on the offer premium, market reaction and strategic rationale.
- **Market Reaction** – How has the market responded to the proposed deal? A negative market reaction should cause closer scrutiny of a deal.
- **Strategic rationale** – Does the deal make sense strategically? From where is value derived? Cost and revenue synergies should not be overly aggressive or optimistic, but reasonably achievable. Management should also have a favourable track record of successful integration of historical acquisitions.
- **Negotiations and process** – Were the terms of the transaction negotiated at arms-length? Was the process fair and equitable? A fair process helps to ensure the best price for shareholders. Significant negotiation “wins” can also signify the deal makers’ competency. The comprehensiveness of the sales process (e.g., full auction, partial auction, no auction) can also affect shareholder value.
- **Conflicts of interest** – Are insiders benefiting from the transaction disproportionately and inappropriately as compared to non-insider shareholders? As the result of potential conflicts, the directors and officers of the company may be more likely to vote to approve a merger than if they did not hold these interests. Consider whether these interests may have influenced these directors and officers to support or recommend the merger. The CIC figure presented in the “ISS Transaction Summary” section of this report is an aggregate figure that can in certain cases be a misleading indicator of the true value transfer from shareholders to insiders. Where such figure appears to be excessive, analyze the underlying assumptions to determine whether a potential conflict exists.
- **Governance** – Will the combined company have a better or worse governance profile than the current governance profiles of the respective parties to the transaction? If the governance profile is to change for the worse, the burden is on the company to prove that other issues (such as valuation) outweigh any deterioration in governance.



#### Income Trust Conversions

For an income trust, or in a broader sense, a Specified Investment Flow-Through Trust (SIFT), including REITs, ISS will recommend votes as follows:

- Generally AGAINST a trust conversion if the conversion itself will trigger any change-in-control payments or acceleration of options vesting;
- Generally AGAINST a trust conversion if bundled with an equity compensation plan resolution and the equity compensation plan itself does not warrant shareholder support;
- Generally AGAINST an equity compensation plan proposal on the same agenda if the vesting of options is accelerated under the plan in connection with a trust conversion.

In addition, the authorization of newly created blank cheque preferred shares, particularly on an unlimited basis, as part of the new capital structure of the resulting corporate entity is unacceptable from a corporate governance perspective and will generally result in a vote AGAINST the proposed conversion.

Otherwise, recommendations will be on a CASE-BY-CASE basis taking into account the following factors:

- *Method of Conversion* – Exchange Method by way of a statutory plan of arrangement; Distribution Method;
- *Rationale of Conversion Ahead of Expiry of Tax Benefit* – Pursuing growth rate higher than the rate limited by the “normal growth guideline”; enhancing access to capital; overcoming the foreign ownership restriction; timing of the conversion versus availability of unused pool of tax credits (certain tax credits may offset the unused pool); superiority to other strategic alternatives;
- *Change of Annualized Payout Level* – Comparison of one-year and three-year annualized distribution yield prior to the conversion and the proposed annualized dividend yield;
- *Equity Based Compensation Plan* – Effect on the old plan (Vote AGAINST if the vesting of options is accelerated), features of the new plan; whether or not bundled with the conversion as a single agenda item (a bundled agenda might trigger a vote AGAINST its approval);
- *Change-in-Control* – Whether or not the conversion will be treated as a change-in-control event (vote AGAINST if the conversion by itself will trigger change-in-control payment); note both 4) and 5) are related to conflicts of interest;
- *Cost of Implementing the Conversion* – Legal fees, investment bank fees, etc., if disclosed;
- *Market Reaction* – Historical market performance dating back to Oct. 30, 2006, the day before the announcement of changing tax rules; market response to the conversion announcement;
- *Corporate Governance* – Examine the relative strength of the company's corporate governance going forward (from two-tier board structure to one-tier board; equity capital from unit plus exchangeable shares to common shares);
- *Dissent Rights* – Whether or not unit holders are specifically granted dissent rights for the conversion.

RATIONALE: The criteria as set out here were developed based on the principle that early Trust conversion to a corporate structure results in a loss of the tax benefit for SIFTs, and therefore must be justified on the basis of the trade-off between cost and benefit of the conversion. In addition, it is unacceptable from a corporate governance perspective for a Trust conversion to be treated as a change in control and trigger change in control payments. The successive equity compensation plan for the corporation should be considered and voted on its own merits and should not be bundled with a trust conversion resolution.

The authorization of blank cheque preferred shares, particularly on an unlimited basis, that may subordinate the rights and value of outstanding common shares is unsupportable from a corporate governance perspective. Board discretion to issue one or more classes of preferred shares for which the terms and rights have not been defined and disclosed in order to afford shareholders the ability to give fully informed approval is anathema to the preservation of the full integrity and value of the ownership characteristics of issued and outstanding common shares. Furthermore, issuances of blank cheque preferreds may be used as an antitakeover mechanism at the discretion of the board by placing these shares in management friendly hands in the event of a takeover bid not supported by management, the result of which may be to deny shareholders of the ability to consider a bid for their shares.

## 1. Income Trust Overview

An income trust (including a REIT), or in a broader sense, a Specified Investment Flow-Through Trust (SIFT), is an exchange traded equity-type investment that is similar to common stock. By owning securities or assets of an underlying business (or businesses), an income trust is structured to distribute cash flows from those businesses to unit holders in a tax efficient manner. That is, by maintaining a certain distribution ratio, a trust will pay little to no corporate income tax. Because of the focus on distributions, income trusts are usually based on mature businesses with steady cash flows.

