

OPTIMUM GROUP

Optimum Group is an international financial group active in property and casualty insurance, life reinsurance, life insurance, consulting, financial services and real estate management.

Founded in 1969 by Canadian actuaries, Optimum Group's growth reflects the optimal management of its assets and human resources. It has grown steadily over the years making it a solid group ready to explore new business opportunities.

Active in Canada, the United States and France, the Group employs over 600 people, the vast majority of whom are industry professionals.

The Optimum Group's logo, the nautilus, with its coiled shell, symbolizes continuity. Just as a nautilus grows by adding one section at a time, the Group has also grown systematically, always ensuring that a consolidated base of assets is present to support a new sphere of activity. The spiral form of the nautilus, which resembles the logarithmic curves familiar to actuaries, aptly reflects the origins of the Group.

In order to harmonize the Group's image, all the subsidiaries adopted the nautilus as their logo. Moreover, the name OPTIMUM was incorporated in their name, with the result that the same corporate image is conveyed by the entire Group.





MESSAGE FROM MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jean-Claude Pagé
President and
Chief Operating Officer

Mr. Henri Joli-Coeur
Vice-Chairman and
Vice-President, Investments,
Acquisitions and Reinsurance

Mr. Gilles Blondeau
Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer

More than 30 years after it was created, Optimum Group has made a name for itself in its core business lines: property and casualty insurance, life reinsurance, life insurance, consulting, financial services and real estate management. Over the years, the Group has successfully meshed growth and profitability. Since it was created in 1969, gross revenues have risen from \$600,000 to over \$390 million and assets from \$2 million to over \$685 million. Today, the Group has over \$2 billion in assets under management. Its success is attributable to the contribution of over 600 employees worldwide.

The Optimum Group's beginnings date back to 1969, with the founding of the actuarial consulting firm Gilles Blondeau & Company. Over the years, the Group has widened its fields of interest and expanded its operations. Today, it is growing by creating new companies or investing in existing companies.

In 1971, the Group acquired a life insurance company and reoriented its mission, launching its entry into life reinsurance. Today, Optimum Reassurance has become a leader in Canada in this business line. In 1987, the Group expanded its reinsurance activities to the United States, with the acquisition of Optimum Re Insurance Company.

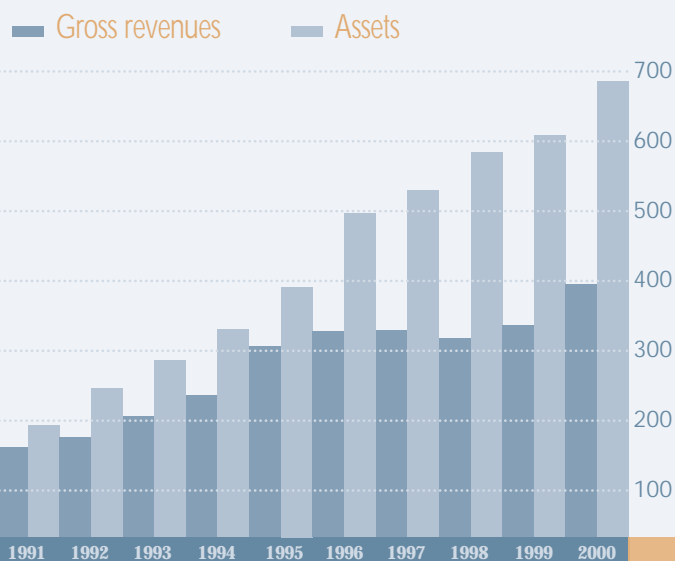
The Group made another foray into insurance in 1975, this time in France, where it acquired Optimum Vie. This confirmed the Group's international vocation, which was already reflected in its reinsurance activities. This French subsidiary, which has posted continued growth since it was acquired, today provides a solid foothold from which to access the vast European Union market. In 1998, the Group penetrated the U.S. life insurance market, creating Windsor Life Insurance Company, based in Dallas, Texas.

The Group again diversified further when it made its entry into the property and casualty insurance market. In 1976, it acquired Optimum Insurance Company, which is active mainly in Quebec. Over the years, more acquisitions were made in the property and casualty insurance sector as the Group expanded into the rest of Canada and into the U.S., in Texas. These subsidiaries were consolidated under Optimum General. Today, Optimum General, which is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, represents one of the Group's core business divisions and is well positioned for continued growth in an industry undergoing consolidation.

