



Canadian Utilities (CDUAF)

Updated March 6th, 2023 by Nikolaos Sismanis

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$26	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	9.9%	Market Cap:	\$7.07 B
Fair Value Price:	\$26	5 Year Growth Estimate:	4.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	05/04/2023 ¹
% Fair Value:	99%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	0.2%	Dividend Payment Date:	06/01/2023
Dividend Yield:	5.1%	5 Year Price Target	\$32	Years Of Dividend Growth²:	50
Dividend Risk Score:	B	Retirement Suitability Score:	A	Rating	Buy

Overview & Current Events

Canadian Utilities is an \$7.0 billion company with approximately 5,000 employees. ATCO owns 53% of Canadian Utilities. Based in Alberta, Canadian Utilities is a diversified global energy infrastructure corporation delivering solutions in Electricity, Pipelines & Liquid, and Retail Energy. The company prides itself on having Canada's longest consecutive years of dividend increases, with a 50-year streak. Unless otherwise noted, US dollars are used in this research report.

On March 2nd, 2023, Canadian Utilities reported its Q4-2022 and FY2022 results for the period ending December 31st, 2022. Revenues for the year amounted to nearly \$3.0 billion, 15.2% higher year-over-year (in constant currency), while earnings-per-share came in at \$1.53 compared to \$0.96 in fiscal 2021.

These increases were primarily the result of rate relief provided to customers in 2021 in light of the COVID-19 global pandemic and, subsequently, the decision to maximize the collection of 2021 deferred revenues in 2022. Higher revenues were also due to higher electricity and natural gas commodity prices at ATCO Energy, higher flow-through revenues in Natural Gas Distribution, growth in rate base in the Alberta Utilities, and additional revenue from the Alberta Hub natural gas storage facility acquired in December, 2021.

Our initial estimates point towards FY2023 EPS of \$1.65. The company's current annualized dividend rate of C\$1.7768 equals close to US\$1.32 at the current FX rates.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028
EPS	\$1.97	\$2.18	\$0.81	\$1.54	\$1.32	\$1.53	\$2.50	\$1.04	\$0.96	\$1.53	\$1.65	\$2.01
DPS	\$0.91	\$0.92	\$0.85	\$0.97	\$1.14	\$1.15	\$1.30	\$1.37	\$1.39	\$1.31	\$1.32	\$1.49
Shares³	255	258	262	265	267	269	272	272	270	269	269	270

By benefiting from a stable business model, Canadian Utilities can slowly but progressively grow its earnings. The company consistently invests in new projects and benefits from the base rate increases, which grow at around 3% to 4% annually. In 2021, management had filed an application with the Alberta Utilities Commission to postpone Canadian Utilities' electricity and natural gas distribution rate increases. The company received almost all deferred revenues by the end of 2022.

Combining the company's growth projects, the potential for modest margin improvements, and –as voluntarily pursued, – the postponed rate base increases, we retain our expected growth rate at 4%.

Our DPS CAGR estimate remains at 2.5%. The company will likely improve its payout ratio before its new projects start producing enough cash flows to re-accelerate dividend growth. U.S. investors have enjoyed a lesser growth in their dividends than the Canadian ones over the past decade due to the depreciation of \$CAD to \$USD. Regardless, the stock's

¹ Estimated dates.

² Years of Dividend Growth and Last Dividend Increase based in C\$.

³ Share count in millions

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impressive 10-year dividend CAGR of 9.6% is more than enough to compensate for the FX fluctuations, progressively growing investors' income.

Valuation Analysis

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Now	2028
Avg. P/E	17.5	18.1	19.3	20.9	18.3	18.2	15.0	22.9	16.5	17.9	15.8	16.0
Avg. Yld.	2.7%	2.7%	3.4%	3.6%	3.5%	4.6%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	5.1%	4.6%

Canadian Utilities' shares are currently attached to a high dividend yield of 5.1%, offering attractive tangible returns in the form of quarterly income. The yield is also currently above the company's 10-year average, which makes this legendary dividend payer even more attractive from an income standpoint. The stock's current P/E ratio of 15.8 is notably lower from its historical average. Still, it makes sense given the company's limited earnings growth potential and interest rate hikes, which have increased the cost of equity. We retain our fair P/E at 16, suggesting shares are relatively fairly valued. Also, due in part to achieving half a century of consecutive annual dividend increases, the high yield is more than likely to attract investor interest going forward. Thus, we don't expect a further multiple compression ahead.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

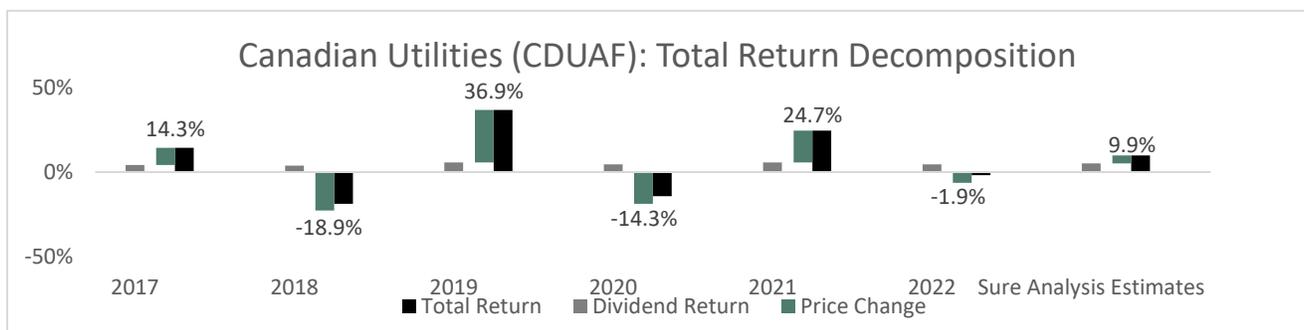
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028
Payout	46%	42%	105%	63%	86%	75%	52%	132%	145%	86%	80%	74%