## 2. SIFT Rules

On Oct. 31, 2006, the Canadian federal government announced a new tax regime for specified investment flow-through trusts (SIFTs) under which certain amounts distributed by SIFTs will be subject to tax at corporate income tax rates. SIFT trusts will not be able to deduct distributions for tax purposes, and distributions will be treated as dividends to unit holders.

The new tax was deferred until 2011 for SIFTs that were publicly traded on Oct. 31, 2006, subject to "normal growth guidelines" which permit SIFTs to grow their equity capital through new equity issuances by the greater of \$50 million and a "safe harbour" amount of up to 100 percent of the SIFT's market cap as of Oct. 31, 2006, over the four-year transition period, without triggering the new tax treatment.

As a result of the new tax treatment it was expected that SIFTs would want to convert into corporations prior to 2011. On July 14, 2008, the government released the long-awaited draft amendments (the "Conversion Amendments") to the Income Tax Act (Canada), allowing the conversion of certain income trusts into corporations on a tax-deferred basis. The Conversion Amendments apply to conversions which occur after July 14, 2008, and before 2013, and are applicable to SIFT trusts, SIFT partnerships, or REITs that were in existence at any time between the period of Oct. 31, 2006, and July 14, 2008 (a "Qualifying SIFT"). The Conversion Amendments were necessary to facilitate conversions prior to 2011 without unit holders or SIFTs having adverse tax implications. The final tranche of tax-deferred REIT conversions were anticipated prior to the 2013 deadline.



### Increases in Authorized Capital

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on proposals to increase the number of shares of common stock authorized for issuance. Generally vote FOR proposals to approve increased authorized capital if:

- A company's shares are in danger of being de-listed;
- A company's ability to continue to operate as a going concern is uncertain.

Generally vote AGAINST proposals to approve unlimited capital authorization.

RATIONALE: Canadian jurisdictions generally, and most recently the British Columbia Corporations Act (BCCA), permit companies to have an unlimited authorized capital. ISS prefers to see companies with a fixed maximum limit on authorized capital, with at least 30 percent of the authorized stock issued and outstanding. Limited capital structures protect against excessive dilution and can be increased when needed with shareholder approval.



### Private Placement Issuances

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on private placement issuances taking into account:

- Whether other resolutions are bundled with the issuance;
- The financial consequences for the company if the issuance is not approved.

Generally vote FOR private placement proposals if:

- The issuance represents no more than 30 percent of the company's outstanding shares;
- The use of the proceeds from the issuance is disclosed.

RATIONALE: The Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) requires shareholder approval for private placements:

- For an aggregate number of listed securities issuable greater than 25 percent of the number of securities of the issuer which are listed and outstanding, on a non-diluted basis, prior to the date of closing of the transaction if the price per security is less than the market price; or

- That during any six month period are placed with insiders for listed securities or options, rights or other entitlements to listed securities greater than 10 percent of the number of the issuer’s listed and outstanding securities, on a non-diluted basis, prior to the date of closing of the first private placement to an insider during the six-month period.
- Allowable discounts for private placements not requiring shareholder approval are as follows:

Market Price	Maximum Discount
\$0.50 or less	25%
\$0.51 to \$2.00	20%
Above \$2.00	15%

The TSX will allow the price per listed security for a particular transaction to be less than that specified above provided that the listed issuer has received the approval of non-interested shareholders.



### Blank Cheque Preferred Stock

Generally vote AGAINST proposals to create unlimited blank cheque preferred shares or increase blank cheque preferred shares where:

- The shares carry unspecified rights, restrictions, and terms;
- The company does not specify any specific purpose for the increase in such shares.

Generally vote FOR proposals to create a reasonably limited<sup>11</sup> number of preferred shares where both of the following apply:

- The company has stated in writing that the shares will not be used for antitakeover purposes;
- The voting, conversion, and other rights, restrictions, and terms of such stock are specified in the articles and are reasonable.



### Dual-class Stock

Generally vote AGAINST proposals to create a new class of common stock that will create a class of common shareholders with diminished voting rights.

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<sup>11</sup> Institutional investors have indicated low tolerance for dilutive preferred share issuances, therefore if the authorized preferreds may be assigned conversion rights or voting rights when issued, the authorization should be limited to no more than 20% of the outstanding common shares as of record date. If the preferred share authorization proposal prohibits the assignment of conversion, voting or any other right attached to the that could dilute or negatively impact the common shares or the rights of common shareholders when such preferred shares are issued, a maximum authorization limit of 50% of the outstanding common shares as of record date may be supported taking into account the stated purpose for the authorization and other details of the proposal.

The following is an exceptional set of circumstances under which we would generally support a dual class capital structure. Such a structure must meet all of the following criteria:

- It is required due to foreign ownership restrictions and financing is required to be done out of country;
- It is not designed to preserve the voting power of an insider or significant shareholder;
- The subordinate class may elect some board nominees;
- There is a sunset provision; and
- There is a coattail provision that places a prohibition on any change in control transaction without approval of the subordinate class shareholders.



### Escrow Agreements

Generally vote AGAINST an amendment to an existing escrow agreement where the company is proposing to delete all performance-based release requirements in favour of time-driven release requirements.

RATIONALE: On going public, certain insiders of smaller issuers must place a portion of their shares in escrow. The primary objective of holding shares in escrow is to ensure that the key principals of a company continue their interest and involvement in the company for a reasonable period after public listing.



## 5. Compensation

### Executive Pay Evaluation

Evaluate executive pay and practices, as well as certain aspects of outside director compensation on a CASE-BY-CASE basis.

Vote AGAINST management say-on-pay (MSOP) proposals, WITHHOLD from compensation committee members (or in rare cases where the full board is deemed responsible, all directors including the CEO), and/or AGAINST an equity-based incentive plan proposal if:

- There is a misalignment between CEO pay and company performance (pay for performance);
- The company maintains problematic pay practices;
- The board exhibits poor communication and responsiveness to shareholders.

