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First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF –  
November • NOVB.F

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Annual Management Report of Fund Performance  
December 31, 2023

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# **ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT OF FUND PERFORMANCE**

## **December 31, 2023**

### **First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November (the “First Trust ETF”)**

This annual management report of fund performance contains financial highlights but does not contain the complete audited annual financial statements of the First Trust ETF. All references to dollars contained herein are to Canadian dollars.

Securityholders may also contact us to request a copy of the First Trust ETF’s proxy voting policies and procedures, proxy voting disclosure record, or quarterly portfolio disclosures relating to the First Trust ETF by calling 1-877-622-5552, by writing to us at FT Portfolios Canada Co., 40 King Street West, Suite 5102, Scotia Plaza, Box 312, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3Y2 or by visiting our web site at [www.firsttrust.ca](http://www.firsttrust.ca) or SEDAR at [www.sedarplus.ca](http://www.sedarplus.ca).

### **Forward Looking Statements**

This document may contain forward-looking statements relating to anticipated future events, results, circumstances, performance or expectations that are not historical facts but instead represent beliefs regarding future events. By their nature, forward-looking statements are based on assumptions and are subject to inherent risks and uncertainties. There is significant risk that forward-looking statements will not prove to be accurate. Readers of this document should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements as a number of factors could cause actual future results, conditions, actions or events to differ materially from the expectations, estimates or intentions expressed or implied in the forward-looking statements. These factors include but are not limited to market and general economic conditions, interest rates, foreign currency exchange rates, the extent of industry sector exposure, the performance of the securities of the issuers held in the portfolio and regulatory developments and the risks detailed in the First Trust ETF’s prospectus. The Manager does not undertake and specifically disclaims any intention or obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

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# First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November Management Report of Fund Performance For the year ended December 31, 2023

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## **Investment Objective and Strategy**

The fundamental investment objective of **First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November** (the “First Trust ETF”) is to provide unitholders with returns (before fees, expenses and taxes) that match the price return of the SPDR® S&P 500® ETF Trust (the “Underlying ETF”) up to a predetermined upside cap (before fees, expenses and taxes), while providing a buffer against the first 10% (before fees, expenses and taxes) of the decrease in market price of the Underlying ETF, over a period of approximately one year from the Monday following the third Friday of November of each year (each, a “Target Outcome Period”). At the end of a Target Outcome Period a new cap will be established for the next Target Outcome Period. The buffer stays constant at 10% (before fees, expenses, and taxes) for the next Target Outcome Period.

To achieve its investment objectives, the First Trust ETF will under normal market conditions invest substantially all of its assets in FLEXible EXchange® Options (“FLEX Options”) that reference the price return of the Underlying ETF. The investment objective of the Underlying ETF is to seek to provide investment results that, before expenses, correspond generally to the price and yield performance of the S&P 500® Index.

FLEX Options are customized equity and/or index option contracts that trade on an exchange but provide investors with the ability to customize key contract terms like exercise prices, styles and expiration dates.

The First Trust ETF will generally seek to hedge substantially all of its U.S. dollar currency exposure associated with its portfolio investments in respect of the hedged units back to the Canadian dollar.

Although the First Trust ETF has two classes of units called “Units” \* and “Hedged Units”, the First Trust ETF currently offers only Hedged Units on the TSX with the symbol: NOVB.F.

\*The Units of the First Trust ETF were qualified for distribution by a prospectus dated August 18, 2023. As of the date of this management report of fund performance (“MRFP”), the First Trust ETF has not offered any Units to the public. No transactions or other activities have been undertaken by the First Trust ETF for the Units for the year ended December 31, 2023. As such, no financial highlights or management discussion for the Units are included in this MRFP.

## **Risk**

The risks associated with an investment in the First Trust ETF remain as discussed in the First Trust ETF’s most recent prospectus. There have been no significant changes during the reporting period that affected the overall level of risk associated with the First Trust ETF.

## **Results of Operations**

### **General**

The First Trust ETF’s net asset value as of December 31, 2023 was \$27,126,989 or \$38.75 per unit. The First Trust ETF’s net asset value as of December 31, 2022 was \$24,609,738 or \$32.81 per unit.

There were no cash distributions paid nor declared for the year ended December 31, 2023.

### **Investment Performance**

For the year ended December 31, 2023, the First Trust ETF returned 18.11% compared to S&P 500® Price Return Index (CAD-Hedged) (the “benchmark”) total return of 23.02%. Unlike the benchmark, the First Trust ETF’s return is net of fees and expenses.

