

I'm retiring with my dividends, but Investor Clinic lives on



JOHN HEINZL

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Published February 13, 2026

When I launched my weekly Investor Clinic column back in April, 2009, I figured the new gig would last a few years.

Nearly 17 years and roughly 800 columns later, it's time to pass the torch.

This will be my final Investor Clinic column. I'm also stepping back from the weekly Stars and Dogs feature and putting a bow on the model Yield Hog Dividend Growth Portfolio.

At 61 and still in good health, I want to see what this retirement thing is all about. Thankfully, in addition to qualifying for the seniors' discounts at Shoppers Drug Mart, I have my own real-life portfolio of dividend stocks to see me through my golden years.

If you've read my columns, you already know I'm a big fan of dividends. You may have even thought to yourself, "I wish this guy would shut up about dividends already."

I will. Just give me a few more minutes.

[John Heinzl's model dividend growth portfolio as of Jan. 31](#)

I still remember, more than a quarter century ago, the exact moment when the light bulb went off. I was reading dividend guru Tom Connolly's newsletter and was intrigued to learn that many companies don't just pay dividends but raise them each and every year. Really? Wow.

This insight fundamentally changed my approach to investing. Instead of trying to pick stocks that would generate capital gains, I began focusing on building a portfolio of blue-chip stocks designed to pay me a growing stream of income. I reasoned that, if the dividends grew, the share prices would eventually rise, too.

With a few exceptions (BCE Inc. and Algonquin Power & Utilities Corp. come to mind), the strategy has worked largely as I had hoped. The income from my personal portfolio has grown to the point that it could cover all of my retirement expenses. On top of that, I

collect a modest company pension, and I am eligible to apply for Canada Pension Plan benefits at any time. In a few years, I'll qualify for Old Age Security. (Dear Mark Carney: Could we rename OAS to something with a little more youthful vigour – like the “Rock-on Retirement Reward” or the “Still Got Game Grant?”)

Dividends don't just put money in your pocket. For investors who get rattled by market downturns, the strategy has psychological benefits as well: Because dividends are more predictable and far less volatile than stock prices, they help investors stay calm during periods of market turbulence. It's like a soother you give to a crying baby, except it's money and doesn't get covered in saliva.

Having enjoyed the fruits of dividend investing personally, I launched the model Yield Hog Dividend Growth Portfolio to illustrate the strategy in action for Globe readers. On Oct. 1, 2017, I allocated \$100,000 of virtual cash across roughly 20 stocks with a track record of increasing their dividends – including banks, utilities, power producers, pipelines and real estate investment trusts. (You can view the complete portfolio online at tgam.ca/dividend-portfolio).

As of Friday morning – eight years, four months and 13 days later – the model portfolio is worth \$224,074, for a gain of about 124 per cent. That works out to an annualized total return of 10.1 per cent, including dividends. Thanks to regular reinvestments of those dividends and scores of dividend increases over the years, the portfolio's annualized income has also more than doubled, to \$8,354 from \$4,094 at inception. (Just this week, Manulife Financial Corp. hiked its dividend by 10.2 per cent, Restaurant Brands International Inc. by 4.8 per cent and TC Energy Corp. by 3.2 per cent.)

The portfolio's \$100,000 starting value was arbitrary. If you want to see how a portfolio with \$1-million would have fared, just add a zero to all of the above dollar figures.

Just to be clear: I believe investors shouldn't rely on dividend stocks exclusively. I recommend that people supplement their dividend holdings with broad index exchange-traded funds to capture all the returns the market has to offer. That's what I do in my own portfolio, and the results have been gratifying.

In closing, I want to thank you, the readers, for the thousands of questions and comments you have sent my way over the years. You've given me countless column ideas, helped me understand where investors' heads are at and, most rewarding of all, made me feel like I've made a difference in your financial lives. I love words, numbers and helping people. It's no exaggeration to say I hit the trifecta with this job. I've told my editor that I reserve the right to make an appearance from time to time in the future. After 36 years as a Globe journalist – 30 as a staffer and the past six as a freelancer – I suspect going cold turkey won't be easy.

Now, I'd like to hand it off to The Globe's Andrew Galbraith, who will be taking the reins of Investor Clinic. Please fill his inbox (agalbraith@globeandmail.com) with enough investing and personal finance questions to keep him busy for the next 17 years, at least.