### Advisory Vote on Executive Compensation (Say-on-Pay) Management Proposals

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on management proposals for an advisory shareholder vote on executive compensation. Vote AGAINST these resolutions in cases where boards have failed to demonstrate good stewardship of investors' interests regarding executive compensation practices.

The following five global principles apply to all markets:

- Maintain appropriate pay-for-performance alignment with emphasis on long-term shareholder value: This principle encompasses overall executive pay practices, which must be designed to attract, retain, and appropriately motivate the key employees who drive shareholder value creation over the long term. It will take into consideration, among other factors: the linkage between pay and performance; the mix between fixed and variable pay; performance goals; and equity-based plan costs;
- Avoid arrangements that risk "pay for failure": This principle addresses the use and appropriateness of long or indefinite contracts, excessive severance packages, and guaranteed compensation;
- Maintain an independent and effective compensation committee: This principle promotes oversight of executive pay programs by directors with appropriate skills, knowledge, experience, and a sound process for compensation decision-making (e.g., including access to independent expertise and advice when needed);
- Provide shareholders with clear, comprehensive compensation disclosures: This principle underscores the importance of informative and timely disclosures that enable shareholders to evaluate executive pay practices fully and fairly;
- Avoid inappropriate pay to non-executive directors: This principle recognizes the interests of shareholders in ensuring that compensation to outside directors does not compromise their independence and ability to make appropriate judgments in overseeing managers' pay and performance. At the market level, it may incorporate a variety of generally accepted best practices.

#### Voting Alternatives

In general, the management say-on-pay (MSOP) ballot item is the primary focus of voting on executive pay practices--dissatisfaction with compensation practices can be expressed by voting against MSOP rather than withholding or voting against the compensation committee. However, if there is no MSOP on the ballot, then the negative vote will apply to members of the compensation committee. In addition, in egregious cases, or if the board fails to respond to concerns raised by a prior MSOP proposal, then vote withhold or against compensation committee members (or, if the full board is deemed accountable, all directors). If the negative factors involve equity-based compensation, then vote AGAINST an equity-based plan proposal presented for shareholder approval.

### **Pay for Performance:**

- Rationale for determining compensation (e.g., why certain elements and pay targets are used, how they are used in relation to the company's business strategy, and specific incentive plan goals, especially retrospective goals) and linkage of compensation to long-term performance;
- Evaluation of peer group benchmarking used to set target pay or award opportunities;
- Analysis of company performance and executive pay trends over time, taking into account ISS' Pay for Performance policy;
- Mix of fixed versus variable and performance versus non-performance-based pay.

### **Pay Practices:**

- Assessment of compensation components included in the Problematic Pay Practices policy such as: perks, severance packages, employee loans, supplemental executive pension plans, internal pay disparity, and equity plan practices (including option backdating, repricing, option exchanges, or cancellations/surrenders and re-grants etc.);
- Existence of measures that discourage excessive risk taking which include but are not limited to: clawbacks, holdbacks, stock ownership requirements, deferred compensation practices, etc.

### **Board Communications and Responsiveness:**

- Clarity of disclosure (e.g., whether the company's Form 51-102F6 disclosure provides timely, accurate, clear information about compensation practices in both tabular format and narrative discussion);
- Assessment of board's responsiveness to investor concerns on compensation issues (e.g., whether the company engaged with shareholders and / or responded to majority-supported shareholder proposals relating to executive pay).

## **Pay for Performance Evaluation**

This policy will be applied at all S&P/TSX Composite Index Companies and for all Management Say-On-Pay Resolutions.

On a CASE-BY-CASE basis, ISS will evaluate the alignment of the CEO's total compensation with company performance over time, focusing particularly on companies that have underperformed their peers over a sustained period. From a shareholder's perspective, performance is predominantly gauged by the company's share price performance over time. Even when financial or operational measures are used as the basis for incentive awards, the achievement related to these measures should ultimately translate into superior shareholder returns in the long term.

Generally vote AGAINST management say-on-pay (MSOP) proposals, and/or AGAINST/WITHHOLD on compensation committee members (or, in rare cases where the full board is deemed responsible, all directors including the CEO), and/or AGAINST an equity-based incentive plan proposal if:

- There is significant long-term misalignment between CEO pay and company performance.

The determination of long-term pay for performance alignment is a two step process: step one is a quantitative screen, which includes a relative and absolute analysis on pay for performance, and step two is a qualitative assessment of the CEO's pay and company performance. A P4P disconnect will be determined as follows:

### **Step I: Quantitative Screen**

#### Relative:

1. The Relative Degree of Misalignment (RDA) is the difference between the company's TSR rank and the CEO's total pay rank within a peer group<sup>12</sup>, measured over a one-year and three-year period;
2. Multiple of Median (MOM) is the total compensation in the last reported fiscal year relative to the median compensation of the peer group; and

#### Absolute:

3. The CEO pay-to-TSR Alignment (PTA) over the prior five fiscal years, i.e., the difference between absolute pay changes and absolute TSR changes during the prior five-year period (or less as company disclosure permits);

### **STEP II: Qualitative Analysis**

Companies identified by the methodology as having potential P4P misalignment will receive a qualitative assessment to determine the ultimate recommendation, considering a range of case-by-case factors which may include:

- The ratio of performance- to time-based equity grants and the overall mix of performance-based compensation relative to total compensation (considering whether the ratio is more than 50 percent); standard time-vested stock options and restricted shares are not considered to be performance-based for this consideration.
- The quality of disclosure and appropriateness of the performance measure(s) and goal(s) utilized, so that shareholders can assess the rigor of the performance program. The use of non-GAAP financial metrics also makes it challenging for shareholders to ascertain the rigor of the program as shareholders often cannot tell the type of adjustments being made and if the adjustments were made consistently. Complete and transparent disclosure helps shareholders to better understand the company's pay for performance linkage.
- The trend in other financial metrics, such as growth in revenue, earnings, return measures such as ROE, ROA, ROIC, etc.
- The trend considering prior years' P4P concern.
- Extraordinary situation due to a new CEO in the last reported FY.<sup>13</sup>
- Any other factors deemed relevant.

