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NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

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OUR VIEWS ON ECONOMIC AND OTHER EVENTS AND THEIR EXPECTED IMPACT ON INVESTMENTS

APRIL 21, 2025

OWNER OPERATED COMPANIES

GO TO PORTLAND 15 OF 15 ALTERNATIVE FUND[1]

PORTLAND 15 OF 15 ALTERNATIVE FUND[1] COMPANY NEWS

Reliance Industries Ltd. (Reliance) – Reliance is planning to raise funds through the issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs), as per a recent company filing. This move is part of the company's strategy to support ongoing business growth and strengthen its balance sheet. The fundraising will be discussed in the board meeting scheduled for Friday, April 25, 2025. While the exact amount to be raised hasn't been disclosed, the company said the NCDs will be listed and may be issued as secured or unsecured, redeemable instruments through private placement in one or more tranches. Besides the fundraising proposal, the board will review and approve the standalone and consolidated audited financial results for the quarter and year ending March 31, 2025. Additionally, the board is expected to recommend a dividend on equity shares for the financial year.

Reliance – Mobile recharges are reportedly going to get costlier as Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. (Jio), Bharti Airtel Ltd. (Airtel), and Vodafone Idea Ltd. (Vi), are preparing for a major hike in tariff plans in the coming months. According to reports, Jio, Vi, and Airtel are likely to increase the prices of their recharge plans in the months ahead. Reports say that the planned tariff hike is part of a long-term strategy by private telecom providers to earn more revenue which will enable them to further strengthen their network infrastructure, especially on the 5G (Fifth Generation) front. According to industry insiders, several reasons could be driving the tariff hike by telcos, including the push to expand their 5G network in more parts of the country, and the high cost of purchasing spectrum and strengthening their existing network infrastructure. Notably, all private players, including Jio had significantly hiked their mobile tariffs in mid 2024.

Reliance - Every so often, the global telecom industry is rocked by a mega event, some disfiguring convulsion that tears through and leaves it permanently changed. The biggest this century was probably triggered on June 27, 2007, when Steve Jobs held up a thin rectangular slab of glass and metal, small enough to cradle in the palm of a hand. But in the world of networks, there aren't many that beat the launch in India of 4G (Fourth Generation) services on September 4, 2016, by a new entrant calling itself Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. (Jio). What's sometimes left out of the Jio story is that chunks of the technology powering its 4G and 5G network came from Jio itself. And those same technologies, including critical elements of the 5G core and radio access network (RAN), might soon enter use outside India as Jio embraces a telecom vendor role. Nearly all telcos worldwide take the mobile "core," the control center of the network, from one of the established product vendors in the sector. These days, the main ones include Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd (Huawei) and Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation (ZTE), from China, and Telefonaktiebolaget LM Ericsson (Ericsson) and Nokia Corporation (Nokia), from Europe. Mavenir Systems, Inc (Mavenir), a US software company, has also enjoyed recent success in this market. And Cisco Systems, Inc. (Cisco) provides core network technology to some telcos. But when Jio came to review its options for a 5G core about three years ago, it was not overly impressed with anything on offer. "Except for Huawei and ZTE, we evaluated every other 5G core in the market, and we looked at the gap that existed for us to launch 5G standalone scalable and with the desired functionality. So, we accelerated our development of 5G SA core, and we've built today a 5G SA core that is over 50% of our existing traffic." said Mathew Oommen, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Jio. The standalone (SA) he refers to is, of course, the version of 5G that can dispense with the old 4G core and bring some entirely new features. Within the next few months, some 200 million Jio customers in India will be handled by that homegrown core, proving it can be scaled to cope with traffic volumes much greater than networks in most other countries would see. During the 4G era, Jio hired Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. (Samsung) to provide the traditional RAN equipment for its network. In 5G, it has pivoted largely to Ericsson and Nokia, rolling out equipment at lightning-fast pace. But Jio's website also advertises its own 5G base stations, combining the central and distributed units (CUs and DUs) needed for RAN compute with a radio unit (RU) engineered to support massive Multiple Input Multiple Output (MIMO), an advanced, antenna-rich 5G technology. It has deployed its 5G RAN technology at about 10,000 sites, according to a reliable source.

