Court File No. CV-22-00691546-00CL

ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE
(COMMERCIAL LIST)

APPLICATION UNDER SUBSECTION 243(1) OF THE *BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT*, R.S.C. 1985, c.B-3, AS AMENDED, AND SECTION 101 OF THE *COURTS OF JUSTICE ACT*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.43, AS AMENDED

B E T W E E N :

BANK OF MONTREAL

Applicant

- and -

BRANT INSTORE CORPORATION

Respondent

BOOK OF AUTHORITIES OF THE RECEIVER

December 14, 2022

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ROYAL BANK OF CANADA (plaintiff/respondent) v. SOUNDAIR CORPORATION (respondent), CANADIAN PENSION CAPITAL LIMITED (appellant) and CANADIAN INSURERS' CAPITAL CORPORATION (appellant)

Goodman, McKinlay and Galligan JJ.A.

Heard: June 11, 12, 13 and 14, 1991
Judgment: July 3, 1991
Docket: Doc. CA 318/91

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S.F. Dunphy and *G.K. Ketcheson* , for Ernst & Young Inc., receiver of respondent Soundair Corporation.
W.G. Horton , for Ontario Express Limited.
N.J. Spies , for Frontier Air Limited.

***Galligan J.A.* :**

1 This is an appeal from the order of Rosenberg J. made on May 1, 1991. By that order, he approved the sale of Air Toronto to Ontario Express Limited and Frontier Air Limited, and he dismissed a motion to approve an offer to purchase Air Toronto by 922246 Ontario Limited.

2 It is necessary at the outset to give some background to the dispute. Soundair Corporation ("Soundair") is a corporation engaged in the air transport business. It has three divisions. One of them is Air Toronto. Air Toronto operates a scheduled airline from Toronto to a number of mid-sized cities in the United States of America. Its routes serve as feeders to several of Air Canada's routes. Pursuant to a connector agreement, Air Canada provides some services to Air Toronto and benefits from the feeder traffic provided by it. The operational relationship between Air Canada and Air Toronto is a close one.

3 In the latter part of 1989 and the early part of 1990, Soundair was in financial difficulty. Soundair has two secured creditors who have an interest in the assets of Air Toronto. The Royal Bank of Canada (the "Royal Bank") is owed at least $65 million dollars. The appellants Canadian Pension Capital Limited and Canadian Insurers' Capital Corporation (collectively called "CCFL") are owed approximately $9,500,000. Those creditors will have a deficiency expected to be in excess of $50 million on the winding up of Soundair.

4 On April 26, 1990, upon the motion of the Royal Bank, O'Brien J. appointed Ernst & Young Inc. (the "receiver") as receiver of all of the assets, property and undertakings of Soundair. The order required the receiver to operate Air Toronto and sell it as a going concern. Because of the close relationship between Air Toronto and Air Canada, it was contemplated that the receiver would obtain the assistance of Air Canada to operate Air Toronto. The order authorized the receiver:

(b) to enter into contractual arrangements with Air Canada to retain a manager or operator, including Air Canada, to manage and operate Air Toronto under the supervision of Ernst & Young Inc. until the completion of the sale of Air Toronto to Air Canada or other person.

Also because of the close relationship, it was expected that Air Canada would purchase Air Toronto. To that end, the order of O'Brien J. authorized the Receiver:

(c) to negotiate and do all things necessary or desirable to complete a sale of Air Toronto to Air Canada and, if a sale to Air Canada cannot be completed, to negotiate and sell Air Toronto to another person, subject to terms and conditions approved by this Court.

5 Over a period of several weeks following that order, negotiations directed towards the sale of Air Toronto took place between the receiver and Air Canada. Air Canada had an agreement with the receiver that it would have exclusive negotiating rights during that period. I do not think it is necessary to review those negotiations, but I note that Air Canada had complete access to all of the operations of Air Toronto and conducted due diligence examinations. It became thoroughly acquainted with every aspect of Air Toronto's operations.

6 Those negotiations came to an end when an offer made by Air Canada on June 19, 1990, was considered unsatisfactory by the receiver. The offer was not accepted and lapsed. Having regard to the tenor of Air Canada's negotiating stance and a letter sent by its solicitors on July 20, 1990, I think that the receiver was eminently reasonable when it decided that there was no realistic possibility of selling Air Toronto to Air Canada.

7 The receiver then looked elsewhere. Air Toronto's feeder business is very attractive, but it only has value to a national airline. The receiver concluded reasonably, therefore, that it was commercially necessary for one of Canada's two national airlines to be involved in any sale of Air Toronto. Realistically, there were only two possible purchasers, whether direct or indirect. They were Air Canada and Canadian Airlines International.

8 It was well known in the air transport industry that Air Toronto was for sale. During the months following the collapse of the negotiations with Air Canada, the receiver tried unsuccessfully to find viable purchasers. In late 1990, the receiver turned to Canadian Airlines International, the only realistic alternative. Negotiations began between them. Those negotiations led to a letter of intent dated February 11, 1990. On March 6, 1991, the receiver received an offer from Ontario Express Limited and Frontier Airlines Limited, who are subsidiaries of Canadian Airlines International. This offer is called the OEL offer.

9 In the meantime, Air Canada and CCFL were having discussions about making an offer for the purchase of Air Toronto. They formed 922246 Ontario Limited ("922") for the purpose of purchasing Air Toronto. On March 1, 1991, CCFL wrote to the receiver saying that it proposed to make an offer. On March 7, 1991, Air Canada and CCFL presented an offer to the receiver in the name of 922. For convenience, its offers are called the "922 offers."

10 The first 922 offer contained a condition which was unacceptable to the receiver. I will refer to that condition in more detail later. The receiver declined the 922 offer and on March 8, 1991, accepted the OEL offer. Subsequently, 922 obtained an order allowing it to make a second offer. It then submitted an offer which was virtually identical to that of March 7, 1991, except that the unacceptable condition had been removed.

11 The proceedings before Rosenberg J. then followed. He approved the sale to OEL and dismissed a motion for the acceptance of the 922 offer. Before Rosenberg J., and in this court, both CCFL and the Royal Bank supported the acceptance of the second 922 offer.

12 There are only two issues which must be resolved in this appeal. They are:

(1) Did the receiver act properly when it entered into an agreement to sell Air Toronto to OEL?

(2) What effect does the support of the 922 offer by the secured creditors have on the result?

13 I will deal with the two issues separately.

1. Did the Receiver Act Properly in Agreeing to Sell to OEL?

14 Before dealing with that issue, there are three general observations which I think I should make. The first is that the sale of an airline as a going concern is a very complex process. The best method of selling an airline at the best price is something far removed from the expertise of a court. When a court appoints a receiver to use its commercial expertise to sell an airline, it is inescapable that it intends to rely upon the receiver's expertise and not upon its own. Therefore, the court must place a great deal of confidence in the actions taken and in the opinions formed by the receiver. It should also assume that the receiver is acting properly unless the contrary is clearly shown. The second observation is that the court should be reluctant to second-guess, with the benefit of hindsight, the considered business decisions made by its receiver. The third observation which I wish to make is that the conduct of the receiver should be reviewed in the light of the specific mandate given to him by the court.

15 The order of O'Brien J. provided that if the receiver could not complete the sale to Air Canada that it was "to negotiate and sell Air Toronto to another person." The court did not say how the receiver was to negotiate the sale. It did not say it was to call for bids or conduct an auction. It told the receiver to negotiate and sell. It obviously intended, because of the unusual nature of the asset being sold, to leave the method of sale substantially in the discretion of the receiver. I think, therefore, that the court should not review minutely the process of the sale when, broadly speaking, it appears to the court to be a just process.

16 As did Rosenberg J., I adopt as correct the statement made by Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87, 67 C.B.R. (N.S.) 320n, 22 C.P.C. (2d) 131, 39 D.L.R. (4th) 526 (H.C.) , at pp. 92-94 [O.R.], of the duties which a court must perform when deciding whether a receiver who has sold a property acted properly. When he set out the court's duties, he did not put them in any order of priority, nor do I. I summarize those duties as follows:

1. It should consider whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently.

2. It should consider the interests of all parties.

3. It should consider the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained.

4. It should consider whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

17 I intend to discuss the performance of those duties separately.

1. Did the Receiver make a sufficient effort to get the best price and did it act providently?

18 Having regard to the fact that it was highly unlikely that a commercially viable sale could be made to anyone but the two national airlines, or to someone supported by either of them, it is my view that the receiver acted wisely and reasonably when it negotiated only with Air Canada and Canadian Airlines International. Furthermore, when Air Canada said that it would submit no further offers and gave the impression that it would not participate further in the receiver's efforts to sell, the only course reasonably open to the receiver was to negotiate with Canadian Airlines International. Realistically, there was nowhere else to go but to Canadian Airlines International. In do ing so, it is my opinion that the receiver made sufficient efforts to sell the airline.

19 When the receiver got the OEL offer on March 6, 1991, it was over 10 months since it had been charged with the responsibility of selling Air Toronto. Until then, the receiver had not received one offer which it thought was acceptable. After substantial efforts to sell the airline over that period, I find it difficult to think that the receiver acted improvidently in accepting the only acceptable offer which it had.

20 On March 8, 1991, the date when the receiver accepted the OEL offer, it had only two offers, the OEL offer, which was acceptable, and the 922 offer, which contained an unacceptable condition. I cannot see how the receiver, assuming for the moment that the price was reasonable, could have done anything but accept the OEL offer.

21 When deciding whether a receiver had acted providently, the court should examine the conduct of the receiver in light of the information the receiver had when it agreed to accept an offer. In this case, the court should look at the receiver's conduct in the light of the information it had when it made its decision on March 8, 1991. The court should be very cautious before deciding that the receiver's conduct was improvident based upon information which has come to light after it made its decision. To do so, in my view, would derogate from the mandate to sell given to the receiver by the order of O'Brien J. I agree with and adopt what was said by Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, at p. 112 [O.R.]:

> Its decision was made as a matter of business judgment *on the elements then available to it* . It is of the very essence of a receiver's function to make such judgments and in the making of them to act seriously and responsibly so as to be prepared to stand behind them.
>
> If the court were to reject the recommendation of the Receiver in any but the most exceptional circumstances, it would materially diminish and weaken the role and function of the Receiver both in the perception of receivers and in the perception of any others who might have occasion to deal with them. It would lead to the conclusion that the decision of the Receiver was of little weight and that the real decision was always made upon the motion for approval. That would be a consequence susceptible of immensely damaging results to the disposition of assets by court-appointed receivers.

[Emphasis added.]

22 I also agree with and adopt what was said by Macdonald J.A. in *Cameron v. Bank of Nova Scotia* (1981), 38 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1, 45 N.S.R. (2d) 303, 86 A.P.R. 303 (C.A.) , at p. 11 [C.B.R.]:

> In my opinion if the decision of the receiver to enter into an agreement of sale, subject to court approval, with respect to certain assets is reasonable and sound under the circumstances *at the time existing* it should not be set aside simply because a later and higher bid is made. To do so would literally create chaos in the commercial world and receivers and purchasers would never be sure they had a binding agreement.

[Emphasis added.]

