Assured Guaranty Ltd. (AGO)

Updated May 28th, 2024, by Tiago Dias

Key Metrics

Current Price:	$75	**5 Year CAGR Estimate:**	-7.4%	**Market Cap:**	$4 B
Fair Value Price:	$45	**5 Year Growth Estimate:**	0.0%	**Ex-Dividend Date:**	05/14/2024
% Fair Value:	167%	**5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:**	-9.7%	**Dividend Payment Date:**	05/29/2024
Dividend Yield:	1.6%	**5 Year Price Target**	$45	**Years Of Dividend Growth:**	11
Dividend Risk Score:	C	**Retirement Suitability Score:**	D	**Rating:**	Sell

Overview & Current Events

Assured Guaranty Ltd. (AGO) is a Bermuda-based holding company that provides, through its subsidiaries, credit protection products and asset management services. The company provides credit protection products to the U.S. and international public finance and structured finance markets and manages assets across collateralized loan obligations as well as other funds. Incorporated in 2003, this $4 billion market cap company has raised its dividend every year for the past 11 years.

Assured Guaranty Ltd. reported Q1 2024 earnings on May 7th, 2024. For the quarter, earnings-per-share equaled $1.89 per share, above the $1.34 per share reported in the same period in 2023. The company issued a $0.31 dividend that will be paid by the end of May. The company's shareholders equity stood at $102 per share.

The president and CEO, Dominic Frederico, was pleased with the excellent first quarter 2024 results, with net income increasing 35% year over year and adjusted operating income increasing by 66%. Shareholders equity per share reached a new all-time high with the business reflecting the strong production in U.S public finance and global structured finance.

In April, the company celebrated its 20th anniversary of its IPO, since that time through the end of the first quarter the company's share price has increased by almost 385% which is above the S&P500 financials average. The company has ramped up its share repurchase program with a share repurchase authorisation increase of $300 million on May 2nd.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
EPS	$6.26	$7.08	$6.56	$5.96	$4.68	$4.00	$4.19	$5.23	$1.92	$12.30	***$5.00***	***$5.00***
DPS	$0.44	$0.48	$0.52	$0.57	$0.64	$0.72	$0.80	$0.88	$1.00	$1.12	***$1.20***	***$1.20***
Shares	158	138	128	116	103	93	77	67	64	60	***57.0***	***50.0***

While the -8.6% average annual growth rate in earnings during the 2013 to 2022 period may seem lackluster at first, a quick look will immediately see that such a growth rate is deflated by unusually low earnings in 2022. When we discard that outlier, we can see that the company has been flat during the time period.

For such a mature and well-established industry, it is normal for growth to not be particularly spectacular, however AGO has failed to live up to its peers' performance over the past 5 years, and arguably the past decade. While there are some bright spots, and potential turnaround moments, particularly with the settlement of its Puerto Rico business, we are not confident that the company will be able to break from its current shrinking trajectory.

For these reasons we are estimating 0% growth in earnings, and subsequently 0% growth in its dividend. This means we expect EPS in 2029 to be around $5.00 per share, with a dividend payment of around $1.20.

While the company has not seen its earnings meaningfully improve over the past decade, insurance is a well-established and stable business that can provide reliable income for long lengths of time. While it's true that the lack of growth in earnings has been felt, particularly given the increasing dividend which has put pressure on the payout ratio, such pressure has not yet reached the point where the dividend is in danger of a cut.

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Valuation Analysis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Avg. P/E	3.8	3.7	4.2	6.6	8.1	11.1	7.2	8.4	29.0	7.3	***15.0***	***9.0***
Avg. Yld.	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	1.4%	1.7%	1.6%	2.7%	2.0%	2.0%	1.2%	***1.6%***	***2.7%***

AGO is currently trading at around seven times TTM earnings and 18 times forward earnings, well above its historical average. Given its lackluster performance, we expect that the company will be re-rated back down to closer to its historical norms and trade at a multiple of around nine times earnings by 2028.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