RATIONALE: The two part methodology is a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors that more effectively drive a Case-By-Case evaluation and will improve the analysis of: longer term compensation versus company performance and weight the longer term factors accordingly; absolute CEO pay levels; and, circumstances under which there is a change in

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12. The peer group is generally comprised of 11-24 companies that meet the following criteria:

- Revenue/assets between 0.25X and 4X the subject company's size;
- In the closest GICS industry group (8-digit, 6-digit, 4-digit, or 2-digit) to the subject company's GICS category; and
- Market Cap between 0.25X and 4X of the company's market cap expanded out to four market cap buckets (micro, small, mid, and large) as needed.

In exceptional cases, peer groups may be determined on a customized basis.

<sup>13</sup> Note that the longer-term emphasis of the new methodology alleviates concern about impact of CEO turnover. Thus, except in extenuating circumstances, a "new" CEO will not exempt the company from consideration under the methodology since the compensation committee is also accountable when a company is compelled to significantly "overpay" for new leadership due to prior poor performance.

CEO during the most recent year. Please refer to [Canadian Pay for Performance Evaluation FAQ](#) for a more detailed discussion of ISS' quantitative pay-for-performance screen and peer group construction methodology.

### **Problematic Pay Practices**

Generally, vote AGAINST management advisory vote proposals, and/or WITHHOLD from compensation committee members if the company has problematic compensation practices. In general, WITHHOLD on the entire slate if individual director elections are not permitted and the company has demonstrated problematic compensation practices. Also, generally vote AGAINST equity plans if the plan is a vehicle for problematic compensation practices.

Generally vote based on the preponderance of problematic elements; however, certain adverse practices may warrant Withhold or Against votes on a stand-alone basis in particularly egregious cases. The following practices, while not an exhaustive list, are examples of problematic compensation practices that may warrant a vote against or withholding votes:

- **Poor disclosure practices:**
  - General omission of timely information necessary to understand the rationale for compensation setting process and outcomes, or omission of material contracts, agreements or shareholder disclosure documents;
- **New CEO with overly generous new hire package:**
  - Excessive “make whole” provisions;
  - Any of the problematic pay practices listed in this policy;
- **Egregious employment contracts:**
  - Contracts containing multiyear guarantees for salary increases, bonuses and equity compensation;
- **Employee Loans:**
  - Interest free or low interest loans extended by the company to employees for the purpose of exercising options or acquiring equity to meet holding requirements or as compensation;
- **Excessive severance and/or change-in-control provisions:**
  - Inclusion of excessive change-in-control or severance payments, especially those with a multiple in excess of 2X cash pay (salary + bonus);
  - Severance paid for a “performance termination” (i.e., due to the executive’s failure to perform job functions at the appropriate level);
  - Employment or severance agreements that provide for modified single triggers, under which an executive may voluntarily leave following a change of control for any reason and still receive the change-in-control severance package;
  - Perquisites for former executives such as car allowance, personal use of corporate aircraft, or other inappropriate arrangements;
  - Change-in-control payouts without loss of job or substantial diminution of job duties (single-triggered);
- **Abnormally large bonus payouts without justifiable performance linkage or proper disclosure:**
  - Performance metrics that are changed, canceled, or replaced during the performance period without adequate explanation of the action and the link to performance;
- **Egregious pension/SERP (supplemental executive retirement plan) payouts:**
  - Inclusion of performance-based equity awards in the pension calculation;
  - Inclusion of target (unearned) or excessive bonus amounts in the pension calculation;
  - Addition of extra years service credited without compelling rationale;
  - No absolute limit on SERP annual pension benefits (any limit should ideally be expressed in \$ terms);
  - No reduction in benefits on a pro-rata basis in the case of early retirement;
- **Excessive perks:**
  - Overly generous cost and/or reimbursement of taxes for personal use of corporate aircraft, personal security systems maintenance and/or installation, car allowances, and/or other excessive arrangements relative to base salary;
- **Payment of dividends on performance awards:**
  - Performance award grants for which dividends are paid during the period before the performance criteria or goals have been achieved, and therefore not yet earned;

- **Problematic option granting practices:**
  - Backdating options, or retroactively setting a stock option's exercise price lower than the prevailing market value at the grant date;
  - Springloading options, or timing the grant of options;
  - Cancellation and subsequent re-grant of options;
- **Internal Pay Disparity:**
  - Excessive differential between CEO total pay and that of next highest-paid named executive officer (NEO);
- **Absence of pay practices that discourage excessive risk taking:**
  - These provisions include but are not limited to: clawbacks, holdbacks, stock ownership requirements, deferred bonus and equity award compensation practices, etc;
  - Financial institutions will be expected to have adopted or at least addressed the provisions listed above in accordance with the Financial Stability Board's (FSB) Compensation Practices and standards for financial companies;
- **Other excessive compensation payouts or problematic pay practices at the company.**

**RATIONALE:** Shareholders are not generally permitted to vote on provisions such as change-in-control provisions or the ability of an issuer to extend loans to employees to exercise stock options, for example, when reviewing equity based compensation plan proposals. Nor do shareholders in Canada have the ability to approve employment agreements, severance agreements, or pensions; however, these types of provisions, agreements, and contractual obligations continue to raise shareholder concerns. Therefore, ISS will review disclosure related to the various components of executive compensation and may recommend withholding from the compensation committee or against an equity plan proposal if compensation practices are unacceptable from a corporate governance perspective.