The deployment of its own RAN has allowed Jio to work on integration challenges ahead of selling any of its products abroad.

Ares Management Corporation (Ares) – Canada Pension Plan Investments (CPP Investments) has completed the sale of a diversified portfolio of 25 limited partnership interests in North American and European buyout funds to Ares's Private Equity Secondaries funds and CVC Secondary Partners. The transaction, finalized on March 31, 2025, generated net proceeds of approximately C$1.2 billion for CPP Investments after costs and adjustments. The sale is part of CPP Investments' active portfolio management strategy, aimed at optimizing portfolio construction through systematic buying and selling in the secondaries market. The divested interests span primary and secondary investments made over the past decade. As of December 31, 2024, CPP Investments had $151.2 billion in net private equity investments, with a global focus on long-term value creation through fund commitments, secondaries, and direct investments.

Ares – Kodiak Robotics Inc. (Kodiak), a U.S.-based autonomous truck technology firm, announced plans to go public later in 2025 through a merger with Ares Acquisition Corp II, a Special Purpose Acquisition Company (SPAC), in a deal valuing Kodiak at US$2.5 billion. The merged entity will be named Kodiak AI and is expected to receive approximately $551 million in trust cash at closing, along with over $110 million in additional investments from backers including Soros Fund Management LLC, ARK Investment Management LLC, and Ares. Founded in 2018, Kodiak develops self-driving technology for commercial trucks and operates autonomous freight services, particularly in the Permian Basin. It recently delivered its first "RoboTrucks" to Atlas Energy Solutions Inc., which has ordered 100 vehicles. Kodiak's software has already logged more than 2.6 million real-world miles. Amid rising logistics demands and driver shortages, Kodiak sees public listing as a way to scale its technology, broaden its customer base, and expand partnerships.

Brookfield Asset Management Ltd. (Brookfield) – has announced the formation of its new Investment Solutions Group (ISG), appointing industry veteran Alper Daglioglu to lead the initiative. Daglioglu, formerly of Morgan Stanley, joins Brookfield as Managing Partner and Head of ISG, while Howard Marks, Co-Chairman of Oaktree Capital Management, Inc. (Oaktree) will serve as Chair. The ISG will focus on providing tailored, multi-asset portfolio solutions to institutional investors, private wealth clients, and family offices. It will draw on Brookfield's global investment platform spanning infrastructure, renewable power, real estate, private equity, and credit, as well as partnerships with firms like Oaktree, Castlelake, L.P., Primary Wave Music Publishing, LLC, and Pinegrove Capital Partners, LLC. The move aligns with a growing industry trend of clients seeking strategic partnerships with fewer, more diversified managers. Brookfield aims to meet this demand by offering integrated investment solutions across asset classes.

LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE (LVMH)– CEO Bernard Arnault urged European governments to de-escalate trade tensions with the United States following President Donald Trump's tariff threats, warning that failure to reach a resolution would be "Brussels' fault." Speaking at LVMH's annual shareholder meeting, Arnault said trade disputes were fuelling market volatility and could hurt LVMH's business. The U.S. is considering tariffs of up to 20% on European fashion and 31% on Swiss watches, though most tariffs have been temporarily paused for 90 days. To reduce exposure to U.S. tariffs, Arnault said LVMH might expand production in the U.S., which already accounts for a quarter of its sales.

LVMH shareholders voted to extend the maximum age limit for the company's chairman and CEO to 85, allowing 76-year-old Bernard Arnault to remain at the helm of the world's largest luxury group. The resolution passed with 99.18% support, following a previous age cap increase from 75 to 80 in 2022. Arnault, who has led LVMH since 1989 and built its empire through acquisitions, has not publicly named a successor. Speculation continues around which of his five children—each holding senior roles within the company—may eventually take over. His eldest children, Delphine and Antoine, are from his first marriage, while Alexandre, Frédéric, and Jean are from his current marriage to pianist Hélène Mercier.