In 1981, the Group invested in a commercial building in Quebec City and made other real estate investments in Montreal, Paris and Dallas.

With its increasing expertise in financial market investments, in 1985, the Group created a company specialized in portfolio management for financial institutions and pension funds and began to provide financial products and services to individual clients. Optimum Asset Management and Optimum Investments have since established a solid reputation in their respective industries in Canada, while Optimum Gestion Financière serves the market in France. With the baby-boom generation's growing need for savings and retirement products, this Group division is experiencing strong growth.

Gross Revenues and Asset Growth 1990–2000
(in Millions of Canadian Dollars)



The Group has remained true to its original vocation and continues to provide actuarial consulting services. Over the years, it has added new activities such as risk and insurance management. In addition, the Group and its subsidiaries have entrusted the management of information technology services to Optimum Informatique, a specialized subsidiary.

The professionalism and dynamism of its employees, actuarial expertise and rigorous management of financial resources have all played a key role in the Group's success. It has earned a solid reputation for its competent and innovative approach in its fields of expertise. Proud of its past accomplishments, the Optimum Group is committed to supporting the growth of its subsidiaries by providing the strategic planning, financial resources and specialized services they need to carry out their projects. The Optimum Group will continue to grow, remain open to new business opportunities that will foster its development and has embarked on the 21st century determined to take advantage of all opportunities that present themselves.



Michel Paré (seated)
Vice-President, Accounting
Brigitte Dionne-Bourassa
Communications Manager

Pierre St-Laurent (seated)
Legal Counsel

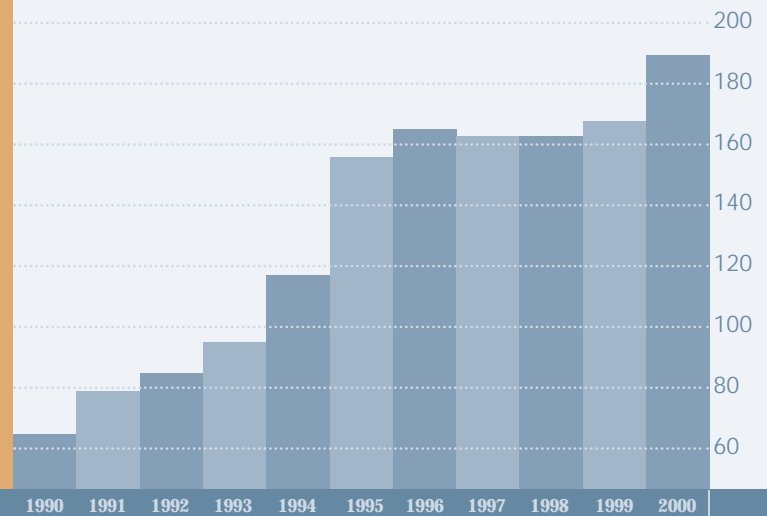
Alain Béland (seated)
Vice-President and Treasurer
Louis Fontaine
Vice-President, Legal Affairs and
Secretary

Gilles Demers
Counsel
Benoit Lapointe (seated)
Legal Counsel

Chantal Brulé
Vice-President, Taxation



Gross Premiums Growth 1990–2000
(in Millions of Canadian Dollars)



PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE

The Optimum Group's property and casualty insurance operations are carried out by **Optimum General Inc.**, a Montreal-based company active in major Canadian markets and in the United States. Optimum General groups five subsidiaries, each of which has developed extensive expertise within its respective market:

- ◆ **Optimum Insurance Company Inc.**, in Quebec;
- ◆ **Optimum Farm Insurance Inc.**, in Quebec;
- ◆ **Optimum Frontier Insurance Company**, in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Atlantic Provinces;
- ◆ **Optimum West Insurance Company**, in British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon;
- ◆ **Optimum Property & Casualty Insurance Company**, in Texas, U.S.