### **Board Communications and Responsiveness**

Consider the following on a Case-by-Case basis when evaluating ballot items related to executive pay:

- Poor disclosure practices, including: insufficient disclosure to explain the pay setting process for the CEO and how CEO pay is linked to company performance and shareholder return; lack of disclosure of performance metrics and their impact on incentive payouts; no disclosure of rationale related to the use of board discretion when compensation is increased or performance criteria or metrics are changed resulting in greater amounts paid than that supported by previously established goals.
- Board's responsiveness to investor input and engagement on compensation issues, for example: failure to respond to majority-supported shareholder proposals on executive pay topics, or failure to respond to concerns raised in connection with significant opposition to MSOP proposals.



## **Equity Compensation Plans**

Vote CASE-BY-CASE on equity-based compensation plans. Vote AGAINST the plan if any of the following factors applies:

- **Cost of Equity Plans:** The total cost of the company's equity plans is unreasonable;
  - **Dilution and Burn Rate:** *Dilution and burn rate are unreasonable, where the cost of the plan cannot be calculated due to lack of relevant historical data.*
- **Plan Amendment Provisions:** The provisions do not meet ISS guidelines as set out in this section.
- **Non-Employee Director Participation:** Participation of directors is discretionary or unreasonable.
- **Pay for performance:** There is a disconnect between CEO pay and the company's performance.
- **Repricing Stock Options:** The plan expressly permits the repricing of stock options without shareholder approval and the company has repriced options within the past three years.

- **Problematic Pay Practices:** The plan is a vehicle for problematic pay practices.

Each of these factors is examined below.

## Cost of Equity Plans

Generally vote AGAINST equity plans if the cost is unreasonable.

**RATIONALE:** Section 613 of the TSX Company Manual, requires shareholder approval for equity-based compensation arrangements under which securities listed on the TSX may be issued from treasury. Such approval is also required for equity-based plans that provide that awards issued may be settled either in treasury shares or cash. Cash only settled arrangements or those which are only funded by securities purchased on the secondary market are not subject to shareholder approval.

In addition, certain equity awards made outside of an equity plan, stock purchase plans using treasury shares where financial assistance or share matching is provided, and security purchases from treasury where financial assistance is provided, are also subject to shareholder approval.

Our methodology for reviewing share-based compensation plans primarily focuses on the transfer of shareholder wealth (the dollar cost of share plans to shareholders) instead of simply focusing on dilution. Using information disclosed by the company and assuming the broadest definition of plan terms, ISS will value equity-based awards using a binomial option pricing model. ISS will include in its analyses an estimated dollar cost for the proposed plan and all continuing plans. This total cost will be expressed as a percentage of market value (i.e. 200-day average share price times common shares outstanding). This result is tested for reasonableness by comparing the figure to an allowable cap derived from compensation plan costs of the top performing quartile of peer companies in each industry group (using Global Industry Classification Standard or "GICS" codes). Benchmark SVT levels for each industry are established based on these top performers' historic SVT. Regression analyses are run on 44 different variables including company size, market-based performance metrics, and accounting-based performance metrics in order to identify the variables most strongly correlated to SVT within each industry group. The benchmark industry SVT level is then adjusted upwards or downwards for the specific company by incorporating company-specific performance measures, size and cash compensation into the industry cap equations to arrive at the company's allowable cap.

Shareholder Value Transfer is reasonable if it falls below the company-specific allowable cap.

## Volatility and Stock Price Assumptions in Equity Plan Proposals (SVT)

The 200-day volatility and 200-day average stock price will be calculated and used for the shareholder value transfer policy.

## Dilution and Burn Rate Assessment

In cases where the cost of the plan cannot be calculated using the binomial model due to lack of historic data for a newly created or merged corporate entity, ISS will apply a dilution and burn rate analysis.

Generally vote AGAINST the proposed equity plan if:

- Dilution under all company plans would be more than 10 percent of the outstanding shares on a non-diluted basis, OR
- The historic burn rate for all company plans has been more than 2 percent per year (generally averaged over most recent three-year period). If equity has been granted as part of the resolution subject to shareholder approval and the grants made exceed 2 percent of the outstanding shares a vote AGAINST is warranted.



## Plan Amendment Provisions

Generally vote AGAINST the approval of proposed Amendment Procedures that do not require shareholder approval for the following types of amendments under any security based compensation arrangement, whether or not such approval is required under current regulatory rules:

- Any increase in the number of shares reserved for issuance under a plan or plan maximum;
- Any reduction in exercise price or cancellation and reissue of options or other entitlements;
- Any amendment that extends the term of options beyond the original expiry.
- Amendments to eligible participants that may permit the introduction or reintroduction of non-employee directors on a discretionary basis or amendments that increase limits previously imposed on non-employee director participation.
- Any amendment which would permit options granted under the Plan to be transferable or assignable other than for normal estate settlement purposes.
- Amendments to the plan amendment provisions.

To clarify application of the above criteria, all items will apply to all equity-based compensation arrangements under which treasury shares are reserved for grants of, for example: restricted stock, restricted share units, or deferred share units, except those items that specifically refer to option grants.