LVMH reported a 3% decline in first quarter (Q1) revenue, falling short of analysts' expectations for 2% growth, as U.S. consumers pulled back on purchases of beauty products and alcohol, and demand in China remained weak. Finance chief Cécile Cabanis attributed the U.S. sales drop primarily to Sephora SA's underperformance and intense price competition from Amazon.com Inc. Despite ongoing strength in LVMH's high-end fashion and leather goods brands, that division posted a 5% sales decline—well below expectations—while wines and spirits saw a 9% drop. Luxury players had been banking on strong demand from wealthy Americans to offset sluggish Chinese sales, but with growing fears of a U.S. recession and ongoing trade tensions driven by President Trump's tariffs, the sector now faces mounting headwinds. Tariffs of up to 20% on European fashion and 31% on Swiss watches remain a threat, though a temporary 90-day pause is in place. Cabanis said LVMH is still evaluating a potential expansion of U.S. manufacturing, but noted the group's Texas site has been a consistent underperformer. Total Q1 sales were €20.3 billion (US$23.08 billion).

LIFE SCIENCES

GO TO PORTLAND LIFE SCIENCES ALTERNATIVE FUND[1]

BeOne Medicines Ltd. (BeOne) – (formerly BeiGene, Ltd.) – and nference, Inc., (nference) have announced a collaboration aimed at advancing the understanding of B-cell cancers, particularly chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) and small lymphocytic lymphoma (SLL). The partnership will leverage nference's Agentic AI platform to analyze real-world data from over 700 patient charts, focusing on treatment patterns and outcomes for these conditions. The goal is to generate actionable insights that can improve clinical decision-making and ultimately lead to more personalized and effective treatments for patients with B-cell malignancies.

Clarity Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (Clarity) – has received an AUD$11.1 million R&D (Research and Development) Tax Incentive refund from the Australian Federal Government. With approximately $106 million in cash, Clarity plans to prioritize key clinical-stage assets, including 64/67Cu-SAR-bisPSMA for prostate cancer diagnostics and therapy, and 64Cu-SARTATE for neuroendocrine tumors (NETs). The company will close two trials — CL04 (paediatric neuroblastoma) and COMBAT (low PSMA mCRPC) — to focus resources on higher-value projects with faster commercial potential, while continuing its Discovery Program.

Clarity - has signed a commercial-scale supply agreement with Nusano, Inc. (Nusano) for copper-64 (^{64}Cu), a key diagnostic isotope used in Clarity's radiopharmaceuticals. Nusano's new Utah-based facility, with potential of producing over 1,000 Ci (37,000 GBq) of ^{64}Cu daily, will support Clarity's growing pipeline and upcoming commercialization efforts in the U.S. This deal strengthens Clarity's supply chain ahead of New Drug Application filings and enhances its ability to deliver flexible, on-demand diagnostics with longer shelf-lives compared to current market options. Nusano also plans to produce other key isotopes, including ^{66}Cu and actinium-225, used in Clarity's theranostic products.

Clarity - has commenced the Cohort Expansion Phase (Phase II) of its SECuRE trial by treating the first participant with 8 GBq of 67Cu-SAR-bisPSMA, following successful completion of the Dose Escalation Phase. This phase will include up to 24 participants, some of whom will receive combination therapy with enzalutamide. Early results show favorable PSA response rates.

RadNet Inc. (RadNet) – announced it will acquire iCAD Inc. (iCAD) in an all-stock deal valued at approximately US$103 million, representing a 98% premium over iCAD's recent stock price. This acquisition will integrate iCAD into RadNet's DeepHealth, Inc. (DeepHealth) subsidiary, combining their AI-powered breast cancer detection solutions. iCAD's global reach—spanning over 1,500 healthcare provider locations in more than 50 countries—will significantly boost DeepHealth's commercial footprint.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Cameco Corporation (Cameco) – Westinghouse Electric Company LLC (Westinghouse) and the University of Saskatchewan (USask) have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to support the development and potential deployment of Westinghouse's eVinci® microreactor in Saskatchewan. The collaboration will focus on technical development, deployment analysis, and exploring applications in remote communities. USask, with expertise from its School of Environment and Sustainability and College of Engineering, is conducting an economic analysis on the reactor's benefits, including impacts on community growth, health, and energy resilience. Results are expected in the coming months. Both partners view the initiative as a key step toward advancing clean, secure, and reliable energy solutions in Canada.