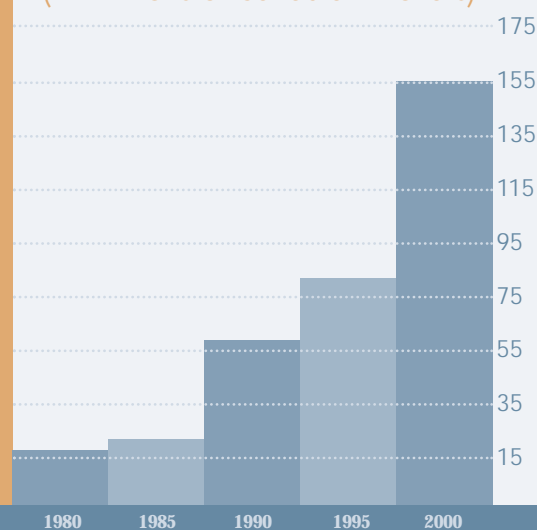
Optimum General has adapted its product offering to the needs of its diverse client segments. It is active in the four core property and casualty insurance lines: automobile, personal property, commercial property, as well as personal and commercial liability insurance. Its products are distributed through a vast network of independent insurance brokers.

Optimum General is focusing on its regional presence, its actuarial expertise and the quality of its human resources to ensure its growth in the future. It remains open to business and development opportunities that meet its profitability and growth objectives.

In May 1996, Optimum General became a public company. It is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange.



Gross Premiums – Life Reinsurance (in Millions of Canadian Dollars)



LIFE REINSURANCE

With \$45 million in capital, **Optimum Re Life Corporation** groups all the life reinsurance activities of Optimum Group in North America. Its subsidiary **Optimum Reassurance Inc.** serves the Canadian market, while **Optimum Re Insurance Company** provides for the reinsurance needs of client segments in the United States and the Caribbean.

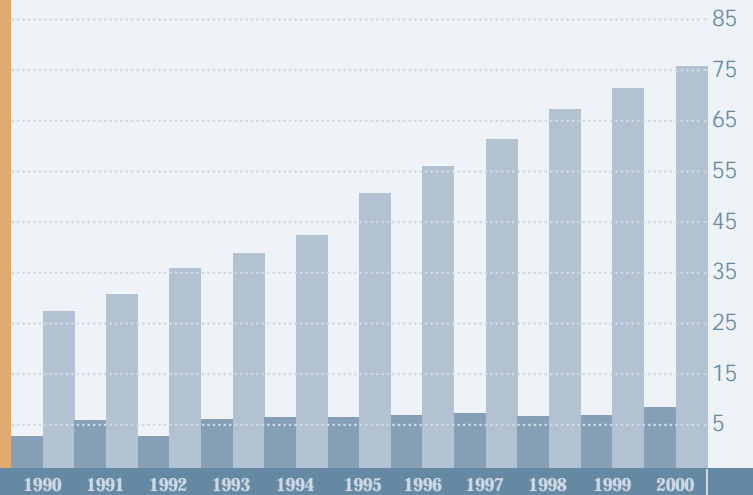
Optimum Reassurance has been active in Canada for more than a quarter century. It is one of the leading life reinsurers in the country and the only one that is Canadian owned. With highly qualified employees, Optimum Reassurance offers all individual and group reinsurance services, including product development support, negotiation of health-care professional fees, technical expertise and claims analysis. Always attentive to the emerging needs of its clients, Optimum Reassurance has over the past years steered a large part of its research efforts into developing health insurance products, including critical illness insurance.

Over the past 25 years, Optimum Reassurance has posted sustained growth. Premium volume totalled \$85 million in 2000, while assets stood at more than \$187 million. With offices in Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto, the Company's customer service orientation is strongly reflected in its innovative approaches, rapid service and highly competent and professional staff.

Optimum Re Insurance Company does business in most U.S. states and in several Caribbean countries. The Company serves that market mainly from its home office in Dallas and from a satellite marketing office in Nashville. Primarily targeting mid-size insurance companies, Optimum Re's mission is to support the development of its clients by providing turnkey products adapted to their specific markets in exchange for the reinsurance generated by these new products. Optimum Re has applied its expertise and knowledge of its clients' markets, assisting over 160 companies in increasing their market share while providing them with the support and capacity required for such enhanced production.