23 On March 8, 1991, the receiver had two offers. One was the OEL offer, which it considered satisfactory but which could be withdrawn by OEL at any time before it was accepted. The receiver also had the 922 offer, which contained a condition that was totally unacceptable. It had no other offers. It was faced with the dilemma of whether it should decline to accept the OEL offer and run the risk of it being withdrawn, in the hope that an acceptable offer would be forthcoming from 922. An affidavit filed by the president of the receiver describes the dilemma which the receiver faced, and the judgment made in the light of that dilemma:

> 24. An asset purchase agreement was received by Ernst & Young on March 7, 1991 which was dated March 6, 1991. This agreement was received from CCFL in respect of their offer to purchase the assets and undertaking of Air Toronto. Apart from financial considerations, which will be considered in a subsequent affidavit, the *Receiver determined that it would not be prudent to delay acceptance of the OEL agreement to negotiate a highly uncertain arrangement with Air Canada and CCFL* . Air Canada had the benefit of an 'exclusive' in negotiations for Air Toronto and had clearly indicated its intention take itself out of the running while ensuring that no other party could seek to purchase Air Toronto and maintain the Air Canada connector arrangement vital to its survival. The CCFL offer represented a radical reversal of this position by Air Canada at the eleventh hour. However, it contained a significant number of conditions to closing which were entirely beyond the control of the Receiver. As well, the CCFL offer came less than 24 hours before signing of the agreement with OEL which had been negotiated over a period of months, at great time and expense.

[Emphasis added.] I am convinced that the decision made was a sound one in the circumstances faced by the receiver on March 8, 1991.

24 I now turn to consider whether the price contained in the OEL offer was one which it was provident to accept. At the outset, I think that the fact that the OEL offer was the only acceptable one available to the receiver on March 8, 1991, after 10

months of trying to sell the airline, is strong evidence that the price in it was reasonable. In a deteriorating economy, I doubt that it would have been wise to wait any longer.

25 I mentioned earlier that, pursuant to an order, 922 was permitted to present a second offer. During the hearing of the appeal, counsel compared at great length the price contained in the second 922 offer with the price contained in the OEL offer. Counsel put forth various hypotheses supporting their contentions that one offer was better than the other.

26 It is my opinion that the price contained in the 922 offer is relevant only if it shows that the price obtained by the receiver in the OEL offer was not a reasonable one. In *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, Anderson J., at p. 113 [O.R.], discussed the comparison of offers in the following way:

> No doubt, as the cases have indicated, situations might arise where the disparity was so great as to call in question the adequacy of the mechanism which had produced the offers. It is not so here, and in my view that is substantially an end of the matter.

27 In two judgments, Saunders J. considered the circumstances in which an offer submitted after the receiver had agreed to a sale should be considered by the court. The first is *Re Selkirk* (1986), 58 C.B.R. (N.S.) 245 (Ont. S.C.) , at p. 247:

> If, for example, in this case there had been a second offer of a substantially higher amount, then the court would have to take that offer into consideration in assessing whether the receiver had properly carried out his function of endeavouring to obtain the best price for the property.

28 The second is *Re Beauty Counsellors of Canada Ltd.* (1986), 58 C.B.R. (N.S.) 237 (Ont. S.C.) , at p. 243:

> If a substantially higher bid turns up at the approval stage, the court should consider it. Such a bid may indicate, for example, that the trustee has not properly carried out its duty to endeavour to obtain the best price for the estate.

29 In *Re Selkirk* (1987), 64 C.B.R. (N.S.) 140 (Ont. S.C.) , at p. 142, McRae J. expressed a similar view:

> The court will not lightly withhold approval of a sale by the receiver, particularly in a case such as this where the receiver is given rather wide discretionary authority as per the order of Mr. Justice Trainor and, of course, where the receiver is an officer of this court. Only in a case where there seems to be some unfairness in the process of the sale or *where there are substantially higher offers which would tend to show that the sale was improvident* will the court withhold approval. It is important that the court recognize the commercial exigencies that would flow if prospective purchasers are allowed to wait until the sale is in court for approval before submitting their final offer. This is something that must be discouraged.

[Emphasis added.]

30 What those cases show is that the prices in other offers have relevance only if they show that the price contained in the offer accepted by the receiver was so unreasonably low as to demonstrate that the receiver was improvident in accepting it. I am of the opinion, therefore, that if they do not tend to show that the receiver was improvident, they should not be considered upon a motion to confirm a sale recommended by a court-appointed receiver. If they were, the process would be changed from a sale by a receiver, subject to court approval, into an auction conducted by the court at the time approval is sought. In my opinion, the latter course is unfair to the person who has entered bona fide into an agreement with the receiver, can only lead to chaos, and must be discouraged.

31 If, however, the subsequent offer is so substantially higher than the sale recommended by the receiver, then it may be that the receiver has not conducted the sale properly. In such circumstances, the court would be justified itself in entering into the sale process by considering competitive bids. However, I think that that process should be entered into only if the court is satisfied that the receiver has not properly conducted the sale which it has recommended to the court.

32 It is necessary to consider the two offers. Rosenberg J. held that the 922 offer was slightly better or marginally better than the OEL offer. He concluded that the difference in the two offers did not show that the sale process adopted by the receiver was inadequate or improvident.

33 Counsel for the appellants complained about the manner in which Rosenberg J. conducted the hearing of the motion to confirm the OEL sale. The complaint was that when they began to discuss a comparison of the two offers, Rosenberg J. said that he considered the 922 offer to be better than the OEL offer. Counsel said that when that comment was made, they did not think it necessary to argue further the question of the difference in value between the two offers. They complain that the finding that the 922 offer was only marginally better or slightly better than the OEL offer was made without them having had the opportunity to argue that the 922 offer was substantially better or significantly better than the OEL offer. I cannot understand how counsel could have thought that by expressing the opinion that the 922 offer was better, Rosenberg J. was saying that it was a significantly or substantially better one. Nor can I comprehend how counsel took the comment to mean that they were foreclosed from arguing that the offer was significantly or substantially better. If there was some misunderstanding on the part of counsel, it should have been raised before Rosenberg J. at the time. I am sure that if it had been, the misunderstanding would have been cleared up quickly. Nevertheless, this court permitted extensive argument dealing with the comparison of the two offers.

34 The 922 offer provided for $6 million cash to be paid on closing with a royalty based upon a percentage of Air Toronto profits over a period of 5 years up to a maximum of $3 million. The OEL offer provided for a payment of $2 million on closing with a royalty paid on gross revenues over a 5-year period. In the short term, the 922 offer is obviously better because there is substantially more cash up front. The chances of future returns are substantially greater in the OEL offer because royalties are paid on gross revenues, while the royalties under the 922 offer are paid only on profits. There is an element of risk involved in each offer.

35 The receiver studied the two offers. It compared them and took into account the risks, the advantages and the disadvantages of each. It considered the appropriate contingencies. It is not necessary to outline the factors which were taken into account by the receiver because the manager of its insolvency practice filed an affidavit outlining the considerations which were weighed in its evaluation of the two offers. They seem to me to be reasonable ones. That affidavit concluded with the following paragraph:

> 24. On the basis of these considerations the Receiver has approved the OEL offer and has concluded that it represents the achievement of the highest possible value at this time for the Air Toronto division of SoundAir.

36 The court appointed the receiver to conduct the sale of Air Toronto, and entrusted it with the responsibility of deciding what is the best offer. I put great weight upon the opinion of the receiver. It swore to the court which appointed it that the OEL offer represents the achievement of the highest possible value at this time for Air Toronto. I have not been convinced that the receiver was wrong when he made that assessment. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the 922 offer does not demonstrate any failure upon the part of the receiver to act properly and providently.

37 It follows that if Rosenberg J. was correct when he found that the 922 offer was in fact better, I agree with him that it could only have been slightly or marginally better. The 922 offer does not lead to an inference that the disposition strategy of the receiver was inadequate, unsuccessful or improvident, nor that the price was unreasonable.

38 I am, therefore, of the opinion the the receiver made a sufficient effort to get the best price, and has not acted improvidently.

2. Consideration of the Interests of all Parties

39 It is well established that the primary interest is that of the creditors of the debtor: see *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, and *Re Selkirk* , supra (Saunders J.). However, as Saunders J. pointed out in *Re Beauty Counsellors* , supra at p. 244 [C.B.R.], "it is not the only or overriding consideration."

40 In my opinion, there are other persons whose interests require consideration. In an appropriate case, the interests of the debtor must be taken into account. I think also, in a case such as this, where a purchaser has bargained at some length and

doubtless at considerable expense with the receiver, the interests of the purchaser ought to be taken into account. While it is not explicitly stated in such cases as *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, *Re Selkirk* (1986), supra, *Re Beauty Counsellors* , supra, *Re Selkirk* (1987), supra, and (*Cameron*), supra, I think they clearly imply that the interests of a person who has negotiated an agreement with a court-appointed receiver are very important.

41 In this case, the interests of all parties who would have an interest in the process were considered by the receiver and by Rosenberg J.

3. Consideration of the Efficacy and Integrity of the Process by which the Offer was Obtained

42 While it is accepted that the primary concern of a receiver is the protecting of the interests of the creditors, there is a secondary but very important consideration, and that is the integrity of the process by which the sale is effected. This is particularly so in the case of a sale of such a unique asset as an airline as a going concern.

43 The importance of a court protecting the integrity of the process has been stated in a number of cases. First, I refer to *Re Selkirk* , supra, where Saunders J. said at p. 246 [C.B.R.]:

> In dealing with the request for approval, the court has to be concerned primarily with protecting the interest of the creditors of the former bankrupt. A secondary but important considera tion is that the process under which the sale agreement is arrived at should be consistent with commercial efficacy and integrity.
>
> In that connection I adopt the principles stated by Macdonald J.A. of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court (Appeal Division) in *Cameron v. Bank of N.S.* (1981), 38 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1, 45 N.S.R. (2d) 303, 86 A.P.R. 303 (C.A.) , where he said at p. 11:
>
> > In my opinion if the decision of the receiver to enter into an agreement of sale, subject to court approval, with respect to certain assets is reasonable and sound under the circumstances at the time existing it should not be set aside simply because a later and higher bid is made. To do so would literally create chaos in the commercial world and receivers and purchasers would never be sure they had a binding agreement. On the contrary, they would know that other bids could be received and considered up until the application for court approval is heard — this would be an intolerable situation.
>
> While those remarks may have been made in the context of a bidding situation rather than a private sale, I consider them to be equally applicable to a negotiation process leading to a private sale. Where the court is concerned with the disposition of property, the purpose of appointing a receiver is to have the receiver do the work that the court would otherwise have to do.

44 In *Salima Investments Ltd. v. Bank of Montreal* (1985), 59 C.B.R. (N.S.) 242, 41 Alta. L.R. (2d) 58, 65 A.R. 372, 21 D.L.R. (4th) 473 at p. 476 [D.L.R.], the Alberta Court of Appeal said that sale by tender is not necessarily the best way to sell a business as an ongoing concern. It went on to say that when some other method is used which is provident, the court should not undermine the process by refusing to confirm the sale.

45 Finally, I refer to the reasoning of Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, at p. 124 [O.R.]:

> While every proper effort must always be made to assure maximum recovery consistent with the limitations inherent in the process, no method has yet been devised to entirely eliminate those limitations or to avoid their consequences. *Certainly it is not to be found in loosening the entire foundation of the system. Thus to compare the results of the process in this case with what might have been recovered in some other set of circumstances is neither logical nor practical* .

