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CPH-TSX

Rating:	Buy
Target:	\$19.50
Price:	\$14.19
Return:	37.4%
Valuation:	20x EPS, 12.5x EBITDA (F2027 estimates)

Market Data

Basic Shares O/S (M)	25.4
Mkt cap (C\$M)	\$360.3
Ent Val (C\$M)	\$339.9
Pro forma cash (C\$M)	\$20.5
Debt (C\$M)	\$0.0
52 Week Range (C\$)	\$12.48-\$20.56
Avg. Daily Volume (M)	0.1600
Fiscal Year End	31-Dec

Financial Metrics

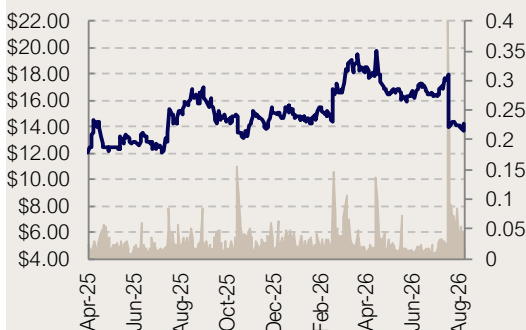
In US\$	2026E	2027E	2028E
Revenue (\$M)	51.3	54.2	55.2
EBITDA (\$M)	29.9	31.6	32.3
Net Inc (\$M)	19.9	19.9	20.5
EPS (fd, fully-taxed)	\$0.74	\$0.75	\$0.78
P/E	13.1x	13.1x	12.7x
EV/EBITDA	8.3x	7.8x	7.6x

Quarterly Data

In US\$M	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Revenue	2026E 12.5	12.1	12.9	13.8
	2027E 13.4	13.4	13.9	13.5
Adj EBITDA	2026E 7.7	6.6	7.6	8.0
	2027E 7.8	7.8	8.1	7.9

Company Description

Cipher is an ON-based specialty pharma firm, with royalty revenue from Galephar-partnered CIP drugs (Absorica, Lipofen) & marketed drugs in Canada/US (Epuris, Natroba) providing free cash to fund pipeline diversification in North American markets.



Natroba Economics Are Dominant In Our Cipher Valuation But Absorica Still Relevant To Our Cipher Investment Thesis - Buy

ON-based specialty pharmaceutical firm Cipher Pharmaceuticals published some positive news on its CIP-isotretinoin/cystic acne dermatology franchise this morning, reporting that US Absorica marketing partner Sun Pharmaceuticals (SUN-BO) is being held accountable legally for its recent underperformance on US Absorica sales, at least indirectly, while directly being held accountable for using clinical data used to support Absorica's original NDA filing & FDA approval (presumably the 2013 Phase I study in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* & the 2014 Phase III 925-patient study published in the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* to which we frequently refer in our Cipher commentary) in support of its own Absorica LD regulatory filings.

Legal activities with US partner Sun Pharmaceuticals conclude favorably for Cipher, generating balance sheet-stabilizing cash in the process. The results of this New York court decision are positive both optically & tangibly. Starting with the tangible benefits, Cipher should now be able to proceed operationally on its Rx marketing activities in North America, focusing on its sales of its suite of dermatology assets that of course includes CIP-isotretinoin in both of its branded forms (Absorica in the US, still sold by Sun though its rights to US marketing expire at the end-of-FQ426 & as Epuris in Canada where Cipher is independently responsible for sales) & US sales for its head lice/scabies-targeted Spinosad A/D topical formulation Natroba.

Secondly, some measurable economics flow to Cipher on this decision, including a damages cash award of C\$4.2M/US\$3.05M that will directly augment the firm's balance sheet cash of C\$12.7M/US\$9.1M, independent of any pending operating cash flow generated so far in FQ326. A cash influx of that magnitude is not hugely material to our CPH valuation other than to influence pro forma cash that we incorporate into our EV calculation for the firm & to at least partially mitigate financial risk & notionally provide capital to partially fund any future Natroba-like product in-licensing transactions that Cipher may consummate in coming quarters.