Gross Premiums and Assets 1990–2000 (in Millions of Euros)

■ Gross Premiums ■ Assets



LIFE INSURANCE

Optimum Group's life insurance activities in France are carried out through **Optimum Vie** and in the United States by **Windsor Life Insurance Company**.

Acquired in 1975, Optimum Vie is the only French life insurer that is Canadian owned. It offers mainly savings and retirement plans and various traditional insurance products. Its products are distributed across France and in the Principality of Monaco through a network of independent brokers.

Optimum Vie has posted steady growth. Assets and gross premiums exceed 75 million Euro and 9 million Euro, respectively.

Optimum Vie's growth objectives target a substantially higher share of the savings market, largely through unit-linked products.

Located in Dallas, Texas, Windsor Life Insurance Company is specialized in designing and distributing life and health related insurance products in the U.S. It offers a comprehensive range of coverages, including attractive term products, critical illness plans and riders, as well as more conventional policies and simplified issue products.

Windsor's approach combines outstanding client service and innovative products of superior quality. Sales are conducted through a network of independent master general agents with whom Windsor has developed a veritable partnership.





Yves Leclerc (seated)
President
Optimum Informatique

Mike Simard
President
Windsor Life Insurance Company

Pierre Renaud (seated)
President
Optimum Consultants & Actuaries

Bruno de Pazzis
General Manager
Optimum Gestion Financière and
Assistant General Manager
Optimum Vie

Pierre Hamel
President
Optimum Investments

Pierre Comtois (seated)
Vice-Chairman of the Board
Optimum Asset Management

Nathalie Blondeau
President
Optimum Foncier

CONSULTING SERVICES

Optimum Consultants & Actuaries Inc. offers a complete line of consulting services in the area of employee benefits, occupational health and safety, compensation as well as fees and valuations of insurance plans for the public and private sector.

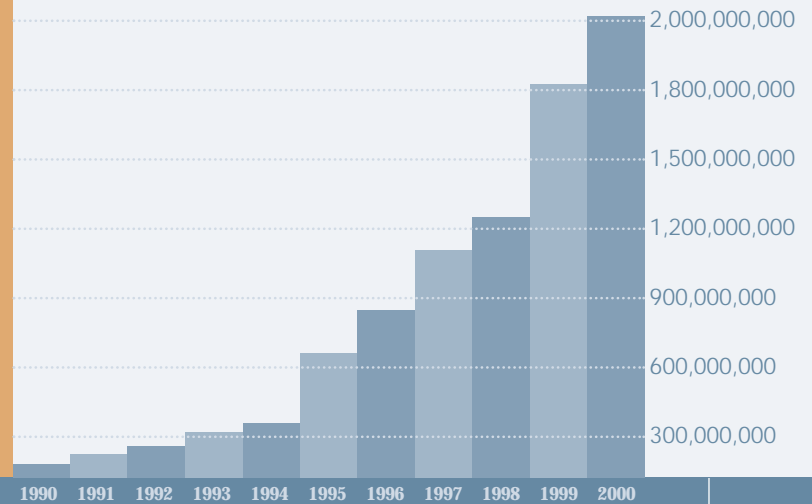
The services provided by Optimum Consultants & Actuaries and by its risk management division, **Optimum Risk Management**, include valuing, administering and managing retirement plans, designing, pricing and administering group insurance plans, establishing and negotiating health-care professional fees, valuing insurers in regard to actuarial reserves and solvency or self-insured life insurance and general insurance plans.

Optimum Consultants & Actuaries' clients represent all sectors of economic activity: public and parapublic, municipal, private enterprise, insurance companies, professional associations, unions and others.

Optimum Informatique Inc., a subsidiary of the Optimum Group created in 1983, groups all of the Group's information technology expertise. Its role is to design, develop, implement and support competitive information and technology solutions that meet the varied needs of the members of the Group.



Managed Assets 1990–2000



FINANCIAL SERVICES

Created in 1985, **Optimum Asset Management Inc.** is an investment consultant registered with the Quebec Securities Commission. Its specialty is active bond and equity management as well as indexed management of various asset classes.