Cameco – Westinghouse and McMaster University (McMaster) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Master Services Agreement (MSA) to advance R&D for the eVinci® microreactor. The partnership will focus on materials testing, irradiation studies, and supporting the reactor's path to commercialization. McMaster, known for its nuclear research expertise, is developing a high-temperature test rig to provide critical data for design validation and licensing. The collaboration builds on a 2022 partnership and supports both McMaster's net-zero goals and the potential for clean energy in remote areas.

Plug Power Inc. (Plug Power) – and Olin Corporation's (Olin) joint venture, Hidrogenii, has commissioned a 15 metric-ton-per-day (TPD) hydrogen liquefaction plant in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, enhancing the U.S. hydrogen supply chain. The facility will liquefy hydrogen produced by Olin for shipment across the U.S., boosting Plug Power's total hydrogen production capacity to 40 TPD.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Pope Francis, known for his non-traditional papacy dies today aged 88. After a period of hospitalization, he met King Charles 12 days ago and emerged on Easter Sunday to make his last public appearance, beforehand he met briefly with U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

US Housing starts fell much more than expected, by 11.4% to 1.32 million annualized in March. Home building activity hasn't gained any traction over the past couple years amid high input prices, elevated borrowing costs, and downbeat sentiment, with tariffs now adding to the multitude of headwinds. Meanwhile, building permits, a good proxy for future home construction, surprisingly climbed for the first time in four months, up 1.6% to 1.48 million annualized. Still, the gauge has essentially gone nowhere for the past couple of years. Overall, the figures suggest residential construction will continue to stay lacklustre amid issues on both the demand and supply side. Potential buyers are reluctant to make a purchase due to elevated mortgage rates and the poorest affordability in decades, while builders are also contending with challenges of their own.

U.S. Retail Sales: Tariff front-running clearly helped lift retail sales to a whole new level of growth last month. The monthly increase was the best since January 2023. Total U.S. retail sales jumped 1.4% in March, in-line with consensus forecasts. Retail sales excluding autos and gas stations increased a better than expected 0.8%. The retail sales control group (ex. autos, gasoline, building materials, and food services), used to help estimate real consumer spending in the GDP report, came in at a solid 0.4%, though that was somewhat below the consensus forecast of 0.6%. Not to worry, the February control group sales were revised up significantly to 1.3% from a previously reported 1.0%. Motor vehicle sales and parts were a huge driver of the sales gains last month as expected, increasing 5.3% as consumers raced to beat higher import tariffs on cars and trucks. Sales gains were robust for a number of other categories such as building material and garden supply stores (+3.3%), sporting goods stores (+2.4%), and food service and drinking places (+1.8%). Sales declines occurred in furniture and home furnishing stores (-0.7%), department stores (-0.3%), and gasoline stations (-2.5%) as fuel prices tumbled.

Canada's Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 0.31% in March, below the consensus estimate of +0.7% (in non-seasonally adjusted terms). This was the first full month without the temporary goods and services tax (GST) holiday and the monthly inflation print was upwardly affected by the discontinuation. In seasonally adjusted terms, headline prices were flat (0.0%) following a 0.62% uptick in February. This translated to an annual inflation rate of 2.3%, down three ticks from the prior 2.6% print, and four ticks below the median estimate. Prices in March increased in 4 of the 8 categories surveyed, starting with alcoholic beverages/tobacco (+2.1%), food (+1.9%), followed by health/personal care (+0.3%), and shelter (+0.2%). Prices were flat for clothing/footwear. On the flip side, prices decreased for recreation/education (-2.1%), transportation (-0.9%), and household ops/furnishings (-0.2%). On a regional perspective, the annual inflation data was above the national average in Manitoba (+3.0%), Alberta (+2.8%), B.C. (+2.6%) and Saskatchewan (+2.5%). It was in-line for Ontario (+2.3%) while printing below the mark in Quebec (+1.9%). In summary the CPI data for March showed a respite from inflationary pressures in the country, with annual inflation coming in 0.4% below consensus expectations in March and despite the end of the GST holiday which had an upward impact on prices this month. Excluding indirect taxes, prices fell by 0.4% after seasonal adjustment, the most pronounced decline since April 2020 when the economy was put on hold due to the pandemic.

