



Canadian Utilities (CDUAF)

Updated July 30th, 2023 by Nikolaos Sismanis

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$25	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	9.7%	Market Cap:	\$6.72 B
Fair Value Price:	\$27	5 Year Growth Estimate:	4.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	08/02/2023
% Fair Value:	94%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	1.3%	Dividend Payment Date:	09/01/2023
Dividend Yield:	5.4%	5 Year Price Target	\$32	Years Of Dividend Growth¹:	51
Dividend Risk Score:	B	Retirement Suitability Score:	A	Rating	Buy

Overview & Current Events

Canadian Utilities is an \$7.6 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 51-year streak. Unless otherwise noted, US dollars are used in this research report.

On July 27th, 2023, Canadian Utilities reported its Q2 results for the period ending June 30th, 2023. Revenues for the quarter amounted to about \$663.5 million, 5.8% lower year-over-year (in constant currency), while adjusted earnings-per-share came in at \$0.40, 27.5% lower year-over-year.

Lower revenues were mainly due to cost efficiencies generated by Electricity Distribution and Natural Gas Distribution over the second generation Performance Base Regulation (PBR) term now being passed onto customers under the 2023 Cost of Service rebasing framework, and the AUC (Alberta Utilities Commission) decision to maximize the collection of 2021 deferred revenues in 2022 as a result of rate relief provided to customers in 2021 (due to COVID-19 at the time).

The substantial decline in earnings was primarily driven by reduced revenues, which squeezed the company's margins, coupled with the impact of inflation that further escalated the overall costs. Our updated estimates point towards FY2023 EPS of \$1.66. The company's current annualized dividend rate of C\$1.7944 equals close to US\$1.35 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	\$1.66	\$2.03
DPS	\$0.91	\$0.92	\$0.85	\$0.97	\$1.14	\$1.15	\$1.30	\$1.37	\$1.39	\$1.31	\$1.35	\$1.53
Shares²	255	258	262	265	267	269	272	272	270	269	270	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 impressive 10-year dividend CAGR of 9.6% is more than enough to compensate for the FX fluctuations, progressively growing investors' income.

¹ Years of Dividend Growth and Last Dividend Increase based in C\$.

² Share count in millions

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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	15.0	16.0
Avg. Yld.	2.7%	2.7%	3.4%	3.6%	3.5%	4.6%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	5.4%	4.7%

Canadian Utilities' shares are currently attached to a notable yield of 5.4%, 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 15.0 is not only below its historical average of 18.5 but also below our fair P/E of 16, which we set taking into account higher rates. Hence, we believe that the stock is modestly undervalued. Due to achieving half a century of consecutive annual dividend hikes, we believe the stock can attract investor interest during an uncertain landscape, which could expand its current multiple.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

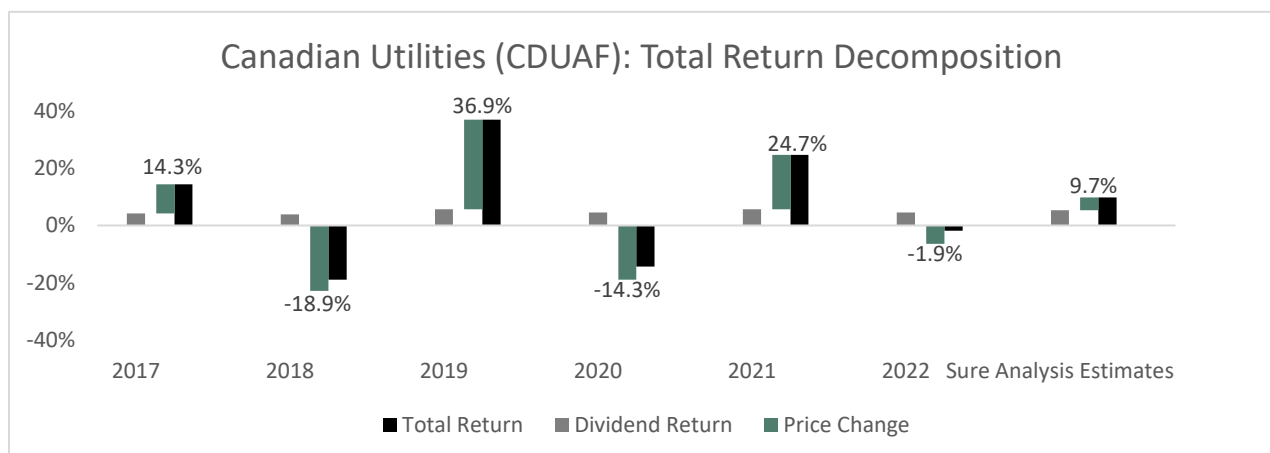
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028
Payout	46%	42%	105%	63%	86%	75%	52%	132%	145%	86%	81%	76%