Royalties on Sun's own Canadian Absorica LD sales augment Cipher's existing Absorica economics, likely to a positive but modest degree in comparison to Epuris' impact on revenue/EBITDA. Separately, we of course reflect favorably on the downstream economics that Cipher could enjoy from Sun's Canadian Absorica LD sales (LD is a branded generic formulation of Epuris, presumably priced comparably to Cipher's own Lidose-based Epuris/isotretinoin formulation, for which it received Health Canada approval transpired in FQ323 & market launch transpired at end-of-FQ323), including a 15% royalty on Canadian sales for that drug out to F2040 & retroactively in place during FQ126-to-FQ326.

Our model assumes that Sun's Canadian market share in the isotretinoin/cystic acne medical market is modest in comparison to Epuris itself or to its other major competitors (mainly Roche's [ROG-SW, NR] legacy brand Accutane & Viatris/Mylan's [VRTS-Q, NR] Clarus) & we would be surprised if the firm was overly motivated to invest in Absorica LD Canadian sales now that it is poised to lose 15% of its operating income on this product.

Exhibit 1. Financial Forecast Summary for Cipher

<i>Fiscal year-end Dec 31</i> <i>(US\$000, except EPS)</i>	2018A	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022A	2023A	2024A	2025A	2026E	2027E	2028E
US/RoW, royalty revenue											
Royalty rev, ConZip (US)	552	600	500	430	152	138	33	154	119	188	188
Royalty rev, Lipofen (US)	2,378	2,312	2,400	2,331	2,850	2,175	2,045	1,600	1,841	1,887	1,963
Royalty rev, Absorica (US)	12,942	11,300	9,929	7,648	5,143	6,148	4,545	1,800	2,397	2,185	2,185
Royalty rev, Natroba (RoW)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	554	1,342	1,375
Canada/US, direct Rx sales											
Revenue, Epuris (Cda)	5,813	7,300	8,100	10,885	11,330	10,848	12,980	14,700	15,661	15,242	15,242
Revenue, Vaniga/Actikerall/ Beteflam/other (Cda)	1,064	939	678	650	1,200	1,753	1,780	2,200	2,137	2,296	2,486
Revenue, Natroba (US)	0	0	0	0	0	0	11,980	29,997	28,267	29,533	30,244
Revenue, Natroba (Cda)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	353	1,477	1,512
Total revenue	\$22,749	\$22,451	\$21,607	\$21,944	\$20,675	\$21,162	\$33,363	\$50,451	\$51,327	\$54,150	\$55,195
Revenue growth (%)	(43.6%)	(1.3%)	(3.8%)	1.6%	(5.8%)	2.4%	57.7%	51.2%	1.7%	5.5%	1.9%
Operational expenses	15,984	9,822	8,116	9,294	8,233	8,712	18,237	24,968	21,438	22,513	22,938
EBITDA	\$6,765	\$12,629	\$13,491	\$12,650	\$12,442	\$12,450	\$15,126	\$25,483	\$29,889	\$31,637	\$32,257
EBITDA growth (%)	(74.5%)	86.7%	6.8%	(6.2%)	(1.6%)	0.1%	21.5%	68.5%	17.3%	5.8%	2.0%
EBITDA margin (%)	29.7%	56.3%	62.4%	57.6%	60.2%	58.8%	45.3%	50.5%	58.2%	58.4%	58.4%
Non-operating expenses	\$3,379	\$4,570	\$6,598	\$1,593	\$1,392	\$2,417	\$9,992	\$7,285	\$9,071	\$8,400	\$8,400
Net interest exp (income)	\$712	\$786	\$291	\$80	(\$464)	(\$1,870)	(\$330)	\$1,165	\$36	\$0	\$0
Tax expense, exc tax loss carry-forward	\$1,922	\$3,071	\$3,554	\$3,413	(\$847)	(\$4,965)	\$54	\$12	\$2,427	\$4,963	\$5,118
Net income, fully-taxed	\$1,201	\$2,639	\$4,386	\$7,759	\$26,636	\$20,383	\$11,546	\$27,329	\$19,884	\$19,853	\$20,473
Fully-taxed EPS (basic)	\$0.04	\$0.10	\$0.16	\$0.29	\$1.06	\$0.81	\$0.45	\$1.08	\$0.78	\$0.78	\$0.81
Fully-taxed EPS (fd)	\$0.04	\$0.10	\$0.16	\$0.28	\$1.01	\$0.78	\$0.43	\$1.03	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.78
P/E (basic)	232.0x	106.1x	64.1x	35.5x	9.9x	12.9x	22.9x	9.7x	13.3x	13.3x	12.9x
EV/EBITDA	38.1x	20.4x	19.1x	20.4x	20.7x	20.7x	17.0x	10.1x	8.6x	8.1x	8.0x

Source: Historic data – Cipher financial filings; Forecasts/Estimates – Leede Financial Inc.

