

Factors That May Affect Future Results

As noted in the above Caution Regarding Forward-Looking Statements, all forward-looking statements and information, by their nature, are subject to inherent risks and uncertainties, general and specific, which may cause our actual results to differ materially from the expectations expressed in the forward-looking statements. Some of these risks and uncertainties are discussed in this section.

General Economic and Business Conditions in the Countries in which We Conduct Business

We conduct business in Canada, the United States and other countries. Factors such as interest rates, foreign exchange rates, consumer spending, business investment, government spending, the health of capital markets, the rate of inflation and the threat of terrorism affect the business and economic environments in which we operate. Therefore, the amount of business we conduct in a specific geographic region and the local economic and business conditions may have an effect on our revenues and earnings. For example, a regional economic decline may result in an increase in credit losses, a decrease in loan growth and reduced capital markets activity.

Currency Rates

The Canadian dollar equivalent of our revenues and expenses denominated in currencies other than the Canadian dollar is subject to fluctuations in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to such currencies. Such fluctuations may affect our overall business and financial results. Our most significant exposure is to fluctuations in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar due to the size of our operations in the United States. The recent increase in value of the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar has affected our results in the past two years. Further appreciation of the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar would reduce the translated value of U.S.-dollar-denominated revenues, expenses and earnings relative to prior periods. Refer to the Foreign Exchange section on page 35 and the discussion of Market Risk on pages 69 to 71 for a more complete discussion of our foreign exchange risk exposures.

Monetary Policy

Bond and money market expectations about inflation and central bank monetary policy have an impact on the level of interest rates. Changes in market expectations and monetary policy are difficult to anticipate and predict. Fluctuations in interest rates that result from these changes can have an impact on our earnings. Refer to the discussion of Market Risk on pages 69 to 71 for a more complete discussion of our interest rate risk exposures.

Level of Competition

The level of competition among financial services companies is high. Furthermore, non-financial companies are increasingly offering services traditionally provided by banks. Customer loyalty and retention can be influenced by a number of factors, including service levels, prices for products or services, our reputation and the actions of our competitors. Loss of market share could adversely affect our earnings.

Changes in Laws and Regulations

Regulations are in place to protect our clients, investors and the public interest. Changes in laws and regulations, including how they are interpreted and enforced, could adversely affect our earnings by allowing more competition for our products and services and by increasing the costs of compliance. In addition, our failure to comply with laws and regulations could result in sanctions and financial penalties that could adversely affect our reputation and earnings.

Judicial or Regulatory Judgments and Legal Proceedings

We take what we believe to be reasonable measures designed to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations of the jurisdictions in which we conduct business. However, there can be no assurance that we will always be in compliance or be deemed to be in compliance. As a result, it is possible that we could receive a judicial or regulatory judgment or decision which results in fines, damages or other costs that would have a negative impact on earnings and damage our reputation. We are also subject to litigation arising in the ordinary course of our business.

The unfavourable resolution of any litigation could have a material adverse effect on our financial results. Damage to our reputation could also result, harming our future business prospects. Information about legal proceedings we currently face is provided in Note 27 on page 128 of the financial statements.

Accuracy and Completeness of Customer and Counterparty Information

When deciding to extend credit or enter into other transactions with customers and counterparties, we may rely on information provided by or on behalf of those customers and counterparties, including audited financial statements and other financial information. We also may rely on representations made by customers and counterparties that the information they provide is accurate and complete. Our financial results could be adversely affected if the financial statements or other financial information provided by customers and counterparties is materially misleading.

Execution of Strategic Plans

Our financial performance is influenced by our ability to execute strategic plans developed by management. If these strategic plans do not meet with success or there is a change in strategic plans, our earnings could grow at a slower pace or decline.

Acquisitions

We perform thorough due diligence before completing an acquisition. However, it is possible that we might make an acquisition that does not subsequently perform in line with our financial or strategic objectives. Higher than anticipated integration costs and failure to realize expected cost savings could adversely affect our earnings after an acquisition. Our post-acquisition performance is also contingent on retaining the clients and key employees of acquired companies, and there can be no assurance that we will always succeed in doing so.

Critical Accounting Estimates

We prepare our financial statements in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The application of GAAP requires that management make significant judgments and estimates that can affect when certain assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses are recorded in our financial statements and their recorded values. In making these judgments and estimates, we rely on the best information available at the time. However, it is possible that circumstances may change or new information may become available. Our financial results would be affected in the period in which any new circumstances or information became apparent, and the amount of the impact could be significant. More information is included in the discussion of Critical Accounting Estimates on page 62.

Operational and Infrastructure Risks

We are exposed to many types of operational risk that affect all large corporations. Such risks include the risk of fraud by employees or others, unauthorized transactions by employees, and operational or human error. We also face the risk that computer or telecommunications systems could fail, despite our efforts to maintain these systems in good working order. Given the high volume of transactions we process on a daily basis, certain errors may be repeated or compounded before they are discovered and successfully rectified. Shortcomings or failures of our internal processes, employees or systems, including any of our financial, accounting or other data processing systems, could lead to financial loss and damage to our reputation. In addition, despite the contingency plans we have in place, our ability to conduct business may be adversely affected by a disruption in the infrastructure that supports our operations and the communities in which we do business.

Other Factors

Other factors beyond our control that may affect our future results are noted in the Caution Regarding Forward-Looking Statements on page 28. Additional factors, including credit and counterparty, market, liquidity and funding, operational, business reputation and other risks, are discussed in the Enterprise-Wide Risk Management section starting on page 66.

We caution that the preceding discussion of factors that may affect future results is not exhaustive. When relying on forward-looking statements to make decisions with respect to BMO, investors and others should carefully consider these factors, as well as other uncertainties, potential events and industry and company-specific factors that may adversely affect future results. We do not undertake to update any forward-looking statements, written or oral, that may be made from time to time by us or on our behalf.