

NORTH AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION GROUP LTD. | NOA-TSE

Q4'23/Q1'24 Results Slightly Weaker Than We Hoped; Reiterate \$60 Target

PRICE CAN\$31.84

PRICE TARGET CAN\$60.00

KEY TAKEAWAY

NOA reported Q4'23 EBITDA of \$101M (+18% yr/yr), which was in line with our forecast but modestly below consensus of \$107M. NOA generated strong results in its wholly owned segments, where gross profit came in well above our forecast (\$66M vs. \$51M). However, this was partially offset by lower joint venture profit (\$9M vs. \$14M). Several mining projects at its Nuna joint venture underperformed during Q4, but we believe these are nearly complete. NOA maintained its 2024 guidance ranges; however, the company sees Q1 results falling short of our prior expectations. To be conservative, we are lowering our 2024 outlook to the low end of the range. Our EBITDA estimate goes from \$450M to \$430M (versus guidance of \$430M–\$470M). We reiterate our CAN\$60 12-month price target.

KEY POINTS

Reports Q4'23 results in line with our model but below consensus. North American Construction reported Q4'23 adjusted EBITDA of \$101M (+18% yr/yr) versus our estimate of \$101M and consensus of \$107M. Lower combined revenue (\$403M versus our \$415M) was offset by higher margins. NOA generated an adjusted EBITDA margin of 25.1% in Q1'24, which was 70 bps above our forecast.

Solid wholly owned results, offset by weaker joint ventures. Wholly owned gross profit smashed our Q4'23 forecast (\$66M versus our \$51M). However, this was partially offset by weaker joint venture profit, which came in at \$9M versus our \$14M. Management blamed the JV underperformance on Nuna, which was negatively impacted by three underperforming mining jobs in Canada during Q4. These projects are now nearly complete, we believe.

Solid Q4 free cash flow, leverage below target. Based on our calculations, NOA generated Q4'23 free cash flow of \$75M (\$2.80/sh), which was up from \$63M last year but below our \$90M forecast. Based on management calculations, the company ended 2023 with net debt leverage of 1.7x versus its target of 1.8x. For 2024, management noted that its priority is to pay down debt.

Combined backlog up at year-end, heading higher. NOA's combined backlog finished 2023 at \$2.7B, including MacKellar, which is up from \$782M at the end of Q3'23. After recent awards, management noted that its pro forma backlog is now ~\$3.3B. The company appears particularly bullish about bidding in Australia, we believe. Guidance now includes costs to move assets from Canada to Australia.

Guidance maintained, re-setting expectations. Management maintained its 2024 adjusted EBITDA guidance of \$430M–\$470M. However, it expects Q1 EBITDA to be \$86M–\$94M versus our prior forecast of \$120M. Given the slower start to the year, we are lowering our full-year forecast from \$450M to \$430M. For 2025, our estimate declines modestly from \$482M to \$464M (+8% yr/yr).

Reiterate CAN\$60 target. It continues to surprise us that NOA—which generates strong margins, free cash flow, and returns on capital—trades at 3.8x our 2024 EV/EBITDA forecast. In 2024, we forecast adjusted EBITDA margin of 26%, free cash flow of \$116M (\$4/sh), and ROIC of 10%. We reiterate our \$60 price target, which is based on 5.6x our 2025 EV/EBITDA forecast.

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COMPANY STATISTICS

52-Week Range	\$21.14-\$34.87
Market Capitalization (M)	\$1,051
Average Daily Volume (000s)	137
Debt/Total Cap	66%
Dividend	\$0.40
Shares Outstanding (M) fd	33.0
Estimated 3-yr EPS Growth	26%
Enterprise Value (M)	\$1,655
Float (M)	29.9

FINANCIALS

FYE Dec	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E
P/E Ratio	13.2x	11.2x	7.5x	6.7x
EV/EBITDA	6.7x	5.6x	3.8x	3.6x
Revenue (M)	\$1,054	\$1,274	\$1,633	\$1,680
Gross Inc (M)	\$151	\$204	\$300	\$322
EBITDA (M)	\$245	\$297	\$430	\$464
EPS				
Q1	\$0.51	\$0.96	\$0.71	\$1.00
Q2	\$0.17	\$0.47	\$1.16	\$1.25
Q3	\$0.65	\$0.54	\$1.38	\$1.45
Q4	\$1.10	\$0.87	\$1.00	\$1.08
Total	\$2.40	\$2.83	\$4.25	\$4.78
Consensus	---	---	\$4.41	\$4.89

Consensus estimates from Visible Alpha; Revenue and Gross Income are for NOA's combined operations, EBITDA and EPS are adjusted.

Note: All figures throughout this report are in CAN\$ unless otherwise noted.

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Valuation. On an EV/EBITDA basis, NOA shares are trading at 3.8x our 2024 EV/EBITDA forecast. Over the past five years, the company has traded at 3.9x forward EV/EBITDA, on average. Our \$60 price target is based on 5.6x our 2025 EV/EBITDA forecast. While this implies multiple expansion, we believe that this is warranted due to NOA's high margins, cash flow, and returns on capital. Note that based on current exchange rates, our US\$ price target would be ~\$44 (shares are currently trading at \$23.46).

Risks. Risks to the stock and to the achievement of our price target include macroeconomic conditions, government regulations, labor availability, acquisition integration risks, declining backlog, and large project execution risks. Additionally, while NOA's business is not directly impacted by oil prices, the stock could be negatively impacted by significant commodity price weakness, we believe. Finally, should the MacKellar acquisition fail to perform in line with expectations, our FY'24 and FY'25 estimates could prove aggressive.

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Price targets, when established, represent our best estimate of the market price of a stock in 12 months. A 12-month price target is highly subjective and the result of numerous assumptions, including company, industry, and market fundamentals, both on an absolute and relative basis, as well as investor sentiment, which can be highly volatile.

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