[Emphasis added.]

46 It is my opinion that the court must exercise extreme caution before it interferes with the process adopted by a receiver to sell an unusual asset. It is important that prospective purchasers know that, if they are acting in good faith, bargain seriously with a receiver and enter into an agreement with it, a court will not lightly interfere with the commercial judgment of the receiver to sell the asset to them.

47 Before this court, counsel for those opposing the confirmation of the sale to OEL suggested many different ways in which the receiver could have conducted the process other than the way which he did. However, the evidence does not convince me that the receiver used an improper method of attempting to sell the airline. The answer to those submissions is found in the comment of Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, at p. 109 [O.R.]:

> The court ought not to sit as on appeal from the decision of the Receiver, reviewing in minute detail every element of the process by which the decision is reached. To do so would be a futile and duplicitous exercise.

48 It would be a futile and duplicitous exercise for this court to examine in minute detail all of circumstances leading up to the acceptance of the OEL offer. Having considered the process adopted by the receiver, it is my opinion that the process adopted was a reasonable and prudent one.

4. Was there unfairness in the process?

49 As a general rule, I do not think it appropriate for the court to go into the minutia of the process or of the selling strategy adopted by the receiver. However, the court has a responsibility to decide whether the process was fair. The only part of this process which I could find that might give even a superficial impression of unfairness is the failure of the receiver to give an offering memorandum to those who expressed an interest in the purchase of Air Toronto.

50 I will outline the circumstances which relate to the allegation that the receiver was unfair in failing to provide an offering memorandum. In the latter part of 1990, as part of its selling strategy, the receiver was in the process of preparing an offering memorandum to give to persons who expressed an interest in the purchase of Air Toronto. The offering memorandum got as far as draft form, but was never released to anyone, although a copy of the draft eventually got into the hands of CCFL before it submitted the first 922 offer on March 7, 1991. A copy of the offering memorandum forms part of the record, and it seems to me to be little more than puffery, without any hard information which a sophisticated purchaser would require in or der to make a serious bid.

51 The offering memorandum had not been completed by February11, 1991. On that date, the receiver entered into the letter of intent to negotiate with OEL. The letter of intent contained a provision that during its currency the receiver would not negotiate with any other party. The letter of intent was renewed from time to time until the OEL offer was received on March 6, 1991.

52 The receiver did not proceed with the offering memorandum because to do so would violate the spirit, if not the letter, of its letter of intent with OEL.

53 I do not think that the conduct of the receiver shows any unfairness towards 922. When I speak of 922, I do so in the context that Air Canada and CCFL are identified with it. I start by saying that the receiver acted reasonably when it entered into exclusive negotiations with OEL. I find it strange that a company, with which Air Canada is closely and intimately involved, would say that it was unfair for the receiver to enter into a time-limited agreement to negotiate exclusively with OEL. That is precisely the arrangement which Air Canada insisted upon when it negotiated with the receiver in the spring and summer of 1990. If it was not unfair for Air Canada to have such an agreement, I do not understand why it was unfair for OEL to have a similar one. In fact, both Air Canada and OEL in its turn were acting reasonably when they required exclusive negotiating rights to prevent their negotiations from being used as a bargaining lever with other potential purchasers. The fact that Air Canada insisted upon an exclusive negotiating right while it was negotiating with the receiver demonstrates the commercial efficacy of OEL being given the same right during its negotiations with the receiver. I see no unfairness on the part of the receiver when it honoured its letter of intent with OEL by not releasing the offering memorandum during the negotiations with OEL.

54 Moreover, I am not prepared to find that 922 was in any way prejudiced by the fact that it did not have an offering memorandum. It made an offer on March 7, 1991, which it contends to this day was a better offer than that of OEL. 922 has not convinced me that if it had an offering memorandum, its offer would have been any different or any better than it actually was. The fatal problem with the first 922 offer was that it contained a condition which was completely unacceptable to the receiver. The receiver, properly, in my opinion, rejected the offer out of hand because of that condition. That condition did not relate

to any information which could have conceivably been in an offering memorandum prepared by the receiver. It was about the resolution of a dispute between CCFL and the Royal Bank, something the receiver knew nothing about.

55 Further evidence of the lack of prejudice which the absence of an offering memorandum has caused 922 is found in CCFL's stance before this court. During argument, its counsel suggested as a possible resolution of this appeal that this court should call for new bids, evaluate them and then order a sale to the party who put in the better bid. In such a case, counsel for CCFL said that 922 would be prepared to bid within 7 days of the court's decision. I would have thought that, if there were anything to CCFL's suggestion that the failure to provide an offering memorandum was unfair to 922, that it would have told the court that it needed more information before it would be able to make a bid.

56 I am satisfied that Air Canada and CCFL have, and at all times had, all of the information which they would have needed to make what to them would be a commercially viable offer to the receiver. I think that an offering memorandum was of no commercial consequence to them, but the absence of one has since become a valuable tactical weapon.

57 It is my opinion that there is no convincing proof that if an offering memorandum had been widely distributed among persons qualified to have purchased Air Toronto, a viable offer would have come forth from a party other than 922 or OEL. Therefore, the failure to provide an offering memorandum was neither unfair, nor did it prejudice the obtaining of a better price on March 8, 1991, than that contained in the OEL offer. I would not give effect to the contention that the process adopted by the receiver was an unfair one.

58 There are two statements by Anderson J. contained in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* , supra, which I adopt as my own. The first is at p. 109 [O.R.]:

> The court should not proceed against the recommendations of its Receiver except in special circumstances and where the necessity and propriety of doing so are plain. Any other rule or approach would emasculate the role of the Receiver and make it almost inevitable that the final negotiation of every sale would take place on the motion for approval.

The second is at p. 111 [O.R.]:

> It is equally clear, in my view, though perhaps not so clearly enunciated, that it is only in an exceptional case that the court will intervene and proceed contrary to the Receiver's recommendations if satisfied, as I am, that the Receiver has acted reasonably, prudently and fairly and not arbitrarily.

In this case the receiver acted reasonably, prudently, fairly and not arbitrarily. I am of the opinion, therefore, that the process adopted by the receiver in reaching an agreement was a just one.

59 In his reasons for judgment, after discussing the circumstances leading to the 922 offer, Rosenberg J. said this:

> They created a situation as of March 8th, where the Receiver was faced with two offers, one of which was in acceptable form and one of which could not possibly be accepted in its present form. The Receiver acted appropriately in accepting the OEL offer.

I agree.

60 The receiver made proper and sufficient efforts to get the best price that it could for the assets of Air Toronto. It adopted a reasonable and effective process to sell the airline which was fair to all persons who might be interested in purchasing it. It is my opinion, therefore, that the receiver properly carried out the mandate which was given to it by the order of O'Brien J. It follows that Rosenberg J. was correct when he confirmed the sale to OEL.

II. The effect of the support of the 922 offer by the two secured creditors.

61 As I noted earlier, the 922 offer was supported before Rosenberg J., and in this court, by CCFL and by the Royal Bank, the two secured creditors. It was argued that, because the interests of the creditors are primary, the court ought to give effect to their wish that the 922 offer be accepted. I would not accede to that suggestion for two reasons.

62 The first reason is related to the fact that the creditors chose to have a receiver appointed by the court. It was open to them to appoint a private receiver pursuant to the authority of their security documents. Had they done so, then they would have had control of the process and could have sold Air Toronto to whom they wished. However, acting privately and controlling the process involves some risks. The appointment of a receiver by the court insulates the creditors from those risks. But, insulation from those risks carries with it the loss of control over the process of disposition of the assets. As I have attempted to explain in these reasons, when a receiver's sale is before the court for confirmation, the only issues are the propriety of the conduct of the receiver and whether it acted providently. The function of the court at that stage is not to step in and do the receiver's work, or change the sale strategy adopted by the receiver. Creditors who asked the court to appoint a receiver to dispose of assets should not be allowed to take over control of the process by the simple expedient of supporting another purchaser if they do not agree with the sale made by the receiver. That would take away all respect for the process of sale by a court-appointed receiver.

63 There can be no doubt that the interests of the creditor are an important consideration in determining whether the receiver has properly conducted a sale. The opinion of the creditors as to which offer ought to be accepted is something to be taken into account. But if the court decides that the receiver has acted properly and providently, those views are not necessarily determinative. Because, in this case, the receiver acted properly and providently, I do not think that the views of the creditors should override the considered judgment of the receiver.

64 The second reason is that, in the particular circumstances of this case, I do not think the support of CCFL and the Royal Bank of the 922 offer is entitled to any weight. The support given by CCFL can be dealt with summarily. It is a co-owner of 922. It is hardly surprising and not very impressive to hear that it supports the offer which it is making for the debtor's assets.

65 The support by the Royal Bank requires more consideration and involves some reference to the circumstances. On March 6, 1991, when the first 922 offer was made, there was in existence an inter-lender agreement between the Royal Bank and CCFL. That agreement dealt with the share of the proceeds of the sale of Air Toronto which each creditor would receive. At the time, a dispute between the Royal Bank and CCFL about the interpretation of that agreement was pending in the courts. The unacceptable condition in the first 922 offer related to the settlement of the inter-lender dispute. The condition required that the dispute be resolved in a way which would substantially favour CCFL. It required that CCFL receive $3,375,000 of the $6 million cash payment and the balance, including the royalties, if any, be paid to the Royal Bank. The Royal Bank did not agree with that split of the sale proceeds.

66 On April 5, 1991, the Royal Bank and CCFL agreed to settle the inter-lender dispute. The settlement was that if the 922 offer was accepted by the court, CCFL would receive only $1 million, and the Royal Bank would receive $5 million plus any royalties which might be paid. It was only in consideration of that settlement that the Royal Bank agreed to support the 922 offer.

67 The Royal Bank's support of the 922 offer is so affected by the very substantial benefit which it wanted to obtain from the settlement of the inter-lender dispute that, in my opinion, its support is devoid of any objectivity. I think it has no weight.

68 While there may be circumstances where the unanimous support by the creditors of a particular offer could conceivably override the proper and provident conduct of a sale by a receiver, I do not think that this is such a case. This is a case where the receiver has acted properly and in a provident way. It would make a mockery out of the judicial process, under which a mandate was given to this receiver to sell this airline if the support by these creditors of the 922 offer were permitted to carry the day. I give no weight to the support which they give to the 922 offer.

69 In its factum, the receiver pointed out that, because of greater liabilities imposed upon private receivers by various statutes such as the *Employment Standards Act* , R.S.O. 1980, c. 137, and the *Environmental Protection Act* , R.S.O. 1980, c. 141, it is likely that more and more the courts will be asked to appoint receivers in insolvencies. In those circumstances, I think that creditors who ask for court-appointed receivers and business people who choose to deal with those receivers should know that

if those receivers act properly and providently, their decisions and judgments will be given great weight by the courts who appoint them. I have decided this appeal in the way I have in order to assure business people who deal with court-appointed receivers that they can have confidence that an agreement which they make with a court-appointed receiver will be far more than a platform upon which others may bargain at the court approval stage. I think that persons who enter into agreements with court-appointed receivers, following a disposition procedure that is appropriate given the nature of the assets involved, should expect that their bargain will be confirmed by the court.

