



Canadian Utilities (CDUAF)

Updated November 21st, 2024 by Nikolaos Sismanis

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$25.29	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	6.0%	Market Cap:	\$5.18 B
Fair Value Price:	\$21.97	5 Year Growth Estimate:	4.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	11/07/2024
% Fair Value:	115%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	-2.8%	Dividend Payment Date:	12/01/2024
Dividend Yield:	5.2%	5 Year Price Target	\$27	Years Of Dividend Growth¹:	52
Dividend Risk Score:	B	Retirement Suitability Score:	A	Rating	Hold

Overview & Current Events

Canadian Utilities is a \$6.24 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 52-year streak. Unless otherwise noted, US dollars are used in this research report.

On November 14th, 2024, Canadian Utilities posted its Q3 results for the period ending September 30th, 2024. For the quarter, revenues amounted to \$599.0 million, relatively flat year-over-year (in constant currency), while adjusted EPS came in at \$0.28, about 19% higher year-over-year.

Flat revenues were mainly due to the decreased revenue contribution from ATCOenergy with its sale to ATCO Ltd. in the quarter, being offset by growth in rate base and an increase in return on equity (ROE) in ATCO Energy Systems.

Higher adjusted earnings in Q3 were primarily driven by growth in rate base and an increase in ROE within ATCO Energy Systems' businesses, higher demand and stronger seasonal spreads in natural gas storage services at ATCO EnPower, and increased interest income. These gains were partially offset by the impact of inflation indexing in ATCO Australia and tax adjustments recorded by Electricity Distribution in the final two quarters of 2023.

We now expect earnings per share of \$1.69 for FY2024. At the current CAD/USD rate, the stock's dividend run rate is \$1.31.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
EPS	\$2.18	\$0.81	\$1.54	\$1.32	\$1.53	\$2.50	\$1.04	\$0.96	\$1.53	\$1.76	\$1.69	\$2.06
DPS	\$0.92	\$0.85	\$0.97	\$1.14	\$1.15	\$1.30	\$1.37	\$1.39	\$1.31	\$1.35	\$1.31	\$1.48
Shares²	262	265	267	269	272	273	273	270	269	270	272	275

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 and the possibility of modest margin improvements, we retain our projected 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	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Now	2029
Avg. P/E	18.1	19.3	20.9	18.3	18.2	15.0	22.9	16.5	17.9	14.3	15.0	13.0
Avg. Yld.	2.7%	3.4%	3.6%	3.5%	4.6%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	5.4%	5.2%	5.5%

Canadian Utilities' shares currently yield an attractive 5.2%, a notable high for this legendary dividend payer. This above-average yield can be attributed to the current decade-high interest rates, prompting investors to value YieldCos at higher yields.

The stock's current P/E ratio of 15.0 is notably below its historical average of about 18. However, again, we believe that the multiple compression is well-justified given the rapid increases in interest rates. Investors demand higher tangible returns in the face of higher risk-free returns from T-bills. In fact, we believe the stock would be more appropriately valued with a P/E ratio of around 13.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

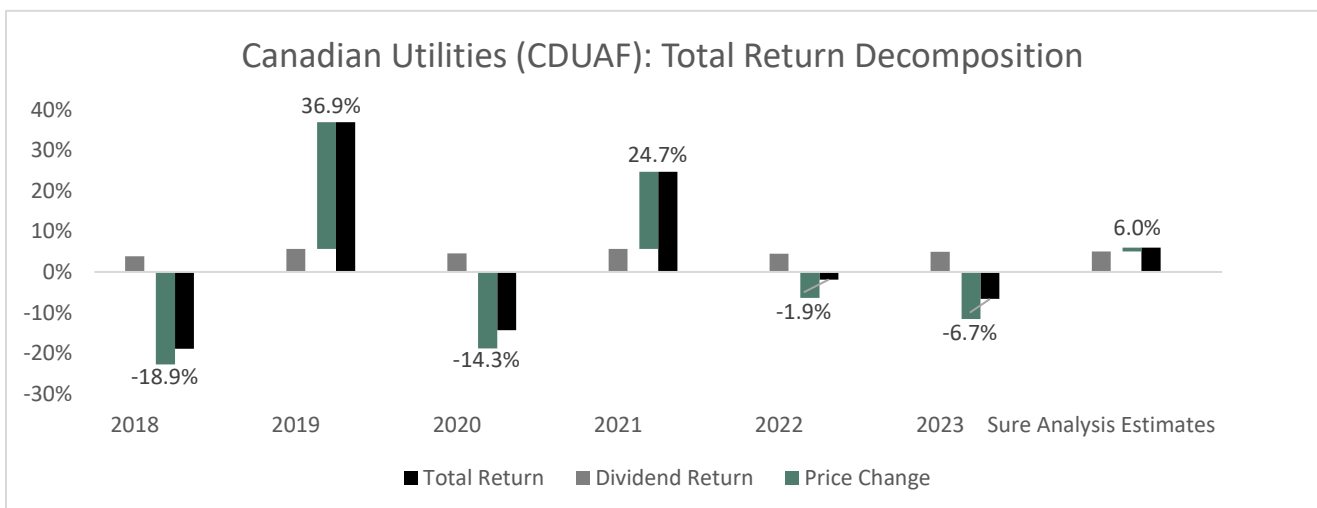
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2029
Payout	42%	105%	63%	86%	75%	52%	132%	145%	86%	77%	78%	72%