RATIONALE: In response to the rule changes affected by the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) related to Part IV, Subsection 613 of the TSX Company Manual and Staff Notices #2004-0002, and #2006-0001 which came into effect in 2007, ISS has revised its policy with regard to Equity Compensation Plan Amendment Procedures. This policy addresses the removal by the TSX of previously established requirements for shareholder approval of certain types of amendments to Security-Based Compensation Arrangements of its listed issuers. For the purposes of the rule change, security-based compensation arrangements include: stock option plans for the benefit of employees, insiders and service providers; individual stock options granted to any of these specified parties outside of a plan; stock purchase plans where the issuer provides financial assistance or where the employee contribution is matched in whole or in part by an issuer funded contribution; stock appreciation rights involving the issuance of treasury shares; any other compensation or incentive mechanism involving the issuance or potential issuance of securities of the listed issuer; security purchases from treasury by an employee, insider or service provider which is financially assisted by the issuer in any manner. Issuers had until June 30, 2007, to adopt the proper Amendment Procedure in their Plans. After such date, issuers who have “general amendment” provisions in their Plans are no longer able to make any amendments to their Plans without security holder approval, including amendments considered to be of a “housekeeping” nature until they have put a shareholder approved detailed Plan Amendment Provision in place.

According to the TSX Guide to Security-Based Compensation Arrangements, the following amendments will continue to be subject to security holder approval according to TSX rules notwithstanding the amendment provisions included in the plan:

- Any increase in the number of shares reserved for issuance under a plan or plan maximum;
- Any reduction in exercise price of options or other entitlements which benefits an insider<sup>14</sup>;
- Any amendment that extends the term of options beyond the original expiry and that benefits an insider of the issuer;

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<sup>14</sup> Security holder approval, excluding the votes of securities held by insiders benefiting from the amendment, is required for a reduction in the exercise price, purchase price, or an extension of the term of options or similar securities held by insiders. If an issuer cancels options or similar securities held by insiders and then reissues those securities under different terms, the TSX will consider this an amendment to those securities and will require security holder approval, unless the regrant occurs at least 3 months after the related cancellation. Staff Notice #2005-0001, Section 613 Security Based Compensation Arrangements, S.613(h)(iii) Amendments to Insider Securities.

- Changes to insider participation limits which result in the security holder approval to be required on a disinterested basis;
- Amendment provisions granting additional powers to the board of directors to amend the plan or entitlements without security holder approval.

The TSX has further clarified that shareholder approval is required for any amendment to the Plan Amendment Provision.

In addition, the TSX requires that the exercise price for any stock option granted under a security based compensation arrangement or otherwise, must not be lower than the market price of the securities at the time the option is granted.

Any proposal to increase the maximum number of shares reserved under a plan requires specific shareholder approval for the increase even if the plan includes a shareholder-approved general amendment procedure permitting increases to such maximum numbers.

Sections 613(d) and (g) set out a list of disclosure requirements in respect of materials that must be provided to security holders in meeting materials issued prior to a meeting at which the approval of any security based compensation arrangement is requested. The disclosure requirements include annual disclosure by listed issuers in their information circular or other annual disclosure document distributed to all security holders, the terms of any security based compensation arrangement as well as any amendments that were adopted in the most recently completed fiscal year, including whether or not security holder approval was obtained for the amendment. Staff Notice #2005-0001 goes on to clarify that such disclosure must be as of the date of the information circular containing the relevant disclosure and that issuers must update disclosure for the most recently completed fiscal year end to include grants, exercises, amendments, etc. which may occur after the fiscal year-end is completed, but prior to the filing of the information circular.

ISS has reiterated the need for shareholder approval for the amendments that currently still require shareholder approval by the TSX due to the ability of the TSX to change or eliminate these requirements at any time in future which we believe would not be in the best interests of shareholders or consistent with institutional investor proxy voting guidelines. Note however that from a corporate governance viewpoint, ISS does not support re-pricing of any outstanding options and does not limit this policy to only those options held by insiders. ISS has for many years recommended against any re-pricing of outstanding options. Our reasons are based on the original purpose of stock options as at-risk, incentive compensation that is meant to align the interests of option-holders with those of shareholders. The incentive value of stock options is diminished when the exercise price of out-of-the-money options can be adjusted downwards, and is not supportable when shareholders must suffer the consequences of a downturn in share price.

Discretionary participation by non-employee directors in equity compensation plans is unacceptable from a corporate governance and accountability viewpoint because administrators of the plan should not have the unrestricted ability to issue awards to themselves. Directors who are able to grant themselves equity awards without limit could find their independence compromised. Therefore, the inclusion of non-employee directors in management equity based compensation plans, while not preferable, must at a minimum be subject to shareholder-approved limits. Issuer discretion to change eligible participants may result in discretionary director participation. For clarification purposes, in keeping with ISS' policy regarding acceptable limits on non-employee director participation, if directors are included in an employee equity compensation plan according to a shareholder approved limit, then any amendment that would remove or increase such limit should be approved by shareholders.

The ability of plan participants to assign options by means of Option Transfer Programs or any other similar program which results in option holders receiving value for underwater options when shareholders must suffer the consequences of declining share prices does not align the interests of option holders with those of shareholders and removes the intended incentive to increase share price which was originally approved by shareholders.



## Non-Employee Director Participation

Vote AGAINST discretionary non-employee director participation in management equity compensation plans.

RATIONALE: Due to the continuing use of options in compensation plans in Canada, we have not opposed the use of options for outside directors per se, but have tried to address potential governance concerns by ensuring a reasonable limit on grants to independent non-employee directors who are charged with overseeing not only a company's compensation scheme but also corporate governance and long-term sustainability. To this end, ISS policy established an acceptable range for aggregate non-employee director option grants of 0.25 percent to 1 percent of the outstanding shares. A company was expected to fall within this range based on its size and stage of development, so that larger, more mature companies would be limited to something closer to 0.25 percent, and smaller companies with less cash and much lower share prices would be at the upper end of the range and have a larger pool of shares, options typically, from which to draw. This range was originally established based on an underlying policy that an upper limit of \$1 million worth of stock acquired by means of option grants for each director over the life of a typical 10-year plan seemed reasonable to prevent misalignment of purpose.