The First Trust ETF holds a combination of four FLEX option positions on the Underlying ETF, as well as a currency forward position. The currency forward is short the U.S Dollar and long the Canadian Dollar and is intended to minimize the impact of changes in the Canadian/U.S. dollar exchange rate on the First Trust ETF’s performance.

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## First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November Management Report of Fund Performance For the year ended December 31, 2023

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The combined performance of the option positions is dependent, in large part, on a) the performance of the Underlying ETF, b) the change in the amount of time remaining to the options expiration date (annual reset date), and c) changes in the market's view on future volatility of the Underlying ETF. We estimate that for the reporting year, the impact of holding the options on the First Trust ETF performance was approximately 19.54%.

The cost (or benefit) to the First Trust ETF of holding the currency forwards is dependent, in part, on the interest rate differences between the U.S. and Canada. We estimate that for the reporting year, the impact of holding the currency forwards on the First Trust ETF performance was approximately -0.47%.

Finally, we estimate that for the reporting year, the impact of expenses and taxes (HST) on the First Trust ETF performance was approximately -0.96%.

### **Recent Developments**

The First Trust ETF performance is dependent on the price performance of Underlying ETF (the "SPY"), as well as the cost of the currency forward position, which is based on interest rate differentials between the U.S. and Canada.

During the year ended December 31, 2023, U.S. stock indices rallied nicely while bond markets' returns were mixed. The two biggest stories impacting the markets in 2023 were Artificial Intelligence and Inflation. The tech sector soared as firms positioned to benefit from artificial intelligence saw their stock prices rise dramatically. The Federal Reserve's ("The Fed") interest rate hikes began to have the desired effect of taming inflation as various measures suggested that inflation rates in the U.S. had fallen to around 3%. The U.S. labour market remained strong as unemployment rates remained near 50-year lows.

The S&P 500® Index returned 26.26%, while the Bloomberg U.S. Treasury 20+ Year Total Return Index returned just 2.66%. The Fed raised the Fed Funds Target Rate by 1.00% during the year. These interest hikes have pushed The Fed's Target Rate to a range of 5.25-5.50% as of year-end. In the U.S., economists are still mixed as to whether the U.S. economy will experience a recession during the upcoming twelve months. As of January 12, 2024, a Bloomberg News survey of economists showed a median forecast of U.S. GDP growth of 2.4% in 2023, and just 1.3% in 2024.

### **Related Party Transactions**

FT Portfolios Canada Co. is the Manager of the First Trust ETF and is a Canadian affiliate of First Trust Advisors L.P., the investment advisor (the "Advisor") of the First Trust ETF. Also, First Trust Capital Partners, LLC, an affiliate of the Manager, owns a 44.3% ownership interest (49.3% voting) in Cboe Vest Group Inc., the holding company of Cboe Vest Financial LLC, the sub-advisor to the First Trust ETF.

Pursuant to terms of the declaration of trust of the First Trust ETF, the Manager provides or arranges for all management, administrative and other services required by the First Trust ETF. The Manager receives a management fee from the First Trust ETF. For further details, please see "Management Fees".

The Manager has retained the Advisor to provide certain services to the First Trust ETF pursuant to an investment advisory agreement. The Advisor receives advisory fees from the Manager out of the management fee.

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**Financial Highlights**

The following tables show selected key financial information about the First Trust ETF and are intended to help you understand the First Trust ETF's financial performance for the four years ended December 31. This information is derived from the First Trust ETF's audited annual financial statements.

**Net Asset Value per Unit**

| NOVB.F   | 2023    | 2022     | 2021     | 2020 <sup>(a)</sup>    |
|--|---------|----------|----------|------------------------|
| Net asset value, beginning of period/year <sup>(1)</sup> | \$32.81 | \$36.41  | \$32.95  | \$30.00 <sup>(b)</sup> |
| Increase (Decrease) from operations:                     |         |          |          |                        |
| Total revenue  | 0.02    | 0.02     | -        | -                      |
| Total expenses   | (0.34)  | (0.33)   | (0.34)   | (0.29)                 |
| Realized gains (losses) for the period/year              | 4.80    | (2.86)   | 4.39     | 4.23                   |
| Unrealized gains (losses) for the period/year            | 1.59    | (0.65)   | (0.54)   | 1.37                   |
| Total increase (decrease) from operations <sup>(2)</sup> | \$6.07  | \$(3.82) | \$3.51   | \$5.31                 |
| Distributions:   |         |          |          |                        |
| From income (excluding dividends)                        | -       | -        | -        | -                      |
| From dividends   | -       | -        | -        | -                      |
| From capital gains                                       | -       | -        | (2.12)   | (4.19)                 |
| Return of capital  | -       | -        | -        | -                      |
| Total annual distributions <sup>(3)</sup>                | \$ -    | \$ -     | \$(2.12) | \$(4.19)               |
| Net asset value, end of period/year <sup>(4)</sup>       | \$38.75 | \$32.81  | \$36.41  | \$32.95                |