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 half a century, 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 10-year average growth rate of 7.2%. 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 9.7%, driven by the 5.4% dividend yield and modest EPS growth expectations, boosted by a possible valuation tailwind. Shares earn a buy rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue	\$3,283	\$3,261	\$2,557	\$2,567	\$3,152	\$3,378	\$2,942	\$2,413	2,804	3,111
Gross Profit	\$2,266	\$2,137	\$1,910	\$2,009	\$2,144	\$2,240	\$2,188	\$1,877	1,891	2,101
Gross Margin	69.0%	65.5%	74.7%	78.3%	68.0%	66.3%	74.4%	77.8%	67.4%	67.5%
SG&A Exp.	\$498	\$463	\$363	\$293	\$272	\$330	\$258	\$255	289	287
D&A Exp.	\$464	\$466	\$503	\$433	\$461	\$492	\$439	\$455	519	493
Operating Profit	\$1,033	\$922	\$639	\$898	\$917	\$835	\$963	\$702	696	870
Operating Margin	31.5%	28.3%	25.0%	35.0%	29.1%	24.7%	32.7%	29.1%	24.8%	28.0%
Net Profit	\$570	\$644	\$276	\$468	\$397	\$489	\$717	\$319	313	486
Net Margin	17.4%	19.8%	10.8%	18.2%	12.6%	14.5%	24.4%	13.2%	11.2%	15.6%
Free Cash Flow	-\$517	-\$596	-\$43	\$248	\$73	-\$205	\$185	\$553	396	593
Income Tax	\$182	\$187	\$161	\$178	\$133	\$174	\$40	\$113	110	153

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Assets	14,135	14,388	13,021	13,945	16,572	16,020	15,344	15,920	16,530	16,190
Cash & Equivalents	\$468	\$302	\$350	\$256	\$304	\$400	\$745	\$609	585	514
Accounts Receivable	\$448	\$418	\$312	\$384	\$469	\$496	\$389	\$426	507	620
Inventories	\$85	\$73	\$32	\$28	\$32	\$23	\$23	\$22	16	18
Goodwill & Int. Ass.	\$347	\$341	\$349	\$390	\$448	\$463	\$482	\$514	569	603
Total Liabilities	\$9,070	\$9,558	\$8,558	\$9,294	\$11,530	\$11,202	\$10,046	\$10,580	11,180	10,980
Long-Term Debt	\$5,910	\$6,305	\$5,759	\$6,214	\$7,890	\$7,694	\$6,864	\$7,102	7,464	7,029
Shareholder's Equity	\$4,019	\$3,870	\$3,259	\$3,401	\$3,714	\$3,592	\$4,020	\$4,029	3,972	3,911
LTD/E Ratio	1.17	1.31	1.33	1.38	1.61	1.64	1.33	1.37	1.43	1.39

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Return on Assets	4.2%	4.5%	2.0%	3.5%	2.6%	3.0%	4.6%	2.0%	1.9%	3.0%
Return on Equity	14.8%	16.3%	7.7%	14.1%	11.1%	13.4%	18.8%	7.9%	7.8%	12.3%
ROIC	5.5%	5.8%	2.6%	4.4%	3.3%	3.8%	5.8%	2.6%	2.5%	3.9%
Shares Out.	259.3	262.8	265.3	267.8	270.1	272.1	273.2	273	270	270
Revenue/Share	\$12.66	\$12.41	\$9.64	\$9.59	\$11.67	\$12.41	\$10.77	\$8.83	10.37	11.51
FCF/Share	-\$1.99	-\$2.27	-\$0.16	\$0.93	\$0.27	-\$0.75	\$0.68	\$2.02	1.47	2.19

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

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