70 The process is very important. It should be carefully protected so that the ability of court-appointed receivers to negotiate the best price possible is strengthened and supported. Because this receiver acted properly and providently in entering into the OEL agreement, I am of the opinion that Rosenberg J. was right when he approved the sale to OEL and dismissed the motion to approve the 922 offer.

71 I would, accordingly, dismiss the appeal. I would award the receiver, OEL and Frontier Airlines Limited their costs out of the Soundair estate, those of the receiver on a solicitor-client scale. I would make no order as to the costs of any of the other parties or intervenors.

McKinlay J.A. **:**

72 I agree with Galligan J.A. in result, but wish to emphasize that I do so on the basis that the undertaking being sold in this case was of a very special and unusual nature. It is most important that the integrity of procedures followed by court-appointed receivers be protected in the interests of both commercial morality and the future confidence of business persons in their dealings with receivers. Consequently, in all cases, the court should carefully scrutinize the procedure followed by the receiver to determine whether it satisfies the tests set out by Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 67 C.B.R. (N.S.) 320n, 60 O.R. (2d) 87, 22 C.P.C. (2d) 131, 39 D.L.R. (4th) 526 (H.C.) . While the procedure carried out by the receiver in this case, as described by Galligan J.A., was appropriate, given the unfolding of events and the unique nature of the assets involved, it is not a procedure that is likely to be appropriate in many receivership sales.

73 I should like to add that where there is a small number of creditors who are the only parties with a real interest in the proceeds of the sale (i.e., where it is clear that the highest price attainable would result in recovery so low that no other creditors, shareholders, guarantors, etc., could possibly benefit therefore), the wishes of the interested creditors should be very seriously considered by the receiver. It is true, as Galligan J.A. points out, that in seeking the court appointment of a receiver, the moving parties also seek the protection of the court in carrying out the receiver's functions. However, it is also true that in utilizing the court process, the moving parties have opened the whole process to detailed scrutiny by all involved, and have probably added significantly to their costs and consequent shortfall as a result of so doing. The adoption of the court process should in no way diminish the rights of any party, and most certainly not the rights of the only parties with a real interest. Where a receiver asks for court approval of a sale which is opposed by the only parties in interest, the court should scrutinize with great care the procedure followed by the receiver. I agree with Galligan J.A. that in this case that was done. I am satisfied that the rights of all parties were properly considered by the receiver, by the learned motions court judge, and by Galligan J.A.

Goodman J.A. **(dissenting):**

74 I have had the opportunity of reading the reasons for judgment herein of Galligan and McKinlay JJ.A. Respectfully, I am unable to agree with their conclusion.

75 The case at bar is an exceptional one in the sense that upon the application made for approval of the sale of the assets of Air Toronto, two competing offers were placed before Rosenberg J. Those two offers were that of OEL and that of 922, a company incorporated for the purpose of acquiring Air Toronto. Its shares were owned equally by CCFL and Air Canada. It was conceded by all parties to these proceedings that the only persons who had any interest in the proceeds of the sale were two secured creditors, viz., CCFL and the Royal Bank of Canada. Those two creditors were unanimous in their position that they desired the court to approve the sale to 922. We were not referred to, nor am I aware of, any case where a court has refused to abide by the unanimous wishes of the only interested creditors for the approval of a specific offer made in receivership proceedings.

76 In *British Columbia Developments Corp. v. Spun Cast Industries Ltd.* (1977), 26 C.B.R. (N.S.) 28, 5 B.C.L.R. 94 (S.C.) , Berger J. said at p. 30 [C.B.R.]:

> Here all of those with a financial stake in the plant have joined in seeking the court's approval of the sale to Fincas. This court does not have a roving commission to decide what is best for investors and businessmen when they have agreed among themselves what course of action they should follow. It is their money.

77 I agree with that statement. It is particularly apt to this case. The two secured creditors will suffer a shortfall of approximately $50 million. They have a tremendous interest in the sale of assets which form part of their security. I agree with the finding of Rosenberg J. that the offer of 922 is superior to that of OEL. He concluded that the 922 offer is marginally superior. If by that he meant that mathematically it was likely to provide slightly more in the way of proceeds, it is difficult to take issue with that finding. If, on the other hand, he meant that having regard to all considerations it was only marginally superior, I cannot agree. He said in his reasons:

> I have come to the conclusion that knowledgeable creditors such as the Royal Bank would prefer the 922 offer even if the other factors influencing their decision were not present. No matter what adjustments had to be made, the 922 offer results in more cash immediately. Creditors facing the type of loss the Royal Bank is taking in this case would not be anxious to rely on contingencies especially in the present circumstances surrounding the airline industry.

78 I agree with that statement completely. It is apparent that the difference between the two offers insofar as cash on closing is concerned amounts to approximately $3 million to $4 million. The bank submitted that it did not wish to gamble any further with respect to its investment, and that the acceptance and court approval of the OEL offer in effect supplanted its position as a secured creditor with respect to the amount owing over and above the down payment and placed it in the position of a joint entrepreneur, but one with no control. This results from the fact that the OEL offer did not provide for any security for any funds which might be forthcoming over and above the initial down payment on closing.

79 In *Cameron v. Bank of Nova Scotia* (1981), 38 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1, 45 N.S.R. (2d) 303, 86 A.P.R. 303 (C.A.) , Hart J.A., speaking for the majority of the court, said at p. 10 [C.B.R.]:

> Here we are dealing with a receiver appointed at the instance of one major creditor, who chose to insert in the contract of sale a provision making it subject to the approval of the court. This, in my opinion, shows an intention on behalf of the parties to invoke the normal equitable doctrines which place the court in the position of looking to the interests of all persons concerned before giving its blessing to a particular transaction submitted for approval. In these circumstances the court would not consider itself bound by the contract entered into in good faith by the receiver but would have to look to the broader picture to see that that contract was for the benefit of the creditors as a whole. When there was evidence that a higher price was readily available for the property the chambers judge was, in my opinion, justified in exercising his discretion as he did. Otherwise he could have deprived the creditors of a substantial sum of money.

80 This statement is apposite to the circumstances of the case at bar. I hasten to add that in my opinion it is not only price which is to be considered in the exercise of the judge's discretion. It may very well be, as I believe to be so in this case, that the amount of cash is the most important element in determining which of the two offers is for the benefit and in the best interest of the creditors.

81 It is my view, and the statement of Hart J.A. is consistent therewith, that the fact that a creditor has requested an order of the court appointing a receiver does not in any way diminish or derogate from his right to obtain the maximum benefit to be derived from any disposition of the debtor's assets. I agree completely with the views expressed by McKinlay J.A. in that regard in her reasons.

82 It is my further view that any negotiations which took place between the only two interested creditors in deciding to support the approval of the 922 offer were not relevant to the determination by the presiding judge of the issues involved in the motion for approval of either one of the two offers, nor are they relevant in determining the outcome of this appeal. It is

sufficient that the two creditors have decided unanimously what is in their best interest, and the appeal must be considered in the light of that decision. It so happens, however, that there is ample evidence to support their conclusion that the approval of the 922 offer is in their best interests.

83 I am satisfied that the interests of the creditors are the prime consideration for both the receiver and the court. In *Re Beauty Counsellors of Canada Ltd.* (1986), 58 C.B.R. (N.S.) 237 (Ont. S.C.) , Saunders J. said at p. 243:

> This does not mean that a court should ignore a new and higher bid made after acceptance where there has been no unfairness in the process. The interests of the creditors, while not the only consideration, are the prime consideration.

84 I agree with that statement of the law. In *Re Selkirk* (1986), 58 C.B.R. (N.S.) 245 (Ont. S.C.) , Saunders J. heard an application for court approval of the sale by the sheriff of real property in bankruptcy proceedings. The sheriff had been previously ordered to list the property for sale subject to approval of the court. Saunders J. said at p. 246:

> In dealing with the request for approval, the court has to be concerned primarily with protecting the interests of the creditors of the former bankrupt. A secondary but important consideration is that the process under which the sale agreement is arrived at should be consistent with commercial efficacy and integrity.

85 I am in agreement with that statement as a matter of general principle. Saunders J. further stated that he adopted the principles stated by Macdonald J.A. in *Cameron* , supra, quoted by Galligan J.A. in his reasons. In *Cameron* , the remarks of Macdonald J.A. related to situations involving the calling of bids and fixing a time limit for the making of such bids. In those circumstances the process is so clear as a matter of commercial practice that an interference by the court in such process might have a deleterious effect on the efficacy of receivership proceedings in other cases. But Macdonald J.A. recognized that even in bid or tender cases where the offeror for whose bid approval is sought has complied with all requirements, a court might not approve the agreement of purchase and sale entered into by the receiver. He said at pp. 11-12 [C.B.R.]:

> There are, of course, many reasons why a court might not approve an agreement of purchase and sale, viz., where the offer accepted is so low in relation to the appraised value as to be unrealistic; or, where the circumstances indicate that insufficient time was allowed for the making of bids or that inadequate notice of sale by bid was given (where the receiver sells property by the bid method); or, where it can be said that the proposed sale is not in the best interest of either the creditors or the owner. Court approval must involve the delicate balancing of competing interests and not simply a consideration of the interests of the creditors.

86 The deficiency in the present case is so large that there has been no suggestion of a competing interest between the owner and the creditors.

87 I agree that the same reasoning may apply to a negotiation process leading to a private sale, but the procedure and process applicable to private sales of a wide variety of businesses and undertakings with the multiplicity of individual considerations applicable and perhaps peculiar to the particular business is not so clearly established that a departure by the court from the process adopted by the receiver in a particular case will result in commercial chaos to the detriment of future receivership proceedings. Each case must be decided on its own merits, and it is necessary to consider the process used by the receiver in the present proceedings and to determine whether it was unfair, improvident or inadequate.

88 It is important to note at the outset that Rosenberg J. made the following statement in his reasons:

> On March 8, 1991 the trustee accepted the OEL offer subject to court approval. The Receiver at that time had no other offer before it that was in final form or could possibly be accepted. The Receiver had at the time the knowledge that Air Canada with CCFL had not bargained in good faith and had not fulfilled the promise of its letter of March 1st. The Receiver was justified in assuming that Air Canada and CCFL's offer was a long way from being in an acceptable form and that Air Canada and CCFL's objective was to interrupt the finalizing of the OEL agreement and to retain as long as possible the Air Toronto connector traffic flowing into Terminal 2 for the benefit of Air Canada.

89 In my opinion there was no evidence before him or before this court to indicate that Air Canada, with CCFL, had not bargained in good faith, and that the receiver had knowledge of such lack of good faith. Indeed, on his appeal, counsel for the receiver stated that he was not alleging Air Canada and CCFL had not bargained in good faith. Air Canada had frankly stated at the time that it had made its offer to purchase, which was eventually refused by the receiver, that it would not become involved in an "auction" to purchase the undertaking of Air Canada and that, although it would fulfil its contractual obligations to provide connecting services to Air Toronto, it would do no more than it was legally required to do insofar as facilitating the purchase of Air Toronto by any other person. In so doing, Air Canada may have been playing "hardball," as its behaviour was characterized by some of the counsel for opposing parties. It was nevertheless merely openly asserting its legal position, as it was entitled to do.