## Director Limit Considerations

Generally vote AGAINST an equity compensation plan proposal which provides that: (i) non-employee director participation exceeds our established 1 percent director pool limit, or (ii) non-employee director participation exceeds a \$100,000 per director per year maximum within the 0.25 percent to 1 percent of the outstanding shares range, taking into account:

- The overall mix of pay elements (cash vs. equity)
- The type of equity awards granted (deferred stock units, restricted stock, stock options)
- Director share holding requirements and how they are achieved (stock granted outright until a target is met vs. some "skin in the game" in the form of directors taking DSUs in lieu of cash fees)
- Rigor of mandatory and disclosed vesting requirements (i.e., vest when director leaves the board)
- Overall company performance as well as director pay levels vs. peers.

Generally vote AGAINST an equity plan proposal if the \$100,000 per director per year equity award maximum is exceeded.

Generally vote AGAINST individual equity grants to non-employee directors outside of an equity compensation plan if:

- The director's annual grant would exceed the above per director maximum other than a reasonable one-time grant upon joining the board.

RATIONALE: ISS will assess the non-employee director component (or reserve) of equity-based compensation plans based on the ISS compensation model (binomial) award value that is used for employee compensation purposes. This will be consistent with our methodology for establishing the value of awards for employee participants and the plan generally.

The proposed maximum for non-employee director equity grants including options will then factor in: the difference between options and full value awards (i.e., time-vesting restricted stock); option terms (five, seven, or 10 years usually); share price volatility; expected forfeiture rate; and any other criteria factored into a binomial type evaluation.

Using the binomial equity award value, we have established a maximum non-employee director participation limit of the lesser of: (i) an aggregate reserve of 1 percent of the shares outstanding for all non-executive directors; and (ii) an annual equity award value of \$100,000 per director. Equity award refers to options, restricted stock, deferred stock units, or any

other equity grant made outside of or under an equity compensation plan, other than shares granted or taken in lieu of cash fees.

However, there may be director pay structures that have addressed institutional investor concerns so that directors truly have substantial “at risk” pay that achieves alignment of directors’ interests closely with those of shareholders, therefore some limited flexibility in implementing this guideline is necessary.



## Repricing Options

Generally vote AGAINST an equity-based compensation plan proposal if the plan expressly permits the repricing of options without shareholder approval and the company has repriced options within the past three years.



## Repricing Proposals

Generally vote AGAINST proposals to reprice outstanding options, unless:

Repricing is part of a broader plan amendment that substantially improves the plan and provided that the following conditions are met:

- A value-for-value exchange is proposed;
- The five top paid officers and all non-employee directors are excluded;
- Options exercised do not go back into the plan OR the company commits to an annual burn rate cap.

**RATIONALE:** Security Based Compensation Arrangements Section 613(h)(iii) of the TSX Company Manual requires security holder approval (excluding the votes of securities held directly or indirectly by insiders benefiting from the amendment) for a reduction in the exercise price or purchase price or an extension of the term of an award under a security based compensation arrangement benefiting an insider of the issuer notwithstanding that the compensation plan may have been approved by security holders.

ISS has long opposed option repricing and believes that any proposal to reduce the price of outstanding options including those held by non-insiders, should be approved by shareholders before being implemented (see discussion under Plan Amendment Provisions). Market deterioration, in and of itself, is not an acceptable reason for companies to reprice stock options and/or reset goals under performance plans.

The extension of option terms is also unacceptable. Options are not meant to be a no-risk proposition and may lose their incentive value if the term can be extended when the share price dips below the exercise price. Shareholders approve option grants on the basis that recipients have a finite period during which to increase shareholder value, typically five to ten years. As a company would not shorten the term of an option to rein in compensation during profitable bull market runs, it is not expected to extend the term during a market downturn when shareholders must suffer a decrease in shareholder value.



## Other Compensation Plans

### Employee Stock Purchase Plans (ESPPs, ESOPs)

Generally vote FOR broadly based (preferably all employees of the company with the exclusion of individuals with 5 percent or more beneficial ownership of the company) employee stock purchase plans where the following apply:

- Reasonable limit on employee contribution (may be expressed as a fixed dollar amount or as a percentage of base salary excluding bonus, commissions and special compensation);
- Employer contribution of up to 25 percent of employee contribution and no purchase price discount or employer contribution of more than 25 percent of employee contribution and SVT cost of the company's equity plans is within the allowable cap for the company;
- Purchase price is at least 80 percent of fair market value with no employer contribution;
- Potential dilution together with all other equity-based plans is 10 percent of outstanding common shares or less; and
- The Plan Amendment Provision requires shareholder approval for amendments to:
  - The number of shares reserved for the plan;
  - The allowable purchase price discount;
  - The employer matching contribution amount.

Treasury funded ESPPs, as well as market purchase funded ESPPs requesting shareholder approval, will be considered to be incentive based compensation if the employer match is greater than 25 percent of the employee contribution. In this case, the plan will be run through the ISS compensation model to assess the Shareholder Value Transfer (SVT) cost of the plan together with the company's other equity-based compensation plans.

Eligibility and administration are also key factors in determining the acceptability of an ESPP/ESOP plan.

ISS will also take into account other compensation and benefit programs, in particular pensions.



