# Wellington Global Stewards Fund

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## MARKET REVIEW

Global equities rose in January. The transition of power in the US brought meaningful changes to outlooks for foreign policy, trade dynamics, and economic growth. The Trump administration's protectionist policies and territorial ambitions created a complex economic and political landscape that strengthened the US dollar and increased economic uncertainty, raising concerns about potential trade-related inflation. Against this backdrop, the US Federal Reserve held interest rates unchanged, while the European Central Bank and Bank of Canada lowered policy rates. Japan's central bank raised rates for the third time since March 2024 following a prolonged pause. The US announced plans for a multi-hundred-billion-dollar investment in the AI project "Stargate" with aims to invest heavily in AI infrastructure, but the release of two competitive large language models by Chinese startup DeepSeek caused investors to question the long-term monetization structure of the foundational large language models developed by US technology companies. Europe's economy slowed in the fourth quarter, with the eurozone's GDP rising just 0.8% in 2024. In contrast, US GDP grew by 2.8%, and China's economy expanded by 5%, meeting the government's official target. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau resigned as leader of the ruling Liberal Party and as prime minister. The Israel/Hamas ceasefire went into force, with Hamas releasing three hostages in exchange for 90 Palestinian prisoners.

The MSCI All Country World Index Net returned 3.4% for the period. Within the index, 10 out of 11 sectors rose over the period. Communication services and health care were the top performing sectors, while information technology and real estate were the bottom performing sectors for the period.

## FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The fund modestly outperformed the index for the period.
- Security selection was the primary driver of relative outperformance. Strong selection in information technology and real estate was partially offset by selection in health care and consumer staples. Sector allocation, a result of our bottom-up stock selection process, modestly detracted from returns. Allocation effect was driven by our lack of exposure to communication services, but partially offset by our underweight to information technology and overweight to health care and financials. On a market basis, strong stock selection in Japan and United States was offset by selection in United Kingdom and France.
- At the issuer level, our top two relative contributors were not owning NVIDIA and Apple, while our top two relative detractors were not owning Meta Platforms and an overweight to Diageo.
- Shares of NVIDIA fell during the period after China's DeepSeek sparked concerns about increasing AI model efficiency, capex guidance, and the need for NVIDIA chips in developing competitive LLMs. Questions emerged over the exact cost and methods used by DeepSeek, and US officials launched a probe into whether the Chinese startup circumvented US chip restrictions by accessing advanced NVIDIA chips through Singapore. Shares of Meta Platforms rose over the period. The company reported fourth quarter results that beat expectations in earnings and revenue. CEO Mark Zuckerberg stated the company has made good progress on their initiatives in AI, smart glasses, and the future of social media and is confident for further progress in 2025. Meta is also planning investments in Meta AI and the development of Llama 4, an open-source AI model.

#### FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

At the end of the period, our largest overweights were consumer staples, health care and industrials. We were most underweight to communication services, which we had no exposure to. From a regional perspective, our largest overweight was Europe and we were most underweight to North America and Emerging Markets.

#### RISKS

**CAPITAL:** Investment markets are subject to economic, regulatory, market sentiment and political risks. All investors should consider the risks that may impact their capital, before investing. The value of your investment may become worth more or less than at the time of the original investment. The Fund may experience a high volatility from time to time. **CONCENTRATION:** Concentration of investments within securities, sectors or industries, or geographical regions may impact performance. **CURRENCY:** The value of the Fund may be affected by changes in currency exchange rates. Unhedged currency risk may subject the Fund to significant volatility. **EMERGING MARKETS:** Emerging markets may be subject to custodial and political risks, and volatility. Investment in foreign currency entails exchange risks. **EQUITIES:** Investments may be volatile and may fluctuate according to market conditions, the performance of individual companies and that of the broader equity market. **HEDGING:** Any hedging strategy using derivatives may not achieve a perfect hedge. **SUSTAINABILITY:** A Sustainability Risk can be defined as an environmental, social or governance event or condition that, if it occurs, could cause an actual or potential material negative impact on the value of an investment.

#### PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT PREDICT FUTURE RETURNS. AN INVESTMENT CAN LOSE VALUE.

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