(a) December 31, 2020 does not relate to the full year as the First Trust ETF commenced operations on February 4, 2020.

(b) Seed capital

(1) This information is provided as at December 31 of the period/years shown and is prepared under IFRS.

(2) Net asset value and distributions are based on the actual number of units outstanding at the relevant time. The increase/decrease from operations is based on the weighted average number of units outstanding over the period/year.

(3) Distributions were paid in cash or reinvested in additional units of the First Trust ETF, or both. Non-cash distributions are reinvested in additional units of the First Trust ETF and subsequently consolidated. Neither the number of units held by the unitholder, nor the net asset per unit of the First Trust ETF change as a result of any non-cash distributions.

(4) This table is not intended to be a reconciliation of beginning to ending net asset value per unit.

**Ratios and Supplemental Data**

| NOVB.F   | 2023     | 2022     | 2021     | 2020     |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Net asset value (000's)                                  | \$27,127 | \$24,610 | \$14,563 | \$23,066 |
| Number of units outstanding                              | 700,000  | 750,000  | 400,000  | 700,000  |
| Management expense ratio <sup>(1)</sup>                  | 0.92%    | 0.95%    | 0.93%    | 0.94%    |
| Management expense ratio before<br>waivers or absorption | 0.93%    | 0.96%    | 0.95%    | 0.96%    |
| Trading expense ratio <sup>(2)</sup>                     | 0.03%    | 0.05%    | 0.04%    | 0.12%    |
| Portfolio turnover rate <sup>(3)</sup>                   | 244.95%  | 148.01%  | 10.34%   | 170.02%  |

(1) Management expense ratio is based on total expenses (excluding commissions and other portfolio transaction costs) for the stated period/year and is expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the period/year.

(2) The trading expense ratio represents total commissions and other portfolio transaction costs expressed as an annualized percentage of daily average net asset value during the period/year.

(3) The First Trust ETF's portfolio turnover rate indicates how actively the First Trust ETF's portfolio advisor manages its portfolio investments. A portfolio turnover rate of 100% is equivalent to the First Trust ETF buying and selling all of the securities in its portfolio once in the course of the period/year. The higher a First Trust ETF's portfolio turnover rate in a period/year, the greater the trading cost payable by the First Trust ETF in the period/year, and the greater the chance of an investor receiving taxable capital gains in the period/year. There is not necessarily a relationship between high turnover rate and the performance of a First Trust ETF.

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# First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November

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### For the year ended December 31, 2023

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#### Management Fees

The First Trust ETF will pay the Manager a management fee of 0.85% based on the average daily NAV of the First Trust ETF. The management fee, plus applicable taxes including HST, will be accrued daily and paid monthly in arrears. The Manager may, from time to time in its discretion, waive all or a portion of the management fee charged at any given time.