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 2029 we expect it to have returned to more comfortable levels, of around 72% of its net income.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

We believe that Canadian Utilities is an excellent hold for income-oriented investors who seek stable and predictable returns. The above-average dividend yield is quite attractive, and we believe that Canadian Utilities offers low volatility and a stable investment case during a time of high uncertainty. However, share prices are likely to remain muted in the current interest-rates environment. We project annualized returns of 6.0%, driven by the 5.2% dividend yield, modest EPS growth expectations, and the possibility of a valuation headwind ahead. Shares earn a hold rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	\$3,261	\$2,557	\$2,567	\$3,152	\$3,378	\$2,942	\$2,413	2,804	3,111	2,811
Gross Profit	\$2,137	\$1,910	\$2,009	\$2,144	\$2,240	\$2,188	\$1,877	1,891	2,101	1,904
Gross Margin	65.5%	74.7%	78.3%	68.0%	66.3%	74.4%	77.8%	67.4%	67.5%	67.7%
SG&A Exp.	\$463	\$363	\$293	\$272	\$330	\$258	\$255	289	287	291
D&A Exp.	\$466	\$503	\$433	\$461	\$492	\$439	\$455	519	493	537
Operating Profit	\$922	\$639	\$898	\$917	\$835	\$963	\$702	696	870	767
Operating Margin	28.3%	25.0%	35.0%	29.1%	24.7%	32.7%	29.1%	24.8%	28.0%	27.3%
Net Profit	\$644	\$276	\$468	\$397	\$489	\$717	\$319	313	486	524
Net Margin	19.8%	10.8%	18.2%	12.6%	14.5%	24.4%	13.2%	11.2%	15.6%	18.6%
Free Cash Flow	-\$596	-\$43	\$248	\$73	-\$205	\$185	\$553	396	593	327
Income Tax	\$187	\$161	\$178	\$133	\$174	\$40	\$113	110	153	147

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Assets	14,388	13,021	13,945	16,572	16,020	15,344	15,920	16,530	16,190	17,460
Cash & Equivalents	\$302	\$350	\$256	\$304	\$400	\$745	\$609	585	514	156
Accounts Receivable	\$418	\$312	\$384	\$469	\$496	\$389	\$426	507	620	534
Inventories	\$73	\$32	\$28	\$32	\$23	\$23	\$22	16	18	48
Goodwill & Int. Ass.	\$341	\$349	\$390	\$448	\$463	\$482	\$514	569	603	842
Total Liabilities	\$9,558	\$8,558	\$9,294	\$11,530	\$11,202	\$10,046	\$10,580	11,180	10,980	12,060
Long-Term Debt	\$6,305	\$5,759	\$6,214	\$7,890	\$7,694	\$6,864	\$7,102	7,464	7,029	7,941
Shareholder's Equity	\$3,870	\$3,259	\$3,401	\$3,714	\$3,592	\$4,020	\$4,029	3,972	3,911	2,050
LTD/E Ratio	1.31	1.33	1.38	1.61	1.64	1.33	1.37	1.43	1.39	1.52

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Return on Assets	4.5%	2.0%	3.5%	2.6%	3.0%	4.6%	2.0%	1.9%	3.0%	3.1%
Return on Equity	16.3%	7.7%	14.1%	11.1%	13.4%	18.8%	7.9%	7.8%	12.3%	9.9%
ROIC	5.8%	2.6%	4.4%	3.3%	3.8%	5.8%	2.6%	2.5%	3.9%	4.1%
Shares Out.	262.8	265.3	267.8	270.1	272.1	273.2	273	270	270	270
Revenue/Share	\$12.41	\$9.64	\$9.59	\$11.67	\$12.41	\$10.77	\$8.83	10.37	11.51	10.40
FCF/Share	-\$2.27	-\$0.16	\$0.93	\$0.27	-\$0.75	\$0.68	\$2.02	1.47	2.19	1.21

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

Disclaimer

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