90 Furthermore, there was no evidence before Rosenberg J. or this court that the receiver had assumed that Air Canada and CCFL's objective in making an offer was to interrupt the finalizing of the OEL agreement and to retain as long as possible the Air Toronto connector traffic flowing into Terminal 2 for the benefit of Air Canada. Indeed, there was no evidence to support such an assumption in any event, although it is clear that 922, and through it CCFL and Air Canada, were endeavouring to present an offer to purchase which would be accepted and/or approved by the court in preference to the offer made by OEL.

91 To the extent that approval of the OEL agreement by Rosenberg J. was based on the alleged lack of good faith in bargaining and improper motivation with respect to connector traffic on the part of Air Canada and CCFL, it cannot be supported.

92 I would also point out that rather than saying there was no other offer before it that was final in form, it would have been more accurate to have said that there was *no unconditional* offer before it.

93 In considering the material and evidence placed before the court, I am satisfied that the receiver was at all times acting in good faith. I have reached the conclusion, however, that the process which he used was unfair insofar as 922 is concerned, and improvident insofar as the two secured creditors are concerned.

94 Air Canada had been negotiating with Soundair Corporation for the purchase from it of Air Toronto for a considerable period of time prior to the appointment of a receiver by the court. It had given a letter of intent indicating a prospective sale price of $18 million. After the appointment of the receiver, by agreement dated April 30, 1990, Air Canada continued its negotiations for the purchase of Air Toronto with the receiver. Although this agreement contained a clause which provided that the receiver "shall not negotiate for the sale ... of Air Toronto with any person except Air Canada," it further provided that the receiver would not be in breach of that provision merely by receiving unsolicited offers for all or any of the assets of Air Toronto. In addition, the agreement, which had a term commencing on April 30, 1990, could be terminated on the fifth business day following the delivery of a written notice of termination by one party to the other. I point out this provision merely to indicate that the exclusivity privilege extended by the receiver to Air Canada was of short duration at the receiver's option.

95 As a result of due negligence investigations carried out by Air Canada during the months of April, May and June of 1990, Air Canada reduced its offer to $8.1 million conditional upon there being $4 million in tangible assets. The offer was made on June 14, 1990, and was open for acceptance until June 29, 1990.

96 By amending agreement dated June 19, 1990, the receiver was released from its covenant to refrain from negotiating for the sale of the Air Toronto business and assets to any person other than Air Canada. By virtue of this amending agreement, the receiver had put itself in the position of having a firm offer in hand, with the right to negotiate and accept offers from other persons. Air Canada, in these circumstances, was in the subservient position. The receiver, in the exercise of its judgment and discretion, allowed the Air Canada offer to lapse. On July 20, 1990, Air Canada served a notice of termination of the April 30, 1990 agreement.

97 Apparently as a result of advice received from the receiver to the effect that the receiver intended to conduct an auction for the sale of the assets and business of the Air Toronto division of Soundair Corporation, the solicitors for Air Canada advised the receiver by letter dated July 20, 1990, in part as follows:

> Air Canada has instructed us to advise you that it does not intend to submit a further offer in the auction process.

98 This statement, together with other statements set forth in the letter, was sufficient to indicate that Air Canada was not interested in purchasing Air Toronto in the process apparently contemplated by the receiver at that time. It did not form a proper foundation for the receiver to conclude that there was no realistic possibility of selling Air Toronto [to] Air Canada, either alone or in conjunction with some other person, in different circumstances. In June 1990, the receiver was of the opinion that the fair value of Air Toronto was between $10 million and $12 million.

99 In August 1990, the receiver contacted a number of interested parties. A number of offers were received which were not deemed to be satisfactory. One such offer, received on August 20, 1990, came as a joint offer from OEL and Air Ontario (an Air Canada connector). It was for the sum of $3 million for the good will relating to certain Air Toronto routes, but did not include the purchase of any tangible assets or leasehold interests.

100 In December 1990, the receiver was approached by the management of Canadian Partner (operated by OEL) for the purpose of evaluating the benefits of an amalgamated Air Toronto/Air Partner operation. The negotiations continued from December of 1990 to February of 1991, culminating in the OEL agreement dated March 8, 1991.

101 On or before December 1990, CCFL advised the receiver that it intended to make a bid for the Air Toronto assets. The receiver, in August of 1990, for the purpose of facilitating the sale of Air Toronto assets, commenced the preparation of an operating memorandum. He prepared no less than six draft operating memoranda with dates from October 1990 through March 1, 1991. None of these were distributed to any prospective bidder despite requests having been received therefor, with the exception of an early draft provided to CCFL without the receiver's knowledge.

102 During the period December 1990 to the end of January 1991, the receiver advised CCFL that the offering memorandum was in the process of being prepared and would be ready soon for distribution. He further advised CCFL that it should await the receipt of the memorandum before submitting a formal offer to purchase the Air Toronto assets.

103 By late January, CCFL had become aware that the receiver was negotiating with OEL for the sale of Air Toronto. In fact, on February 11, 1991, the receiver signed a letter of intent with OEL wherein it had specifically agreed not to negotiate with any other potential bidders or solicit any offers from others.

104 By letter dated February 25, 1991, the solicitors for CCFL made a written request to the receiver for the offering memorandum. The receiver did not reply to the letter because he felt he was precluded from so doing by the provisions of the letter of intent dated February 11, 1991. Other prospective purchasers were also unsuccessful in obtaining the promised memorandum to assist them in preparing their bids. It should be noted that, exclusivity provision of the letter of intent expired on February 20, 1991. This provision was extended on three occasions, viz., February 19, 22 and March 5, 1991. It is clear that from a legal standpoint the receiver, by refusing to extend the time, could have dealt with other prospective purchasers, and specifically with 922.

105 It was not until March 1, 1991, that CCFL had obtained sufficient information to enable it to make a bid through 922. It succeeded in so doing through its own efforts through sources other than the receiver. By that time the receiver had already entered into the letter of intent with OEL. Notwithstanding the fact that the receiver knew since December of 1990 that CCFL wished to make a bid for the assets of Air Toronto (and there is no evidence to suggest that at that time such a bid would be in conjunction with Air Canada or that Air Canada was in any way connected with CCFL), it took no steps to provide CCFL with information necessary to enable it to make an intelligent bid, and indeed suggested delaying the making of the bid until an offering memorandum had been prepared and provided. In the meantime, by entering into the letter of intent with OEL, it put itself in a position where it could not negotiate with CCFL or provide the information requested.

106 On February 28, 1991, the solicitors for CCFL telephoned the receiver and were advised for the first time that the receiver had made a business decision to negotiate solely with OEL and would not negotiate with anyone else in the interim.

107 By letter dated March 1, 1991, CCFL advised the receiver that it intended to submit a bid. It set forth the essential terms of the bid and stated that it would be subject to customary commercial provisions. On March 7, 1991 CCFL and Air Canada,

jointly through 922, submitted an offer to purchase Air Toronto upon the terms set forth in the letter dated March 1, 1991. It included a provision that the offer was conditional upon the interpretation of an inter-lender agreement which set out the relative distribution of proceeds as between CCFL and the Royal Bank. It is common ground that it was a condition over which the receiver had no control, and accordingly would not have been acceptable on that ground alone. The receiver did not, however, contact CCFL in order to negotiate or request the removal of the condition, although it appears that its agreement with OEL not to negotiate with any person other than OEL expired on March 6, 1991.

108 The fact of the matter is that by March 7, 1991, the receiver had received the offer from OEL which was subsequently approved by Rosenberg J. That offer was accepted by the receiver on March 8, 1991. Notwithstanding the fact that OEL had been negotiating the purchase for a period of approximately 3 months, the offer contained a provision for the sole benefit of the purchaser that it was subject to the purchaser obtaining "a financing commitment within 45 days of the date hereof in an amount not less than the Purchase Price from the Royal Bank of Canada or other financial institution upon terms and conditions acceptable to them. In the event that such a financing commitment is not obtained within such 45 day period, the purchaser or OEL shall have the right to terminate this agreement upon giving written notice of termination to the vendor on the first Business Day following the expiry of the said period." The purchaser was also given the right to waive the condition.

109 In effect, the agreement was tantamount to a 45-day option to purchase, excluding the right of any other person to purchase Air Toronto during that period of time and thereafter if the condition was fulfilled or waived. The agreement was, of course, stated to be subject to court approval.

110 In my opinion, the process and procedure adopted by the receiver was unfair to CCFL. Although it was aware from December 1990 that CCFL was interested in making an offer, it effectively delayed the making of such offer by continually referring to the preparation of the offering memorandum. It did not endeavour during the period December 1990 to March 7, 1991, to negotiate with CCFL in any way the possible terms of purchase and sale agreement. In the result, no offer was sought from CCFL by the receiver prior to February 11, 1991, and thereafter it put itself in the position of being unable to negotiate with anyone other than OEL. The receiver then, on March 8, 1991, chose to accept an offer which was conditional in nature without prior consultation with CCFL (922) to see whether it was prepared to remove the condition in its offer.

111 I do not doubt that the receiver felt that it was more likely that the condition in the OEL offer would be fulfilled than the condition in the 922 offer. It may be that the receiver, having negotiated for a period of 3 months with OEL, was fearful that it might lose the offer if OEL discovered that it was negotiating with another person. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it was imprudent and unfair on the part of the receiver to ignore an offer from an interested party which offered approximately triple the cash down payment without giving a chance to the offeror to remove the conditions or other terms which made the offer unacceptable to it. The potential loss was that of an agreement which amounted to little more than an option in favour of the offeror.

112 In my opinion the procedure adopted by the receiver was unfair to CCFL in that, in effect, it gave OEL the opportunity of engaging in exclusive negotiations for a period of 3 months, notwithstanding the fact that it knew CCFL was interested in making an offer. The receiver did not indicate a deadline by which offers were to be submitted, and it did not at any time indicate the structure or nature of an offer which might be acceptable to it.

113 In his reasons, Rosenberg J. stated that as of March 1, CCFL and Air Canada had all the information that they needed, and any allegations of unfairness in the negotiating process by the receiver had disappeared. He said:

> They created a situation as of March 8, where the receiver was faced with two offers, one of which was acceptable in form and one of which could not possibly be accepted in its present form. The Receiver acted appropriately in accepting the OEL offer.

If he meant by "acceptable in form" that it was acceptable to the receiver, then obviously OEL had the unfair advantage of its lengthy negotiations with the receiver to ascertain what kind of an offer would be acceptable to the receiver. If, on the other hand,

he meant that the 922 offer was unacceptable in its form because it was conditional, it can hardly be said that the OEL offer was more acceptable in this regard, as it contained a condition with respect to financing terms and conditions "*acceptable to them* ."

114 It should be noted that on March 13, 1991, the representatives of 922 first met with the receiver to review its offer of March 7, 1991, and at the request of the receiver, withdrew the inter-lender condition from its offer. On March 14, 1991, OEL removed the financing condition from its offer. By order of Rosenberg J. dated March 26, 1991, CCFL was given until April 5, 1991, to submit a bid, and on April 5, 1991, 922 submitted its offer with the inter-lender condition removed.