Moreover, Sun is clearly not overly motivated to market Absorica LD in the US, where Cipher's own share of Absorica LD economics is itself subjected to a 7.5% royalty to Cipher (manufacturing partner Galephar PR [private] receives the other 7.5%, previously owned by HLS Therapeutics [HLS-T, NR]) & where its underperformance on Absorica LD sales is clear from Cipher's own Absorica royalty revenue trends in recent quarters. Our expectations are thus for Cipher's Canadian Absorica LD royalty revenue going forward to be positive but modest & for now, we will refrain from incorporating Absorica LD's new Canadian royalty revenue expectations into our model.

Exhibit 2. Valuation Summary for Cipher

Price/earnings multiple, F2027	5x	10x	15x	20x	25x	30x	35x
Implied share price ^{1,2}	\$3.76	\$7.52	\$11.29	\$15.05	\$18.81	\$22.57	\$26.34
EV/EBITDA multiple, F2027	5x	7x	9x	10x	11x	13x	15x
Implied share price ^{1,2}	\$6.80	\$9.29	\$11.78	\$13.03	\$14.27	\$16.76	\$19.25
One-year Cipher target price (US\$)	\$14.04						
One-year Cipher target price (C\$) ³	\$19.51						

¹ Based on F2027 adj EBITDA forecast of US\$31.6M, F2027 adj fd EPS of US\$0.75, basic S/O 25.4M; fd S/O 26.4M

² Based on 20x EPS, 10x EV/EBITDA (F2027); pro forma cash of US\$14.7M [C\$20.5M] (FQ226 cash of US\$9.1M or C\$12.7M, plus pending payments from Sun arbitration settlement), no LT debt

³ PT in C\$ assumes USD:CAD exchange rate of 1.39x

Source: Leede Financial Inc.

Recovery of Sun arbitration costs could be as impactful to Cipher's cash as the damages award. Recovery of 80% of arbitration-specific legal costs could also be a non-trivial contribution to Cipher's balance sheet cash. On review of Cipher's trailing MD&A filings, we see that arbitration/legal costs in F2024 & F2025 alone were US\$1.6M in both periods, 80% of which is US\$2.56M, almost as much as the aforementioned cash award. We will incorporate this value & the upfront cash award in our pro forma cash calculation in our valuation (Exhibit 2).

Resolution of Absorica-related arbitration motivates us to reflect on Cipher's pending opportunity to acquire US marketing rights for the drug & potentially drive sales above Sun's baseline sales performance in recent quarters. But the most important element of this arbitration in our view is that it shifts our attention back toward Cipher's US Absorica market opportunity & the reality that the firm has long been contractually entitled to acquire independent US marketing rights for the drug by FQ426. That date was for multiple quarters just a faint image in our field of vision & now is just a few months away, giving us optimism that Cipher's own efforts to market Absorica to US dermatologists (presumably with the team it now has in place through its ParaPro/Natroba acquisition) should be more aggressive than Sun's efforts have been in recent years.

Cipher's US Absorica royalty revenue, which in F2017 was as high at US\$9.4M (in FQ417 specifically), has been equilibrating in the US\$0.6M-to-US\$0.9M range since FQ423 (actual eleven-quarter average US\$0.79M). We stand by our view that Cipher's super-bioavailable absent-of-food-effect Lidose formulation upon which Absorica's PK profile is based is not just a characteristic of the drug's formulation but rather it is a medically essential feature that confers superior gastro-intestinal absorption of Absorica's active retinoid-based API (the vitamin A analog isotretinoin) in comparison to other formulations that came before it (excluding the multiple generic Absorica formulations now available that were inspired by Absorica's commercial success during F2013-to-F2020).

Summary & valuation. As before, we are basing our F2027-to-F2028 quarterly US Absorica royalty revenue forecasts on the assumption that trailing royalty levels are sustainable throughout the next ten quarters as a base-case scenario, but we are prepared to replace our royalty revenue projections with direct sales projections once such sales materialize, possibly as early as FQ127. Our average quarterly US Absorica royalty revenue forecast during the FQ127-to-FQ428 period of US\$0.55M corresponds to gross US Absorica sales of US\$7.3M (7.5% royalty rate assumed), a baseline sales level that we are confident Cipher can exceed, perhaps dramatically so, in coming quarters. Cipher's quarterly cost-of-goods will undoubtedly escalate in an Absorica-dependent way but we are optimistic that SG&A/marketing expense could remain stable while leveraging the Natroba-based infrastructure already in place.