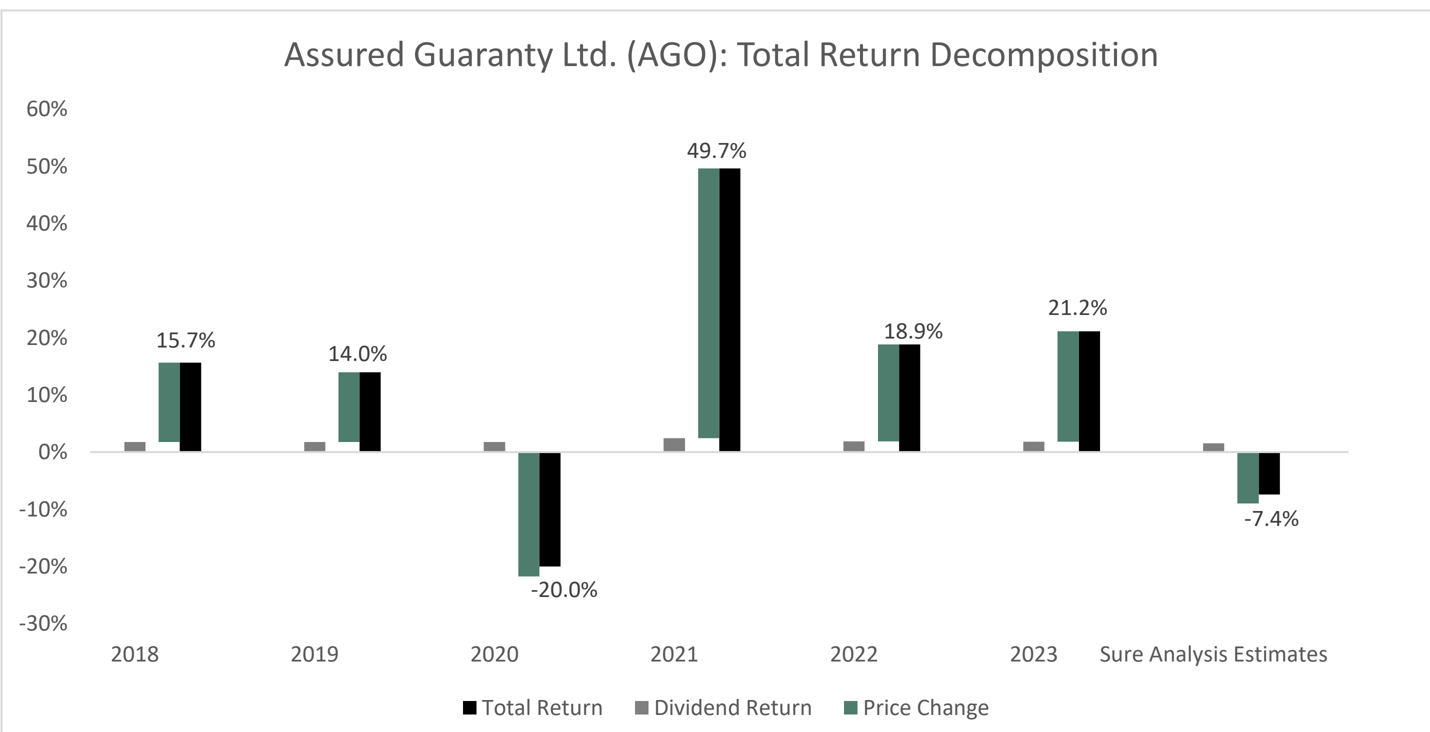
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Payout	7%	7%	8%	10%	14%	18%	19%	17%	52%	9%	***24%***	***24%***

So long as the management team continues to run a steady ship, Assured Guaranty has more than enough runway to make good on its obligations, dispose of unprofitable business, and find new growth opportunities, in the U.S. or abroad. And indeed, the company's comparatively high profit margins indicate that they do have some sort of competitive advantage when it comes to sourcing and insuring local government bonds and other similar financial products. The management team clearly recognizes this expertise, so it's merely a matter of allocating and transferring these competitive advantages to new and more profitable markets.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

With an unattractive 1.6% dividend yield, troubled growth prospects and heavy headwinds stemming from a multiple re-rating, we expect the company to provide a negative return over the next 5 years of around -7.4%. For this reason, the company's shares earn a sell rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



Disclosure: This analyst has no position in the security discussed in this research report, and no plans to initiate one in the next 72 hours.

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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue	1,262	1,739	1,955	1,380	1,651	987	924	1,084	698	684
SG&A Exp.					143	152	178	228	230	258
Net Profit	808	1,088	1,056	881	730	521	402	362	389	124
Net Margin	64.0%	62.6%	54.0%	63.8%	44.2%	52.8%	43.5%	33.4%	55.7%	18.1%
Free Cash Flow	244	577	(71)	(132)	433	462	(509)	(853)	(1,937)	(2,479)
Income Tax	334	443	375	136	261	59	63	45	58	11

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Assets	16,287	14,919	14,544	14,151	14,433	13,603	14,326	15,334	18,208	16,843
Cash & Equivalents	184	75	166	118	144	104	169	162	120	107
Acc. Receivable	1,086	958	888	1,021	1,487	1,394	2,033	2,363	2,173	1,555
Goodwill & Int.						24	216	203	175	163
Total Liabilities	11,172	9,161	8,481	7,647	7,594	7,048	7,674	8,629	11,708	11,551
Accounts Payable	148	107	51	64	---	---	---	---	---	---
Long-Term Debt	816	1,297	1,300	1,306	1,292	1,233	1,235	1,224	1,673	1,675
Total Equity	5,115	5,758	6,063	6,504	6,839	6,555	6,639	6,643	6,292	5,064
D/E Ratio	0.16	0.23	0.21	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.27	0.33

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Return on Assets	4.8%	7.0%	7.2%	6.1%	5.1%	3.7%	2.9%	2.4%	2.3%	0.7%
Return on Equity	16.0%	20.0%	17.9%	14.0%	10.9%	7.8%	6.1%	5.5%	6.0%	2.2%
ROIC	13.7%	16.8%	14.6%	11.6%	9.2%	6.5%	5.1%	4.6%	4.8%	1.6%
Shares Out.	182	158	138	128	116	103	93	77	67	64
Revenue/Share	6.73	10.02	13.12	10.29	13.50	8.87	9.22	12.58	9.39	10.70
FCF/Share	1.30	3.32	(0.48)	(0.98)	3.54	4.15	(5.08)	(9.90)	(26.07)	(38.80)

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