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS

People's Bank of China left its benchmark lending rate for the sixth consecutive month, with the one-year loan prime rate staying at 3.1% and the five-year loan prime rate at 3.6%. Chinese monetary policymakers continue to support exchange rate stability amidst the heightened Sino-US trade tensions. The Chinese central government also announced it increased budgetary expenditure to CNY 9.26 trillion in Q1 2025, hoping to help offset domestic macroeconomic headwinds, including deflationary pressure, property sector stagnation and tariff-induced external shocks. China is using both monetary and fiscal tools to sustain aggregate demand.

European Central Bank (ECB) cut its main policy rates by 25 basis points (bps), leaving the deposit facility at 2.25%, the refinancing rate at 2.40%, and the marginal lending facility to 2.65%. The decision was unanimous, driven by exceptional uncertainty, which comes from the negative demand shock. The "cloud of uncertainty" has the potential to impact households' and firms' decisions to spend and invest and the stronger Euro could slow exports. President Lagarde also pointed out the possibility of exports being "re-routed" to Europe, by markets that are "subject to much higher tariffs" (i.e. China).

US interest rates: following Federal Reserve Chairman Powell's cautionary comments last week POTUS wrote @realDonaldTrump: The ECB is expected to cut interest rates for the 7th time, and yet, "Too Late" Jerome Powell of the Fed, who is always TOO LATE AND WRONG, yesterday issued a report which was another, and typical, complete "mess!" Oil prices are down, groceries (even eggs!) are down, and the USA is getting RICH ON TARIFFS. Too Late should have lowered Interest Rates, like the ECB, long ago, but he should certainly lower them now. Powell's termination cannot come fast enough!

Bank of Canada kept its target for the overnight rate unchanged at 2.75% in a decision where consensus estimates were divided. This is the first 'pause' since the BoC began their easing cycle in June 2024. Before today, there were 7 consecutive rate cuts which totaled 225 basis points of rate relief. At 2.75%, the policy rate is equal to the mid-point of the BoC's estimated neutral range (2.25% to 3.25%). The BoC's overnight target remains 175 bps below the Fed's upper-bound policy target (the largest rate gap since 1997). As was the case in March, the Bank will set the deposit rate 5 basis points below the target rate (2.70%). The Bank rate will remain 25 bps above the overnight target (3.00%). Driving the decision to hold the policy rate target at 2.75% was "pervasive uncertainty" and an economic / trade future that remains no clearer since March. Governing Council decided to hold policy unchanged as they "gain more information about both the path forward for U.S. tariffs and their impacts".

The U.S. 2 year/10 year treasury spread is now 0.66% and the U.K.'s 2 year/10 year treasury spread is 0.67%. A narrowing gap between yields on the 2 year and 10 year Treasuries is of concern given its historical track record that when shorter term rates exceed longer dated ones, such inversion is usually an early warning of an economic slowdown.

The U.S. 30 year mortgage market rate is now 6.83%. Existing U.S. housing inventory is at 3.5 months supply of existing houses as of March 20, 2025 - well off its peak during the Great Recession of 11.1 months and we consider a more normal range of 4-7 months.

The VIX (volatility index) is 32.55 and while, by its characteristics, the VIX will remain volatile, we believe a VIX level below 25 bodes well for quality equities.

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Glossary of Terms: 'CET' core equity tier, 'EBITDA' earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, 'EPS' earnings per share, 'FCF' free cash flow, 'GDP' gross domestic product, 'GAAP' Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, 'ROE' return on equity, 'ROTE' return on common equity, 'ROTCE' return on tangible common equity, 'Conjugate' a substance formed by the reversible combination of two or more others, 'SG&A' Selling, General, and Administrative expense ratio.

1.Not all of the funds shown are necessarily invested in the companies listed

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