Accordingly, we are maintaining our Buy rating & one-year PT of C\$19.50 on CPH, with our valuation still based on multiples of our F2027 adjusted EBITDA/EPS forecasts of US\$31.6M & US\$0.75/shr, respectively & as shown in Exhibits 1 & 2. Our EV calculation incorporates pro forma cash of US\$14.7M (FQ226 balance sheet data of cash of US\$9.1M/ C\$12.7M added to pending cash payments from Sun), no LT debt (all Natroba-based debt was paid down to nil during FQ425) & basic S/O of 24.5M (Exhibit 2). Our PT still corresponds to a one-year return of 37.4%. The stock is up > 1,100% since we reinitiated coverage under the Leede banner in Jan/21.

On the milestone watch, we are clearly watching for final resolution on the Sun arbitration case to de-risk future Absorica economics that provide upside to our current forecasts. For Natroba, which at present is the dominant dermatology product in our CPH revenue forecasts (Canadian Epuris sales are right behind), we still expect review of Cipher's Health Canada NDS filing for Natroba to conclude favorably & thus allow Cipher to launch Natroba in FH127, independent of any RoW royalty-bearing Natroba licensing agreements that Cipher could consummate in coming quarters. Our expectations on clinical timelines for partnered dermatology assets, specifically Can-Fite Biopharma's (CANF-TASE, NR) adenosine receptor agonist drug piclidenoson in its ongoing Phase III plaque psoriasis program, are unchanged & even under best-case scenario would not be relevant to our F2027-to-F2028 forecasts (partner Can-Fite is incurring all clinical costs, thus relieving Cipher of any R&D expense obligations for the drug).