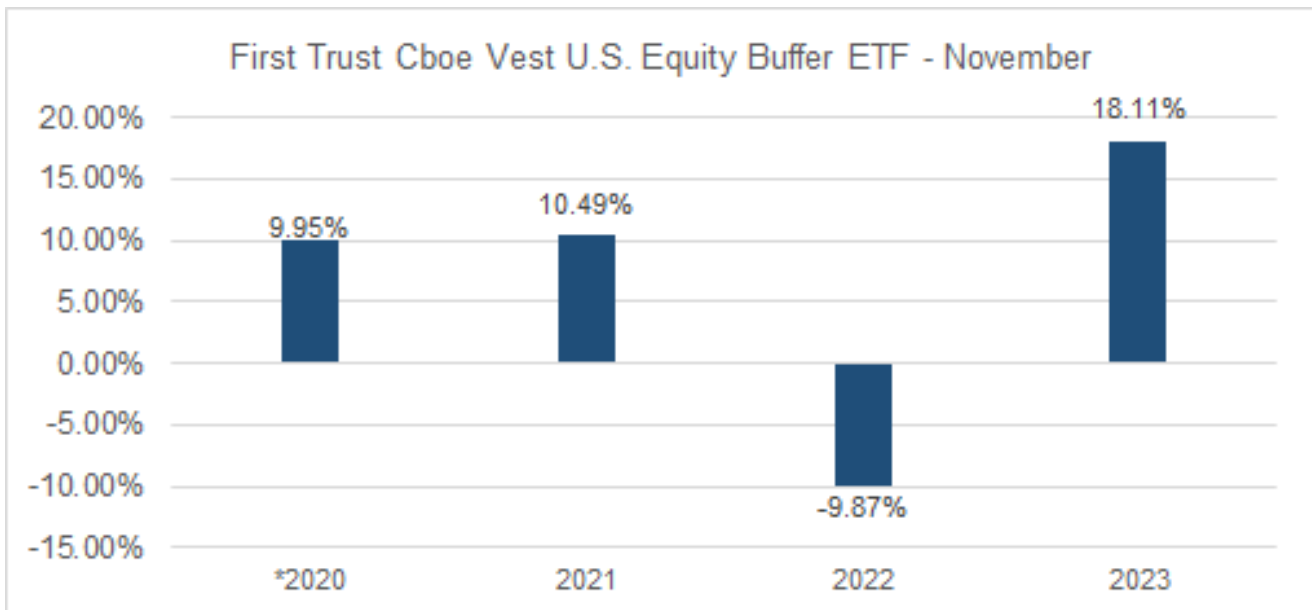
#### Past Performance

##### General

The past performance information shown assumes that all distributions made by the First Trust ETF in the period/years shown were reinvested in additional securities of the First Trust ETF. The performance information does not take into account sales, redemption, distribution or other optional charges that would have reduced returns or performance. How the First Trust ETF has performed in the past does not necessarily indicate how it will perform in the future.

##### Year by Year Returns

The bar chart below shows the First Trust ETF's performance for the years ended December 31, and for the period from commencement of operations to December 31, 2020 and illustrates how the investment fund's performance has changed from year to year. The chart also shows, in percentage terms, how much an investment made on the first day of each financial year would have grown or decreased by the last day of each financial year.



\*First Trust ETF Commencement: February 4, 2020

# First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November

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#### Annual Compound Returns

The table below shows the First Trust ETF's annual compound total return since inception and for the year ended December 31, 2023. The annual compound return is compared to the returns of the relevant benchmark; however, the First Trust ETF's return is net of fees and expenses. See Results of Operations section of this report for further information regarding the current year performance of the First Trust ETF relative to the benchmark.

| Returns   | 1-year | 3-year | 5-year | 10-year | Since Inception |
|---|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| First Trust Cboe Vest U.S. Equity Buffer ETF - November | 18.11% | 5.56%  | -      | -       | 6.80%           |
| S&P 500® Price Return Index (CAD-Hedged)                | 23.02% | 7.57%  | -      | -       | 9.48%           |

*S&P 500® Price Return Index (CAD-Hedged) is designed to measure the returns of S&P 500® while hedging currency risk, but not the underlying equity market risk.*

#### Summary of Investment Portfolio

The table below sets out the percentage (based on total net asset value) of the First Trust ETF's holdings as at December 31, 2023. This summary of portfolio holdings may change due to ongoing portfolio transactions of the First Trust ETF. Daily and quarterly updates are available at [www.firsttrust.ca](http://www.firsttrust.ca).

| Holdings                                     | % of ETF Total Net Asset Value |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 2024-11-15 SPDR® S&P 500® ETF Trust C 4.49   | 97.03%                         |
| 2024-11-15 SPDR® S&P 500® ETF Trust P 450.77 | 2.89%                          |
| 2024-11-15 SPDR® S&P 500® ETF Trust P 405.69 | -1.53%                         |
| 2024-11-15 SPDR® S&P 500® ETF Trust C 529.43 | -1.81%                         |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents                    | 0.95%                          |
| Other Assets, Less Liabilities               | 2.47%                          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>100.00%</b>                 |

#### Portfolio Breakdown

The table below sets out the percentage (based on total net asset value) of the First Trust ETF's portfolio as at December 31, 2023.

| Breakdown                      | % of ETF Total Net Asset Value |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Options                        | 96.58%                         |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents      | 0.95%                          |
| Other Assets, Less Liabilities | 2.47%                          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>100.00%</b>                 |



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