115 In my opinion, the offer accepted by the receiver is improvident and unfair insofar as the two creditors are concerned. It is not improvident in the sense that the price offered by 922 greatly exceeded that offered by OEL. In the final analysis it may not be greater at all. The salient fact is that the cash down payment in the 922 offer con stitutes proximately two thirds of the contemplated sale price, whereas the cash down payment in the OEL transaction constitutes approximately 20 to 25 per cent of the contemplated sale price. In terms of absolute dollars, the down payment in the 922 offer would likely exceed that provided for in the OEL agreement by approximately $3 million to $4 million.

116 In *Re Beauty Counsellors of Canada Ltd.* , supra, Saunders J. said at p. 243 [C.B.R.]:

> If a substantially higher bid turns up at the approval stage, the court should consider it. Such a bid may indicate, for example, that the trustee has not properly carried out its duty to endeavour to obtain the best price for the estate. In such a case the proper course might be to refuse approval and to ask the trustee to recommence the process.

117 I accept that statement as being an accurate statement of the law. I would add, however, as previously indicated, that in determining what is the best price for the estate, the receiver or court should not limit its consideration to which offer provides for the greater sale price. The amount of down payment and the provision or lack thereof to secure payment of the balance of the purchase price over and above the down payment may be the most important factor to be considered, and I am of the view that is so in the present case. It is clear that that was the view of the only creditors who can benefit from the sale of Air Toronto.

118 I note that in the case at bar the 922 offer in conditional form was presented to the receiver before it accepted the OEL offer. The receiver, in good faith, although I believe mistakenly, decided that the OEL offer was the better offer. At that time the receiver did not have the benefit of the views of the two secured creditors in that regard. At the time of the application for approval before Rosenberg J., the stated preference of the two interested creditors was made quite clear. He found as fact that knowledgeable creditors would not be anxious to rely on contingencies in the present circumstances surrounding the airline industry. It is reasonable to expect that a receiver would be no less knowledgeable in that regard, and it is his primary duty to protect the interests of the creditors. In my view, it was an improvident act on the part of the receiver to have accepted the conditional offer made by OEL, and Rosenberg J. erred in failing to dismiss the application of the receiver for approval of the OEL offer. It would be most inequitable to foist upon the two creditors, who have already been seriously hurt, more unnecessary contingencies.

119 Although in other circumstances it might be appropriate to ask the receiver to recommence the process, in my opinion, it would not be appropriate to do so in this case. The only two interested creditors support the acceptance of the 922 offer, and the court should so order.

120 Although I would be prepared to dispose of the case on the grounds stated above, some comment should be addressed to the question of interference by the court with the process and procedure adopted by the receiver.

121 I am in agreement with the view expressed by McKinlay J.A. in her reasons that the undertaking being sold in this case was of a very special and unusual nature. As a result, the procedure adopted by the receiver was somewhat unusual. At the outset, in accordance with the terms of the receiving order, it dealt solely with Air Canada. It then appears that the receiver contemplated a sale of the assets by way of auction, and still later contemplated the preparation and distribution of an offering memorandum inviting bids. At some point, without advice to CCFL, it abandoned that idea and reverted to exclusive negotiations with one interested party. This entire process is not one which is customary or widely accepted as a general practice in the commercial world. It was somewhat unique, having regard to the circumstances of this case. In my opinion, the refusal

of the court to approve the offer accepted by the receiver would not reflect on the integrity of procedures followed by court-appointed receivers, and is not the type of refusal which will have a tendency to undermine the future confidence of business persons in dealing with receivers.

122 Rosenberg J. stated that the Royal Bank was aware of the process used and tacitly approved it. He said it knew the terms of the letter of intent in February 1991, and made no comment. The Royal Bank did, however, indicate to the receiver that it was not satisfied with the contemplated price, nor the amount of the down payment. It did not, however, tell the receiver to adopt a different process in endeavouring to sell the Air Toronto assets. It is not clear from the material filed that at the time it became aware of the letter of intent that it knew that CCFl was interested in purchasing Air Toronto.

123 I am further of the opinion that a prospective purchaser who has been given an opportunity to engage in exclusive negotiations with a receiver for relatively short periods of time which are extended from time to time by the receiver, and who then makes a conditional offer, the condition of which is for his sole benefit and must be fulfilled to his satisfaction unless waived by him, and which he knows is to be subject to court approval, cannot legitimately claim to have been unfairly dealt with if the court refuses to approve the offer and approves a substantially better one.

124 In conclusion, I feel that I must comment on the statement made by Galligan J.A. in his reasons to the effect that the suggestion made by counsel for 922 constitutes evidence of lack of prejudice resulting from the absence of an offering memorandum. It should be pointed out that the court invited counsel to indicate the manner in which the problem should be resolved in the event that the court concluded that the order approving the OEL offer should be set aside. There was no evidence before the court with respect to what additional information may have been acquired by CCFL since March 8, 1991, and no inquiry was made in that regard. Accordingly, I am of the view that no adverse inference should be drawn from the proposal made as a result of the court's invitation.

125 For the above reasons I would allow the appeal one set of costs to CCFL-922, set aside the order of Rosenberg J., dismiss the receiver's motion with one set of costs to CCFL-922 and order that the assets of Air Toronto be sold to numbered corporation 922246 on the terms set forth in its offer with appropriate adjustments to provide for the delay in its execution. Costs awarded shall be payable out of the estate of Soundair Corporation. The costs incurred by the receiver in making the application and responding to the appeal shall be paid to him out of the assets of the estate of Soundair Corporation on a solicitor-client basis. I would make no order as to costs of any of the other parties or intervenors.

Appeal dismissed.

TAB 2

2013 ONSC 7009
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Elleway Acquisitions Ltd. v. 4358376 Canada Inc.

2013 CarswellOnt 16849, 2013 ONSC 7009, 235 A.C.W.S. (3d) 602, 7 C.B.R. (6th) 25

In the Matter of an Application Pursuant to Section 243 of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, R.S.C. 1985, c.B-3, as Amended, and Section 101 of the Courts of Justice Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.C.43, as Amended

Elleway Acquisitions Limited Applicant and 4358376 Canada Inc. (Operating as Itravel 2000.com), The Cruise Professionals Limited (Operating as the Cruise Professionals), and 7500106 Canada Inc. (Operating as Travelcash) Respondents

Morawetz J.

Heard: November 4, 2013
Judgment: November 4, 2013
Docket: CV-13-10320-00CL

Counsel: Jay Swartz, Natalie Renner for Applicant
John N. Birch for Respondents
David Bish, Lee Cassey for Grant Thornton, Proposed Receiver

***Morawetz J.*:**

1 At the conclusion of argument on November 4, 2013, the motion was granted with reasons to follow. These are the reasons.

2 On November 4, 2013, Grant Thornton Limited was appointed as Receiver (the "Receiver") of the assets, property and undertaking of each of 4358376 Canada Inc., (operating as itravel 2000.com ("itravel")), 7500106 Canada Inc., (operating as Travelcash ("Travelcash")), and The Cruise Professionals Limited, operating as The Cruise Professionals ("Cruise" and, together with itravel 2000 and Travelcash, "itravel Canada"). See reasons reported at 2013 ONSC 6866.

3 The Receiver seeks the following:

(i) an order:

(a) approving the entry by the Receiver into an asset purchase agreement (the "itravel APA") between the Receiver and 8635919 Canada Inc. (the "itravel Purchaser") dated on or about the date of the order, and attached as Confidential Appendix I of the First Report of the Receiver dated on or about the date of the order (the "Report");

(b) approving the transactions contemplated by the itravel APA;

(c) vesting in the itravel Purchaser all of the Receiver's right, title and interest in and to the "Purchased Assets" (as defined in the itravel APA) (collectively, the "itravel Assets"); and

(d) sealing the itravel APA until the completion of the sale transaction contemplated thereunder; and

(ii) an order:

(a) approving the entry by the Receiver into an asset purchase agreement (the "Cruise APA", and together with the itravel APA and the Travelcash APA, the "APAs") between the Receiver and 8635854 Canada Inc. (the "Cruise Purchaser"), and together with the itravel Purchaser and the Travelcash Purchaser, the "Purchasers") dated on or about the date of the order, and attached as Confidential Appendix 2 of the Report;

(b) approving the transactions contemplated by the Cruise APA; and

(c) vesting the Cruise Purchaser all of the Receiver's right, title and interest in and to the "Purchased Assets" (as defined in the Cruise APA) (the "Cruise Assets", and together with the itravel Assets and the Travelcash Assets, the "Purchased Assets"); and

(d) sealing the Cruise APA until the completion of the sales transaction contemplated thereunder; and

(iii) an order:

(a) approving the entry by the Receiver into an asset purchase agreement (the "Travelcash APA") between the Receiver and 1775305 Alberta Ltd. (the "Travelcash Purchaser") dated on or about the date of the order, and attached as Confidential Appendix 3 of the Report;

(b) approving the transactions contemplated by the Travelcash APA;

(c) vesting in the Travelcash Purchaser all of the Receiver's right, title and interest in and to the "Purchased Assets" (as defined in the Travelcash APA) (collectively, the "Travelcash Assets"); and

(d) sealing the Travelcash APA until the completion of the sale transaction contemplated thereunder.

4 The Receiver further requests a sealing order: (i) permanently sealing the valuation reports prepared by Ernst & Young LLP and FTI Consulting LLP, attached as Confidential Appendices 4 and 5 of the Report, respectively; and (ii) sealing the Proposed Receiver's supplemental report to the court dated on or about the date of the order (the "Supplemental Report"), for the duration requested and reasons set forth therein.

5 The motion was not opposed. It was specifically noted that Mr. Jonathan Carroll, former CEO of itravel, did not object to the relief sought.

6 The Receiver recommends issuance of the Orders for the factual and legal bases set forth herein and in its motion record. The purchase and sale transactions contemplated under the APAs (collectively, the "Sale Transactions") are conditional upon the Orders being issued by this court.

General Background

7 Much of the factual background to this motion is set out in the endorsement which resulted in the appointment of the Receiver (2013 ONSC 6866), and is not repeated.

8 The Receiver has filed the Report to provide the court with the background, basis for, and its recommendation in respect of the relief requested. The Receiver has also filed the Supplemental Report (on a confidential basis) as further support for the relief requested herein.

9 In the summer of 2010, Barclays Bank PLC ("Barclays") approached Travelzest and stated that it no longer wished to act as the primary lender of Travelzest and its subsidiaries, as a result of certain covenant breaches under the Credit Agreement. This prompted Travelzest to consider and implement where possible, strategic restructuring arrangements, including the divestiture of assets and refinancing initiatives.

10 In September 2010, Travelzest publicly announced its intention to find a buyer for the Travelzest business.

Travelzest's Further Sales and Marketing Processes

11 In the fall of 2011, a competitor of itravel Canada contacted Travelzest and expressed an interest in acquiring the Travelzest portfolio. Negotiations ensued over a period of three months. However, the parties could not agree on a Purchase Price or terms, and negotiations ceased in December 2011.

12 In early 2012, an informal restructuring plan was developed, which included the sale of international companies.

13 The first management offer was received in April 2012. In addition, a sales process continued from May to October 2012, which involved 50 potential bidders within the industry. Counsel advised that 14 parties pursued the opportunity and four parties were provided with access to the data room. Four offers were ultimately made but none were deemed to be feasible, insofar as two were too low, one withdrew and the management offer was withdrawn after equity backers were lost.