Exhibit 3. Comparable Companies for Cipher

Company	Filing Curr.	Sym.	Shrs Out. (M)	Share Price 2-Sep	Mkt Cap (\$M)	Mkt Cap (C\$M)	Ent. Value (\$M)	Ent. Value (C\$M)	EV/EBITDA (T12M)	EV/EBITDA (2026E)	(2027E)	Price/Earnings		
												(T12M)	(2026E)	(2027E)
Profitable Canadian healthcare firms														
Apotex	CAD	APTX	228.5	\$33.15	7,575	7,575	12,080	12,080	NA	NA	11.8x	NA	NA	15.2x
Aurinia Pharmaceuticals	USD	AUPH	133.1	\$15.18	2,020	2,020	2,281	2,315	9.4x	NA	NA	6.4x	15.7x	12.6x
Bausch Health	USD	BHC	374.0	\$6.34	2,371	3,295	31,053	43,138	5.6x	5.6x	6.0x	NA	1.4x	1.5x
BioSynt	CAD	RX	11.5	\$15.01	173	173	167	167	12.9x	10.4x	8.9x	18.7x	16.9x	13.9x
CareRx	CAD	CRRX	63.5	\$3.27	208	208	274	281	8.9x	7.9x	6.9x	7.7x	33.5x	13.6x
Chartwell REIT	CAD	CSH.R	328.3	\$9.36	3,073	3,073	10,109	10,155	22.2x	19.8x	17.8x	NA	32.3x	22.8x
DRI Healthcare Trust	CAD	DHT.UN	55.0	\$18.23	1,002	1,002	1,537	1,560	6.2x	6.5x	7.3x	NA	7.2x	7.8x
Extendicare REIT	CAD	EXE	95.0	\$32.27	3,067	3,067	3,619	3,563	16.3x	14.3x	12.6x	24.4x	23.6x	21.3x
HLS Therapeutics	CAD	HLS	30.9	\$3.87	120	120	164	162	NA	6.0x	5.1x	NA	NA	NA
Jamieson Wellness	CAD	JWEL	41.5	\$45.66	1,894	1,894	2,388	2,359	14.5x	13.3x	11.9x	24.2x	21.2x	18.5x
K-Bro Linen	CAD	KBL	13.0	\$46.14	600	600	897	901	7.7x	8.1x	7.8x	27.4x	22.6x	18.4x
Kneat.com	CAD	#N/A	96.7	\$6.50	628	628	604	604	NA	34.1x	22.4x	NA	NA	NA
Knight Therapeutics	CAD	GUD	98.2	\$9.21	905	905	818	846	8.3x	9.8x	9.3x	NA	55.3x	37.4x
Medexus ¹	CAD	MDP	32.0	\$5.45	175	175	204	199	8.5x	9.2x	6.4x	NA	NA	19.9x
Medical Facilities ¹	CAD	DR	16.2	\$14.81	240	240	304	277	3.8x	3.7x	8.9x	21.2x	8.0x	19.5x
Microbix Biotech	CAD	MBX	137.2	\$0.30	41	41	40	41	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vital Infrastructure	CAD	VITL.UN	250.0	\$5.41	1,353	1,353	2,712	2,687	11.9x	12.7x	12.7x	NA	NA	NA
Savaria	CAD	SIS	72.1	\$29.31	2,114	2,114	2,283	2,346	11.8x	11.1x	10.1x	23.9x	21.2x	18.6x
Sienna Senior Living	CAD	SIA	110.8	\$21.94	2,430	2,430	3,633	3,627	21.7x	17.8x	15.7x	41.8x	40.6x	34.8x
Viemed	USD	VMD	38.1	\$9.17	349	485	484	682	6.2x	5.3x	4.5x	24.2x	21.6x	15.4x
Vitalhub	CAD	VHI	63.4	\$8.01	508	508	374	359	12.8x	10.9x	9.2x	NA	42.7x	23.6x
Well Health	CAD	WELL	255.5	\$4.44	1,134	1,134	2,004	2,004	NA	10.7x	9.8x	NA	18.4x	13.7x
Average									11.1x	11.4x	10.2x	22.0x	23.9x	18.4x
Profitable specialty pharmaceutical firms														
AbbVie	USD	ABBV	1767.1	\$259.99	459,433	638,405	727,622	1,011,067	16.7x	15.9x	13.9x	NA	18.5x	16.0x
Amgen	USD	AMGN	540.6	\$417.84	225,898	313,896	375,013	521,100	15.1x	12.1x	12.0x	25.8x	18.1x	17.1x
Biogen	USD	BIIB	147.8	\$210.65	31,124	43,249	52,836	73,418	12.1x	12.4x	10.4x	37.1x	17.0x	12.7x
Fresenius	EUR	FREG	563.2	€47.66	26,844	43,237	57,577	80,007	NA	12.6x	11.9x	NA	12.9x	12.1x
Cardinal Health	USD	CAH	232.6	\$231.24	53,781	74,731	80,752	112,209	18.7x	19.5x	17.9x	31.8x	21.5x	18.6x
Dr. Reddy Labs	INR	500124	833.0	₹1,206	₹1,004,579	14,696	14,540	20,205	24.5x	17.9x	22.0x	31.2x	19.8x	27.9x
Gilead Sciences	USD	GILD	1240.0	\$138.14	171,287	238,012	270,619	376,038	18.2x	NA	15.6x	NA	NA	13.9x
Jazz Pharmaceuticals	USD	JAZZ	64.9	\$245.85	15,959	22,176	25,228	35,056	15.3x	10.7x	10.3x	16.1x	10.2x	9.6x
Neurocrine Biosciences	USD	NBIX	101.6	\$150.82	15,331	21,303	20,813	28,920	23.9x	20.8x	14.7x	21.4x	21.5x	14.8x
Perrigo	USD	PRGO	138.8	\$12.83	1,780	2,474	6,513	9,050	10.2x	9.8x	8.8x	NA	5.9x	5.3x
Sun Pharma/Ranbaxy ²	INR	SUN	2399.3	₹1,943	₹4,661,548	68,194	63,484	88,214	35.2x	35.9x	32.2x	39.5x	38.6x	35.7x
Teva Pharmaceuticals ³	USD	TEVA	1165.3	\$36.52	42,557	59,135	77,619	107,856	17.2x	17.9x	13.7x	58.9x	18.3x	11.9x
United Therapeutics	USD	UTHR	42.9	\$501.27	21,500	29,875	26,241	36,463	17.2x	17.6x	15.7x	16.6x	18.4x	16.1x
Vertex Pharmaceuticals	USD	VRTX	253.5	\$516.44	130,897	181,888	171,402	238,171	32.7x	30.0x	26.1x	29.8x	27.4x	24.3x
Viatis	USD	VTRS	1148.6	\$16.04	18,423	25,600	42,299	58,777	10.6x	9.6x	9.3x	NA	6.4x	6.0x
Average									19.1x	17.3x	15.7x	30.8x	18.2x	16.1x
Cipher Pharma ¹	CPH		25.4	\$10.21	260	361	245	340	12.6x	11.5x	10.0x	8.9x	12.7x	11.4x