### Deferred Share Unit Plans

Generally vote FOR Deferred Compensation Plans if:

- Potential dilution together with all other equity-based compensation is 10 percent of the outstanding common shares or less.

Other elements of director compensation to evaluate in conjunction with deferred share units include:

- Director stock ownership guidelines of a minimum of three times annual cash retainer
- Vesting schedule or mandatory deferral period which requires that shares in payment of deferred units may not be paid out until the end of three years
- The mix of remuneration between cash and equity
- Other forms of equity-based compensation, i.e. stock options, restricted stock.

RATIONALE: Deferred compensation plans generally encourage a sense of ownership in the company. These types of deferred compensation arrangements are usually designed to compensate outside directors by allowing them the

opportunity to take all or a portion of their annual retainer in the form of deferred units, the payment of which is postponed to some future time, typically retirement or termination of directorship and may be in cash and/or stock.

A DSU plan only requires shareholder approval if it reserves treasury shares. However, a number of companies continue to request shareholder approval for DSU plans funded by shares purchased in the open market. This type of plan will be evaluated on a qualitative basis in the same manner that ESPPs (see above) are evaluated. Eligibility and administration are key factors in determining the acceptability of such plans.

### Treasury Funded Plans

Deferred share units awarded under any equity compensation plan where: i) the authorization of treasury shares for issuance is in payment of the DSUs; and ii) the DSU grants are not in-lieu of cash, would be evaluated by running the compensation model.



## Shareholder Proposals on Compensation

Vote on a CASE-BY-CASE basis for shareholder proposals targeting executive and director pay, taking into account:

- The target company's performance, absolute and relative pay levels as well as the wording of the proposal itself.

Generally vote FOR shareholder proposals requesting that the exercise of some, but not all stock options be tied to the achievement of performance hurdles.



## Shareholder Advisory Vote Proposals

Generally vote FOR shareholder proposals requesting the adoption of a non-binding advisory shareholder vote to ratify the report of the compensation committee.

Generally vote AGAINST shareholder proposals requesting a binding vote on executive or director compensation as being overly prescriptive and which may lead to shareholder micro-management of compensation issues that are more appropriately within the purview of the compensation committee of the board of directors.

**RATIONALE:** Based on the experience of other global markets where advisory votes are permitted, the consensus view is that advisory votes serve as a catalyst for dialogue between investors and public issuers on questionable or contentious compensation practices and can lead to a higher level of board accountability, a stronger link between pay and performance, significantly improved disclosure, and in some cases a noticed deceleration in the rate of increase in executive compensation overall.



## Supplemental Executive Retirement Plans (SERPS) Proposals

Generally vote AGAINST shareholder proposals requesting the exclusion of bonus amounts and extra service credits to determine SERP payouts, unless the company's SERP disclosure includes the following problematic pay practices:

- Inclusion of equity-based compensation in the pension calculation;
- Inclusion of target (unearned) or excessive bonus amounts in the pension calculation;
- Addition of extra years service credited in other than exceptional circumstances and without compelling rationale;
- No absolute limit on SERP annual pension benefits (ideally expressed in money terms);
- No reduction in benefits on a pro-rata basis in the case of early retirement.

In addition, consideration will also be given to the extent to which executive compensation is performance driven and “at risk,” as well as whether bonus payouts can exceed 100 percent of base salary.

**RATIONALE:** The inclusion of bonus and incentive compensation amounts along with base salary as the basis for calculating supplemental pension benefits is generally viewed as an unacceptable market practice. Proposals that aim to limit excessive pension payments for executives are laudable. The inclusion of variable compensation or other enhancements under SERP provisions can significantly drive up the cost of such plans, a cost that is ultimately absorbed by the company and its shareholders.

Investor pressure to structure executive compensation so that the majority is “at risk” has driven down base salary and therefore it may be reasonable in certain cases to include short-term cash bonus amounts in the bonus calculation. Therefore, ISS will assess limits imposed on extra service credits and the overall mix of guaranteed (salary) and at risk (performance driven incentive compensation) executive compensation, as well as the size of potential cash bonus amounts, when determining vote recommendations on SERP shareholder proposals asking for elimination of these elements in SERP calculations. Given the conservative general market practice in this regard, support for such proposals should be limited to those companies that exceed standard market practice thus qualifying as problematic pay practices as outlined above.



## 6. Social/Environmental Issues

### Global Approach

Issues covered under the policy include a wide range of topics, including consumer and product safety, environment and energy, labor standards and human rights, workplace and board diversity, and corporate political issues. While a variety of factors goes into each analysis, the overall principle guiding all vote recommendations focuses on how the proposal may enhance or protect shareholder value in either the short term or long term.

Generally vote CASE-BY-CASE, taking into consideration whether implementation of the proposal is likely to enhance or protect shareholder value, and in addition the following will be considered:

- If the issues presented in the proposal are more appropriately or effectively dealt with through legislation or government regulation;
- If the company has already responded in an appropriate and sufficient manner to the issue(s) raised in the proposal;
- Whether the proposal's request is unduly burdensome (scope, timeframe, or cost) or overly prescriptive;
- The company's approach compared with any industry standard practices for addressing the issue(s) raised by the proposal;
- If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether or not reasonable and sufficient information is currently available to shareholders from the company or from other publicly available sources; and
- If the proposal requests increased disclosure or greater transparency, whether or not implementation would reveal proprietary or confidential information that could place the company at a competitive disadvantage.

**RATIONALE:** This policy update codifies the overarching principles that are applied to all markets, globally, and clarifies the factors that ISS considers in its case-by-case evaluation of environmental and social shareholder proposals. In markets where shareholder proposals on specific environment and social issues are routinely or frequently observed on company ballots, ISS has more nuanced policies that stem from these principles to address those issues.



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