



Stantec Inc. (STN)

Updated March 8th, 2024 by Nikolaos Sismanis

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$84	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	7.3%	Market Cap:	\$9.62 B
Fair Value Price:	\$69	5 Year Growth Estimate:	11.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	03/27/2024
% Fair Value:	122%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	-3.9%	Dividend Payment Date:	04/15/2024
Dividend Yield:	0.7%	5 Year Price Target	\$116	Years Of Dividend Growth:	12 ¹
Dividend Risk Score:	C	Retirement Suitability Score:	F	Rating:	Hold

Overview & Current Events

Stantec Inc. provides professional consulting services in the field of infrastructure and facilities internationally. This includes services in engineering, architecture, interior design, environmental sciences, project management, and project economics. The company also undertakes water provision, transportation, and public works such as transportation planning and traffic engineering. Finally, it serves the urban regeneration, infrastructure, education, and waste industries. Stantec generated \$3.8 billion in revenues last year and is based in Edmonton, Canada. All figures in this report have been converted to U.S. dollars.

On February 28th, 2023, Stantec increased its dividend by 7.7% to a quarterly rate of C\$0.21. It implies an annualized rate of \$0.62 at the current CAD/USD.

On the same day, the company released its Q4 and full-year results for the period ending December 31st, 2023. Net revenues for the quarter came in at \$937.5 million, 9.9% higher on a constant basis year-over-year, reflecting 7.5% organic and a 1.9% acquisition net revenue growth. Adjusted net income increased by 17.7% to nearly \$50 million – a record high. Still Stantec's project margin did decline by 100 bps to 53.9% partly due to changes in project mix in Stantec's US operations.

On a per-share basis, adjusted net income was \$0.62, stable year-over-year. For the year, adjusted net income came in at \$2.75, up 17.3% year-over-year. On a GAAP basis, EPS was \$2.25. The company's contract backlog increased to \$4.73 billion, reflecting 6.8% growth compared to last year. It represents about 12 months of work.

For FY2024, management expects net revenue growth between 11% and 15% and adjusted EPS growth between 12% and 16% in comparison to FY2023. Thus, we estimate FY2024 adjusted EPS of \$3.14, which is derived from: FY2023 adjusted EPS of \$CAD3.67 times 1.14 (midpoint of guidance) times the exchange rate of 0.75 (CAD/USD). Note that all figures in the table below reflect GAAP EPS. We are utilizing adjusted EPS to estimate the company's total return prospects.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
EPS	\$1.52	\$1.20	\$0.91	\$0.68	\$0.31	\$1.34	\$1.21	\$1.43	\$1.64	\$2.25	\$3.14	\$5.29
DPS	\$0.32	\$0.30	\$0.34	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.45	\$0.49	\$0.52	\$0.53	\$0.59	\$0.62	\$0.83
Shares²	93.5	94.1	107.0	114.0	113.7	111.6	111.6	111.2	110.9	111.2	111.2	105.0

Stantec has been growing its revenues consistently over the past two decades, riding the wave of increased spending in infrastructure, net zero-designed buildings, and green energy. EPS lagged from 2013 to 2019, as the company took advantage of its increased operating cash flows to acquire other companies and reinvest back into its business. With scaling, EPS has also started to accelerate over the past few years, and it should continue to do so as the company's margins undergo an expansion phase. We expect an EPS medium-term growth of 11%, powered by the global trend of increased spending in green energy, smart cities, ecosystem restorations, and clean infrastructure. The company has

¹ Based on the original Canadian listing.

² Share count is in millions.

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grown its dividend annually in its original CAD reporting since initiating one in 2012. However, in its NYSE listing, dividend growth has lagged due to the Canadian dollar's prolonged depreciation against the USD. This applies to the company's EPS performance as well. We expect DPS growth of around 6% in the medium-term, lower than Stantec's latest DPS hike, assuming the company retains sufficient cash to reinvest towards its future prosperity.

Valuation Analysis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Now	2029
Avg. P/E	21.7	29.2	35.2	50.9	103.2	23.1	32.2	33.5	28.7	25.6	26.9	22.0
Avg. Yld.	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%

Stantec's P/E ratio has fluctuated wildly over the past decade due to volatile EPS for the reasons mentioned earlier. However, note that all historical P/E figures relate to the company's GAAP metrics, which are usually affected by one-off events. The stock's current valuation of 26.9 times the expected FY2024 adjusted EPS could overvalue the name. We are aware of Stantec's robust backlog, which provides predictability, but we remain prudent against a slowdown in global infrastructure spending in the coming years and elevated interest rates. The yield should remain soft despite Stantec's dividend growth prospects.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