14 In September 2012, a second management offer was received, which was subsequently amended in November 2012. The second management offer did not proceed.

15 In January 2013, discussions ended and the independent committee was disbanded.

16 In March and April 2013, three Canadian financial institutions were approached about a refinancing. However, no acceptable term sheet was obtained.

17 In May 2013, Travelzest entered into new discussions with a prior bidder from a previous sales process. Terms could not be reached.

18 In May 2013, a third management offer was received which was followed by a fourth management offer in July, both of which were rejected.

19 In July 2013, a press release confirmed that Barclays was not renewing its credit facilities with the result that the obligations became payable on July 12, 2013. However, Barclays agreed to support restructuring efforts until August 30, 2013.

20 In August 2013, a fifth management offer was made for the assets of itravel Canada, which included limited funding for liabilities. This offer was apparently below the consideration offered in the previous management offers. The value of the offer was also significantly lower than the Barclays' indebtedness and lower than the aggregate amount of the current offer from the Purchasers.

Barclays' Assignment of the Indebtedness to Elleway

21 On August 21, 2013, a consortium led by LDC Logistics Development Corporation ("LDC"), which included Elleway (collectively, the "Consortium") submitted an offer for Barclays debt and security, as opposed to the assets of Itravel Canada. On August 29, 2013, Elleway and Barclays finalized the assignment deal, which was concluded on September 1, 2013.

22 The consideration paid by Elleway was less than the amount owing to Barclays. Barclays determined, with the advice of KPMG London, that the sale of its debt and security, albeit at a significant discount, was the best available option at the time.

23 itravel Canada is insolvent. Elleway has agreed pursuant to the Working Capital Facility agreement to provide the necessary funding for itravel Canada up to and including the date for a court hearing to consider the within motion. However, if a sale is not approved, there is no funding commitment from Elleway.

Proposed Sale of Assets

24 The Receiver and the Purchasers have negotiated the APAs which provide for the going-concern purchase of substantially all of the itravel Canada's assets, subject to the terms and conditions therein. The purchase prices under the APAs for the Purchased Assets will be comprised of a reduction of a portion of the indebtedness owed by Elleway under the Credit Agreement

and entire amount owed under the Working Capital Facility Agreement and related guarantees, and the assumption by the Purchasers of the Assumed Liabilities (as defined in each of the Purchase Agreements and which includes all priority claims) and the assumption of any indebtedness issued under any receiver's certificates issued by the Receiver pursuant to a funding agreement between the Receiver and Elleway Properties Limited. The aggregate of the purchase prices under the APA is less the amount of the obligations owed by itravel Canada to Elleway under the Credit Agreement and Working Capital Facility Agreement and related guarantees.

25 Pursuant to the APAs, the Purchasers are to make offers to 95% of the employees of itravel Canada on substantially similar terms of such employees current employment. The Purchasers will also be assuming all obligations owed to the customers of itravel Canada.

26 In reviewing the valuation reports of FTI Consulting LLP and Ernst & Young LLP and considering the current financial position of itravel Canada, the Receiver came to the following conclusions:

> (a) FTI Consulting LLP and Ernst & Young LLP concluded that under the circumstances, the itravel Canada companies' values are significantly less than the secured indebtedness owed under the Credit Agreement;
>
> (b) Barclays, in consultation with its advisor, KPMG London, sold its debt and security for an amount lower than its par value;
>
> (c) the book value of the itravel Canada's tangible assets are significantly less than the secured indebtedness; and
>
> (d) Elleway has the principal financial interest in the assets of itravel Canada, subject to priority claims.

27 The Receiver is of the view that the Sale Transactions with the Purchasers are the best available option as it stabilizes itravel Canada's operations, provides for additional working capital, facilitates the employment of substantially all of the employees, continues the occupation of up to three leased premises, provides for new business to itravel Canada's existing suppliers and service providers, assumes the liability associated with pre-existing gift certificates and vouchers, allows for the uninterrupted service of customer's travel arrangements and preserves the goodwill and overall enterprise value of the Companies. In addition, the Receiver believes that the purchase prices under the APAs are fair and reasonable in the circumstances, and that any further marketing efforts to sell itravel Canada's assets may be unsuccessful and could further reduce their value and have a negative effect on operations.

28 The Receiver's request for approval of the Orders raises the following issues for this court.

> A. What is the legal test for approval of the Orders?
>
> B. Does the legal test for approval change in a so-called "quick flip" scenario?
>
> C. Does partial payment of the purchase price through a reduction of the indebtedness owed to Elleway preclude approval of the Orders?
>
> D. Does the Purchasers' relationship to itravel Canada preclude approval of the Orders?
>
> E. Is a sealing of the APAs until the closing of the Sale Transactions contemplated thereunder and a permanent sealing of the FTI Consulting LLP and Ernst & Young LLP valuation and the Supplemental Report Warranted?

A. What is the Legal Test for Approval of the Orders?

29 Receivers have the powers set out in the order appointing them. Receivers are consistently granted the power to sell property of a debtor, which is, indeed, the case under the Appointment Order.

30 Under Section 100 of the *Courts of Justice Act (Ontario)*, this Court has the power to vest in any person an interest in real or personal property that the Court has authority to order be conveyed.

31 It is settled law that where a Court is asked to approve a sales process and transaction in a receivership context, the Court is to consider the following principles (collectively, the "*Soundair* Principles"):

> a. whether the party made a sufficient effort to obtain the best price and to not act improvidently;
>
> b. the interests of all parties;
>
> c. the efficacy and integrity of the process by which the party obtained offers; and
>
> d. whether the working out of the process was unfair.

Royal Bank of Canada v. Soundair Corp. (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.); *Skyepharma PLC v. Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp.* (1999), 12 C.B.R. (4th) 87 (Ont. S.C.J.) appeal quashed, (2000), 47 O.R. (3d) 234 (Ont. C.A.)).

32 In this case, I am satisfied that evidence has been presented in the Report, the Jenkins Affidavit and the Howell Affidavit, to demonstrate that each of the *Soundair* Principles has been satisfied, and that the economic realities of the business vulnerability and financial position of itravel Canada (including that the result would be no different in a further extension of the already extensive sales process) militate in favour of approval of the issuance of the Orders.

B. Does the Legal Test for Approval Change in a So-called "Quick Flip" Scenario?

33 Where court approval is being sought for a so-called "quick flip" or immediate sale (which involves, as is the case here, an already negotiated purchase agreement sought to be approved upon or immediately after the appointment of a receiver without any further marketing process), the court is still to consider the *Soundair* Principles but with specific consideration to the economic realities of the business and the specific transactions in question. In particular, courts have approved immediate sales where:

> (a) an immediate sale is the only realistic way to provide maximum recovery for a creditor who stands in a clear priority of economic interest to all others; and
>
> (b) delay of the transaction will erode the realization of the security of the creditor in sole economic interest.

Fund 321 Ltd. Partnership v. Samsys Technologies Inc. (2006), 21 C.B.R. (5th) 1 (Ont. S.C.J.); *Bank of Montreal v. Trent Rubber Corp.* (2005), 13 C.B.R. (5th) 31 (Ont. S.C.J.).

34 In the case of *Re Tool-Plas*, I stated, in approving a "quick flip" sale that:

> A "quick flip" transaction is not the usual transaction. In certain circumstances, however, it may be the best, or the only, alternative. In considering whether to approve a "quick flip" transaction, the court should consider the impact on various parties and assess whether their respective positions and the proposed treatment that they will receive in the "quick flip" transaction would realistically be any different if an extended sales process were followed.

Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re (2008), 48 C.B.R. (5th) 91 (Ont. S.C.J.).

35 Counsel submits that the parties would realistically be in no better position were an extended sales process undertaken, since the APAs are the culmination of an exhaustive marketing process that has already occurred, and there is no realistic indication that another such process (even if possible, which it is not, as itravel Canada lacks the resources to do so) would produce a more favourable outcome.

36 Counsel further submits that a "quick flip" transaction will be approved pursuant to the *Soundair* Principles, where, as in this case, there is evidence that the debtor has insufficient cash to engage in a further, extended marketing process, and there

is no basis to expect that such a process will result in a better realization on the assets. Delaying the process puts in jeopardy the continued operation of itravel Canada.

37 I am satisfied that the approval of the Orders and the consummation of the Sale Transactions to the Purchasers pursuant to the APAs is warranted as the best way to provide recovery for Elleway, the senior secured lender of itravel Canada and with the sole economic interest in the assets. The sale process was fair and reasonable, and the Sale Transactions is the only means of providing the maximum realization of the Purchased Assets under the current circumstances.

C. Does Partial Payment of the Purchase Price Through a Reduction of the Indebtedness Owed to Elleway Preclude Approval of the Orders?

38 Partial payment of the purchase price by Elleway reducing a portion of the debt owed to it under the Credit Agreement and the entire amount owned under the Working Capital Facility Agreement does not preclude approval of the Orders. This mechanism is analogous to a credit bid by a secured lender, but with the Purchasers, instead of the secured lender, taking title to the purchased assets. As noted, the Receiver understands that following closing of the transactions contemplated under the APAs, that Elleway (or an affiliate thereof) will hold an indirect equity interest in the Purchasers. It is well-established in Canada insolvency law that a secured creditor is permitted to credit bid its debt in lieu of providing cash consideration.

Re White Birch Paper Holding Co. (2010), 72 C.B.R. (5th) 74 (Qc. C.A.); *Re Planet Organic Holding Corp*. (June 4, 2010), Toronto, Court File No. 10-86699-00CL, (S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

39 This court has previously approved sales involving credit bids in the receivership context. See *CCM Master Qualified Fund, Ltd., v. Blutip Power Technologies Ltd.* (April 26, 2012), Toronto, Court File No. CV-12-9622-00CL, (S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

40 It seems to me that, in these circumstances, no party is prejudiced by Elleway reducing a portion of the debt owed to it under the Credit Agreement and the entire amount owed under the Working Capital Facility Agreement as part of the Purchasers' payment of the purchase prices, as the Purchasers are assuming all claims secured by liens or encumbrances that rank in priority to Elleway's security. The reduction of the indebtedness owed to Elleway will be less than the total amount of indebtedness owed to Elleway under the Credit Agreement. As such, if cash was paid in lieu of a credit bid, such cash would all accrue to the benefit of Elleway.

41 Therefore, it seems to me the fact that a portion of the purchase price payable under the APAs is to be paid through a reduction in the indebtedness owed to Elleway does not preclude approval of the Orders.

D. Does the Purchasers' Relationship to itravel Canada preclude approval of the Orders?

42 Even if the Purchasers and itravel Canada were to be considered, out of an abundance of caution, related parties, given that LDC is an existing shareholder of Travelzest and part of the Consortium or otherwise, this does not itself preclude approval of the Orders.

43 Where a receiver seeks approval of a sale to a party related to the debtor, the receiver shall review and report on the activities of the debtor and the transparency of the process to provide sufficient detail to satisfy the court that the best result is being achieved. It is not sufficient for a receiver to accept information provided by the debtor where a related party is a purchaser; it must take steps to verify the information. See *Toronto Dominion Bank v. Canadian Starter Drives Inc.*, 2011 ONSC 8004 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

44 In addition, the 2009 amendments to the BIA relating to sales to related persons in a proposal proceedings (similar amendments were also made to the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (Canada)) are instructive. Section 65.13(5) of the BIA provides:

If the proposed sale or disposition is to a person who is related to the insolvent person, the court may, after considering the factors referred to in subsection (4), grant the authorization only if it is satisfied that:

(a) good faith efforts were made to sell or otherwise dispose of the assets to persons who are not related to the insolvent person; and

(b) the consideration to be received is superior to the consideration that would be received under any other offer made in accordance with the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition.