¹ Share price converted to USD for stocks reporting financial data in USD but for which share value is reported in CAD² Cipher's US Absorica marketing partner³ Generic Absorica competitor (since April-21)

Source: Leede Financial, Consensus Data - Refinitiv

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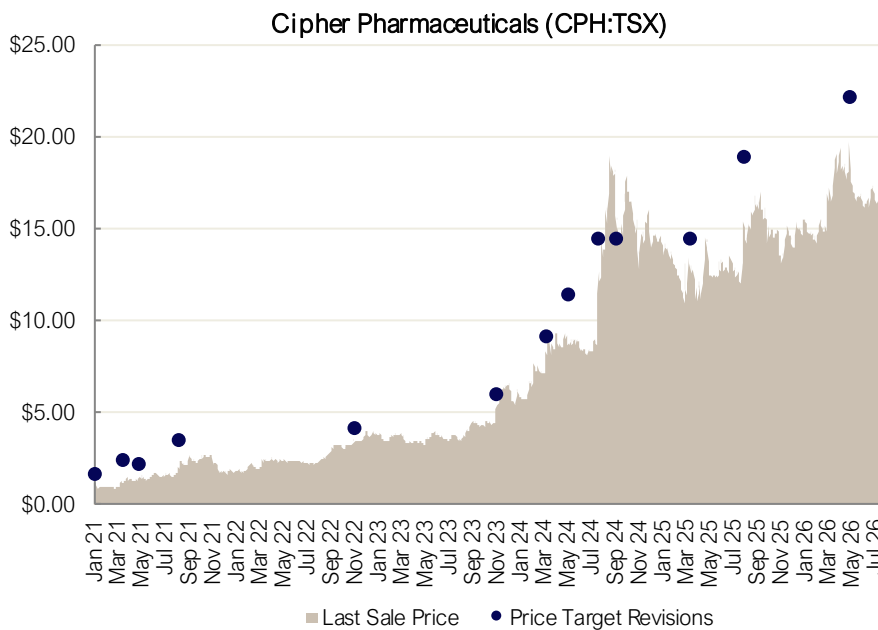
Rating Definitions

Buy	The security represents attractive relative value and is expected to appreciate significantly from the current price over the next 12-month time horizon.
Speculative Buy	The security is considered a BUY but carries an above-average level of risk.
Hold	The security represents fair value and no material appreciation is expected over the next 12-month time horizon.
Sell	The security represents poor value and is expected to depreciate over the next 12-month time horizon.
Under Review	The rating is temporarily placed under review until further information is disclosed.
Tender	Leede Financial Inc. recommends that investors tender to an existing public offer for the securities in the absence of a superior competing offer.
Not Rated	Leede Financial Inc. does not provide research coverage of the relevant issuer.

Rating Distribution

RECOMMENDATION	NO. OF COMPANIES	%
Buy	9	60%
Speculative Buy	4	26%
Hold	1	7%
Sell	-	-
Tender	-	-
Under Review	1	7%

Historical Target Price



Date	Target (\$)	Rating
11 Jan 2021	C\$1.75	Buy
22 Mar 2021	C\$2.50	Buy
30 Apr 2021	C\$2.25	Buy
13 Aug 2021	C\$3.50	Buy
11 Nov 2022	C\$4.25	Buy
10 Nov 2023	C\$6.00	Buy
15 Mar 2024	C\$9.25	Buy
10 May 2024	C\$11.50	Buy
29 Jul 2024	C\$14.50	Buy
13 Sep 2024	C\$14.50	Hold
19 Mar 2025	C\$14.50	Buy
8 Aug 2025	C\$19.00	Buy
8 May 2026	C\$22.25	Buy
12 Aug 2026	C\$19.50	Buy

Coverage Initiated: Jan 11, 2021

Data sourced from: Refinitiv