Optimum Asset Management offers two types of portfolio management: institutional management and private wealth management. Institutional management is geared to a client segment comprising pension funds, corporations, insurance companies, foundations, religious orders and professional corporations. In addition, it also manages mutual funds, including the OPTIMUM FUNDS®.

Private wealth management offers services to individuals who opt for discretionary portfolio management services. This type of mandate is intended to develop an optimal portfolio structure geared to each client's financial objectives.

Optimum Asset Management's success reflects the expertise of its managers, clearly-defined management styles which favour an approach centered on discipline and professional ethics, as well as service quality to ensure close and lasting cooperation with its clients.

Optimum Investments Inc. is a financial services firm which offers a complete range of savings and retirement products and services from its Montreal and Quebec City offices.



Optimum Investments' team consists of group savings representatives and financial planners who are specialists in retirement planning. Strengthened by their know-how, Optimum Investments' consultants can judiciously meet the needs of their clients so that they can attain their objectives.

Optimum Investments manages and distributes the OPTIMUM FUNDS. Clients can choose from among a family of funds comprised of some 10 different mutual funds which meet the needs of all investor profiles. The OPTIMUM FUNDS are no-load funds, which means they charge no purchase, redemption or transfer fees. Moreover, thanks to the quality of their management, they regularly place in the first quartile of the industry.

A chartered member of the Commission des Opérations de Bourse, France's securities commission, **Optimum Gestion Financière** is a portfolio and mutual fund manager which operates in France.

In addition to managing and marketing a wide range of mutual funds, it offers portfolio management services to institutional and private clients.



David Liddle
Senior Vice-President
Optimum General

André Nadon (seated)
Vice-President and
Chief Financial Officer
Optimum General

Clifford P. Quesnel
Senior Vice-President
Optimum General

Mario Georgiev (seated)
President
Optimum Reassurance and
Optimum Re Insurance Company

Claude Lamonde
Executive Vice-President
Optimum Reassurance

George Klassen
President
Optimum Frontier Insurance
Company





REAL ESTATE

The Optimum Group has been active in real estate since 1978. Its real estate assets, valued at \$45 million, are managed by its subsidiary **Optimum Foncier Inc.** The subsidiary's mission is to manage the Group's office requirements and its real estate investments.

It operates through the following subsidiaries:

- ◆ **Immeubles Sol-Par Inc.** is a substantial owner of 425 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West in Montreal, a 17-storey office tower housing the Group's head office and several of its subsidiaries.
- ◆ **L'Immobilière Le St-Laurent Inc.** owns 250 Grande-Allée Avenue West in Quebec City, a prestigious residential and commercial building, which houses the Quebec City offices of Optimum Insurance Company, Optimum Reassurance and Optimum Consultants & Actuaries.
- ◆ **Norbec S.A.** manages 400 acres of agricultural land in Normandy, France.
- ◆ **Optifran S.A.** owns 94 de Courcelles Street in Paris, the corporate head office of Optimum Vie and Optimum Gestion Financière.

Altogether, Optimum Foncier owns 168,000 square feet of commercial space in Montreal, Quebec City and Paris, as well as 160 residential units in Quebec City. It is always on the look-out for investment opportunities in cities where the Group has a major presence.



ORGANIZATION CHART OF OPTIMUM GROUP

PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE

Optimum General Inc.

Optimum Insurance Company Inc.

Optimum Farm Insurance Inc.

Optimum Frontier Insurance Company

Optimum West Insurance Company

Optimum Property & Casualty Insurance Company

LIFE REINSURANCE AND LIFE INSURANCE

Optimum International Inc.

Optimum Reassurance Inc.

Optimum Re Insurance Company (U.S.)

Windsor Life Insurance Company (U.S.)

Optimum Vie (France)

Optimum Gestion Financière (France)

CONSULTING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Optimum Holdings Inc.

Optimum Consultants & Actuaries Inc.

Optimum Informatique Inc.

Optimum Asset Management Inc.

Optimum Investments Inc.

REAL ESTATE

Optimum Foncier Inc.

Immeubles Sol-Par Inc.

L'Immobilière Le St-Laurent Inc.

Norbec S.A. (France)

Optifran S.A. (France)

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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visit our Web site at the following address:

<http://www.optimumgroup.com>

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sur demande.