The company's competitive advantage lies in the moat regulated utilities are surrounded by. With no easy entry in the sector, regulated utilities enjoy an oligopolistic market with little competition threat. The company's resiliency has been proven for decade after decade. Despite multiple recessions and uncertain environments over the past 50 years, the company has withstood every one of them while raising its dividend. While Canadian Utilities' payout ratio were under pressure during 2020 (though dividends were in reality covered from its operating cash flows if we are to exclude depreciation and amortization,) by 2028 we expect it to have returned to more comfortable levels, of around 74% of its net income.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

We believe that Canadian Utilities is an excellent buy for income-oriented investors who seek stable and predictable returns. The latest dividend increase of 1.0% in local currency may suggest a slowdown compared to its 5-year average growth rate of 6.3%. However, as the company retains more cash to invest in future projects and pay down its debt, the dividend yield still remains quite attractive. We believe that Canadian Utilities offers low volatility and a stable investment case during a time of high uncertainty. We project annualized returns of 9.9%, driven by the 5.1% dividend yield, modest EPS growth expectations, and a 0.2% annual valuation tailwind boost. We continue to rate the stock a buy.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Revenue	\$3,040	\$3,283	\$3,261	\$2,557	\$2,567	\$3,152	\$3,378	\$2,942	\$2,413	2,804
Gross Profit	\$2,104	\$2,266	\$2,137	\$1,910	\$2,009	\$2,144	\$2,240	\$2,188	\$1,877	1,891
Gross Margin	69.2%	69.0%	65.5%	74.7%	78.3%	68.0%	66.3%	74.4%	77.8%	67.4%
SG&A Exp.	\$497	\$498	\$463	\$363	\$293	\$272	\$330	\$258	\$255	289
D&A Exp.	\$412	\$464	\$466	\$503	\$433	\$461	\$492	\$439	\$455	519
Operating Profit	\$943	\$1,033	\$922	\$639	\$898	\$917	\$835	\$963	\$702	696
Operating Margin	31.0%	31.5%	28.3%	25.0%	35.0%	29.1%	24.7%	32.7%	29.1%	24.8%
Net Profit	\$553	\$570	\$644	\$276	\$468	\$397	\$489	\$717	\$319	313
Net Margin	18.2%	17.4%	19.8%	10.8%	18.2%	12.6%	14.5%	24.4%	13.2%	11.2%
Free Cash Flow	-\$870	-\$517	-\$596	-\$43	\$248	\$73	-\$205	\$185	\$553	396
Income Tax	\$156	\$182	\$187	\$161	\$178	\$133	\$174	\$40	\$113	110

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Assets	13,287	14,135	14,388	13,021	13,945	16,572	16,020	15,344	15,920	16,530
Cash & Equivalents	\$351	\$468	\$302	\$350	\$256	\$304	\$400	\$745	\$609	585
Accounts Receivable	\$533	\$448	\$418	\$312	\$384	\$469	\$496	\$389	\$426	507
Inventories	\$79	\$85	\$73	\$32	\$28	\$32	\$23	\$23	\$22	16
Goodwill & Int. Ass.	\$331	\$347	\$341	\$349	\$390	\$448	\$463	\$482	\$514	569
Total Liabilities	\$8,890	\$9,070	\$9,558	\$8,558	\$9,294	\$11,530	\$11,202	\$10,046	\$10,580	11,180
Long-Term Debt	\$5,502	\$5,910	\$6,305	\$5,759	\$6,214	\$7,890	\$7,694	\$6,864	\$7,102	7,464
Shareholder's Equity	\$3,670	\$4,019	\$3,870	\$3,259	\$3,401	\$3,714	\$3,592	\$4,020	\$4,029	3,972
LTD/E Ratio	1.25	1.17	1.31	1.33	1.38	1.61	1.64	1.33	1.37	1.43

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Return on Assets	4.5%	4.2%	4.5%	2.0%	3.5%	2.6%	3.0%	4.6%	2.0%	1.9%
Return on Equity	15.7%	14.8%	16.3%	7.7%	14.1%	11.1%	13.4%	18.8%	7.9%	7.8%
ROIC	6.0%	5.5%	5.8%	2.6%	4.4%	3.3%	3.8%	5.8%	2.6%	2.5%
Shares Out.	256.0	259.3	262.8	265.3	267.8	270.1	272.1	273.2	273	270
Revenue/Share	\$11.87	\$12.66	\$12.41	\$9.64	\$9.59	\$11.67	\$12.41	\$10.77	\$8.83	10.37
FCF/Share	-\$3.40	-\$1.99	-\$2.27	-\$0.16	\$0.93	\$0.27	-\$0.75	\$0.68	\$2.02	1.47

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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