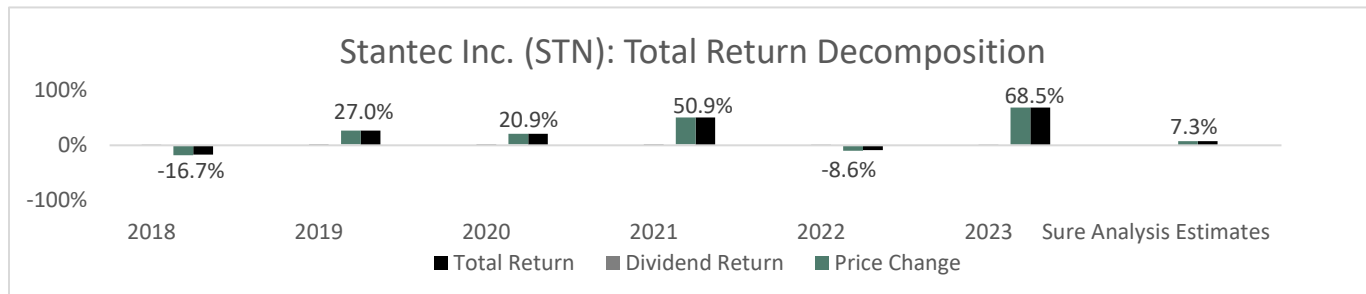
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Payout	21%	25%	37%	59%	129%	34%	40%	36%	32%	26%	20%	16%

We consider Stantec's dividend very safe. Not only is the payout ratio quite healthy, but EPS is growing at a faster rate than DPS. Further, the company reports high depreciation and amortization levels. Hence, the dividend is covered by an even wider margin from cash from operations. Additionally, Stantec showcases great operational qualities, such as its year-long worth of revenues of backlog, which should be able to sustain a stable performance if demand for its services faces temporary headwinds. We can't identify and particular competitive advantages, though the company's massively wide array of services could make it a more desirable option for future clients against its competitors, which operate in smaller, fragmented markets. Due to having a strong backlog and due to infrastructure and water revenues being secured under long-term contracts, we believe that financials will remain resilient under a potential recession, as was the case during the Great Financials Crisis. Financials remained excellent during the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Stantec exhibits an extended record of excellent shareholder value creation. The company is operating in an industry with favorable growth catalysts ahead, which should result in higher financials and a solid backlog going forward. We forecast annualized returns of 7.3% in the medium-term. Accordingly, Stantec earns a hold rating. American investors should be wary of the FX fluctuations between the USD and CAD, which could sway returns either way.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue	2,172	2,292	2,254	3,247	3,109	3,306	3,637	3,530	3,651	4,364
Gross Profit	974	1,031	1,013	1,266	1,359	1,401	1,513	1,441	1,566	1,858
Gross Margin	44.8%	45.0%	44.9%	39.0%	43.7%	42.4%	41.6%	40.8%	42.9%	42.6%
SG&A Exp.	725	766	775	1,008	1,086	1,110	1,080	1,010	1,135	1,339
D&A Exp.	52	57	66	96	---	---	---	---	177	218
Operating Profit	197	208	173	162	177	202	252	260	254	301
Operating Margin	9.1%	9.1%	7.7%	5.0%	5.7%	6.1%	6.9%	7.4%	7.0%	6.9%
Net Profit	142	149	123	99	75	37	146	128	160	190
Net Margin	6.5%	6.5%	5.4%	3.0%	2.4%	1.1%	4.0%	3.6%	4.4%	4.4%
Free Cash Flow	209	146	128	166	154	---	---	---	276	176
Income Tax	51	53	43	38	128	42	54	43	50	60

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Assets	1,567	1,688	1,688	3,178	3,088	2,944	3,492	3,442	4,099	4,165
Cash & Equivalents	134	132	49	156	190	130	171	224	152	109
Accounts Receivable	353	362	403	549	594	569	603	551	618	728
Goodwill & Int. Ass.	633	739	796	1,689	1,447	1,372	1,433	1,455	2,006	1,965
Total Liabilities	728	752	734	1,712	1,578	1,543	2,055	1,929	2,529	2,480
Accounts Payable	80	90	89	270	292	163	173	171	167	221
Long-Term Debt	224	266	263	757	588	686	674	538	982	959
Shareholder's Equity	838	936	954	1,465	1,508	1,400	1,436	1,512	1,570	1,684
LTD/E Ratio	0.27	0.28	0.28	0.52	0.39	0.49	0.47	0.36	0.63	0.57

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Return on Assets	9.3%	9.2%	7.3%	4.1%	2.4%	1.2%	4.6%	3.7%	4.3%	4.6%
Return on Equity	18.1%	16.8%	13.0%	8.1%	5.0%	2.5%	10.3%	8.7%	10.4%	11.7%
ROIC	13.6%	13.2%	10.1%	5.7%	3.5%	1.7%	7.0%	6.1%	7.0%	7.3%
Shares Out.	92.5	93.5	94.1	107	114	113.7	111.6	111.6	111.6	111.1
Revenue/Share	23.31	24.29	23.83	30.25	27.18	29.04	32.61	31.54	32.71	39.29
FCF/Share	2.24	1.55	1.36	1.55	1.35	---	---	---	2.48	1.59

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

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