45 The above referenced jurisprudence and provisions of the BIA (Canada) demonstrate that a court will not preclude a sale to a party related to the debtor, but will subject the proposed sale to greater scrutiny to ensure a transparency and integrity in the marketing and sales process and require that the receiver verify information provided to it to ensure the process was performed in good faith. In this case, the Receiver is of the view that the market for the Purchased Assets was sufficiently canvassed through the sales and marketing processes and that the purchase prices under the APAs are fair and reasonable under the current circumstances. I agree with and accept these submissions.

46 The Receiver requests that the APAs be sealed until the closing of the Sale Transactions contemplated thereunder. It is also requesting an order permanently sealing the valuation reports prepared by Ernst & Young LLP and FIT Consulting LLP and, attached as Confidential Appendices 4 and 5 of the Report, respectively.

47 The Supreme Court of Canada in *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, held that a sealing order should only be granted when:

(a) an order is needed to prevent serious risk to an important interest because reasonable alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and

(b) the salutary effects of the order outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which includes public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance), 2002 SCC 41, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522, at para. 53; *Re Nortel Networks Corporation* (2009), 56 C.B.R. (5 TH) 224, (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]), at paras. 38-39.

48 In my view, the APAs subject to the sealing request contain highly sensitive commercial information of itravel Canada and their related businesses and operations, including, without limitation, the purchase price, lists of assets, and contracts. Courts have recognized that disclosure of this type of information in the context of a sale process could be harmful to stakeholders by undermining the integrity of the sale process. I am satisfied that the disclosure of the APAs prior to the closing of the Sale Transactions could pose a serious risk to the sale process in the event that the Sale Transactions do not close as it could jeopardize dealings with any future prospective purchasers or liquidators of itravel Canada's assets. There is no other reasonable alternative to preventing this information from becoming publicly available and the sealing request, which has been tailored to the closing of the Sale Transactions and the material terms of the APAs until the closing of the Sale Transactions, greatly outweighs the deleterious effects. For these same reasons, plus the additional reason that the valuations were provided to Travelzest on a confidential basis and only made available to Travelzest and the Receiver on the express condition that they remain confidential, the Receiver submits that the FTI Consulting LLP and Ernst & Young LLP valuations be subject to a permanent sealing order. Further, the Receiver submits that the information contained in the Supplemental Report also meets the foregoing test for the factual basis set forth in detail in the Supplemental Report (which has been filed on a confidential basis). I accept the Receiver's submissions regarding the permanent sealing order for the valuation materials. For these reasons, (i) the APA is to be sealed pending closing, and (ii) only the valuation material is to be permanently sealed.

Disposition

49 For the reasons set forth herein, the motion is granted. Orders have been signed to give effect to the foregoing.

TAB 3

2008 CarswellOnt 6258
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re

2008 CarswellOnt 6258, [2008] O.J. No. 4218, 172 A.C.W.S. (3d) 112, 172 A.C.W.S. (3d) 113, 48 C.B.R. (5th) 91

IN THE MATTER OF THE RECEIVERSHIP OF TOOL-PLAS SYSTEMS INC. (Applicant) AND IN THE MATTER OF SECTION 101 OF THE COURTS OF JUSTICE ACT, AS AMENDED

Morawetz J.

Heard: September 29, 2008
Judgment: October 24, 2008
Docket: CV-08-7746-00-CL

Counsel: D. Bish for Applicant, Tool-Plas
T. Reyes for Receiver, RSM Richter Inc.
R. van Kessel for EDC, Comerica
C. Staples for BDC
M. Weinczok for Roynat

***Morawetz J.*:**

1 This morning, RSM Richter Inc. ("Richter" or the "Receiver") was appointed receiver of Tool-Plas, (the "Company"). In the application hearing, Mr. Bish in his submissions on behalf of the Company made it clear that the purpose of the receivership was to implement a 'quick flip' transaction, which if granted would result in the sale of assets to a new corporate entity in which the existing shareholders of the Company would be participating. The endorsement appointing the Receiver should be read in conjunction with this endorsement.

2 The Receiver moves for approval of the sale transaction. The Receiver has filed a comprehensive report in support of its position — which recommends approval of the sale.

3 The transaction has the support of four Secured Lenders — EDC, Comerica, Roynat and BDC.

4 Prior to the receivership appointment, Richter assessed the viability of the Company. Richter concluded that any restructuring had to focus on the mould business and had to be concluded expeditiously given the highly competitive and challenging nature of the auto parts business. Further, steps had to be taken to minimize the risk of losing either or both key customers — namely Ford and Johnson Controls. Together these two customer account for 60% of the Company's sales.

5 Richter was also involved in assisting the Company in negotiating with its existing Secured Lenders. As a result, these Lenders have agreed to continue to finance the Company's short term needs, but only on the basis that a sale transaction occurs.

6 Under the terms of the proposed offer the Purchaser will acquire substantially all of the assets of the Company. The purchase price will consist of the assumption or notional repayment of all of the outstanding obligations to each of the Secured Lenders, subject to certain amendments and adjustments.

7 The proposed purchaser would be entitled to use the name Tool-Plas. The purchaser would hire all current employees and would assume termination and vacation liabilities of the current employees; the obligations of the Company to trade creditors

related to the mould business, subject to working out terms with those creditors; as well as the majority of the Company's equipment leases, subject to working out terms with the lessors.

8 The only substantial condition to the transaction is the requirement for an approval and vesting order.

9 The Receiver is of the view that the transaction would enable the purchaser to carry on the Company's mould business and that this would be a successful outcome for customers, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders, including the Secured Lenders.

10 The Receiver recommends the 'quick flip' transaction. The Receiver is of the view that there is substantial risk associated with a marketing process, since any process other than an expedited process could result in a risk that the key customers would resource their business elsewhere. Reference was made to other recent insolvencies of auto parts suppliers which resulted in receivership and owners of tooling equipment repossessing their equipment with the result that there was no ongoing business. (Polywheels and Progressive Moulded Tooling).

11 The Receiver is also of the view that the proposed purchase price exceeds both a going concern and a liquidation value of the assets. The Receiver has also obtained favourable security opinions with respect to the security held by the Secured Lenders. Not all secured creditors are being paid. There are subordinate secured creditors consisting of private arms-length investors who have agreed to forego payment.

12 Counsel to the Receiver pointed out that the transaction only involved the mould business. The die division has already been shut down. The die division employees were provided with working notice. They will not have ongoing jobs. Suppliers to the die division will not have their outstanding obligations assumed by the purchaser. There is no doubt that employees and suppliers to the die division will receive different treatment than employees and suppliers to the mould business. However, as the Receiver points out, these decisions are, in fact, business decisions which are made by the purchaser and not by the Receiver. The Receiver also stresses the fact that the die business employees and suppliers are unsecured creditors and under no scenario would they be receiving any reward from the sales process.

13 This motion proceeded with limited service. Employees and unsecured creditors (with the exception of certain litigants) were not served. The materials were served on Mr. Brian Szucs, who was formerly employed as an Account Manager. Mr. Szucs has issued a Statement of Claim against the Company claiming damages as a result of wrongful dismissal. His employment contract provides for a severance package in the amount of his base salary ($120,000) plus bonuses.

14 Mr. Szucs appeared on the motion arguing that his Claim should be exempted from the approval and vesting order — specifically that his claim should not be vested out, rather it should be treated as unaffected. Regretfully for Mr. Szucs, he is an unsecured creditor. There is nothing in his material to suggest otherwise. His position is subordinate to the secured creditors and the purchaser has made a business decision not to assume the Company's obligations to Mr. Szucs. If the sale is approved, the relief requested by Mr. Szucs cannot be granted.

15 A 'quick flip' transaction is not the usual transaction. In certain circumstances, however, it may be the best, or the only, alternative. In considering whether to approve a 'quick flip' transaction, the Court should consider the impact on various parties and assess whether their respective positions and the proposed treatment that they will receive in the 'quick flip' transaction would realistically be any different if an extended sales process were followed.

16 In this case certain parties will benefit if this transaction proceeds. These parties include the Secured Lenders, equipment and vehicle lessors, unsecured creditors of the mould division, the landlord, employees of the mould division, suppliers to the mould division, and finally — the customers of the mould division who stand to benefit from continued supply.

17 On the other hand, certain parties involved in litigation, former employees of the die division and suppliers to the die division will, in all likelihood, have no possibility of recovery. This outcome is regrettable, but in the circumstances of this case, would appear to be inevitable. I am satisfied that there is no realistic scenario under which these parties would have any prospect of recovery.

18 I am satisfied that, having considered the positions of the above-mentioned parties, the proposed sale is reasonable. I accept the view of the Receiver that there is a risk if there is a delay in the process. I am also satisfied that the sale price exceeds the going concern and the liquidation value of the assets and that, on balance, the proposed transaction is in the best interests of the stakeholders. I am also satisfied that the prior involvement of Richter has resulted in a process where alternative courses of action have been considered.

19 I am also mindful that the Secured Lenders have supported the proposed transaction and that the subordinated secured lenders are not objecting.

20 In these circumstances the process can be said to be fair and in the circumstances of this case I am satisfied that the principles set out in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.) have been followed.

21 In the result, the motion of the Receiver is granted and an Approval and Vesting Order shall issue in the requested form.

22 The confidential customer and product information contained in the Offer is such that it is appropriate for a redacted copy to be placed in the record with an unredacted copy to be filed separately, under seal, subject to further order.

Motion granted.

Motion granted.

TAB 4

2006 CarswellOnt 2541
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Fund 321 Ltd. Partnership v. Samsys Technologies Inc.

2006 CarswellOnt 2541, 21 C.B.R. (5th) 1, 9 P.P.S.A.C. (3d) 185

Fund 321 Limited Partnership, c.o.b. as Wellington-Financial Fund II (Plaintiff) and Samsys Technologies Inc., Samsys Incorporated, and Hamel-Davidson Corporation (Defendants)

Mesbur J.

Heard: April 13, 2006
Judgment: April 28, 2006
Docket: 06-CL-6380

Counsel: Fred Myers, Jason Wadden for Plaintiff / Applicant
T. Reyes for Proposed Receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc.
Robin B. Schwill for Defendants
Brandon Jaffe for Opposing Shareholder, Tiger Capital Corporation

***Mesbur J.*:**

1 The plaintiff, Wellington, moved under s. 47 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* for an order appointing PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. (PwC) as receiver of the defendants for the limited purpose of approving and effecting a sale transaction of the property assets and undertaking of SAMSys Technologies Inc. to a purchaser, Sirit Inc. If the receiver was appointed, and the sale approved, the plaintiff also sought a vesting order so the transaction could be completed immediately. This type of transaction involving a limited purpose receiver, has been referred to as a "quick flip", and has often been utilized in the technology sector. [1]

2 Tiger Capital Corporation is a SAMSys shareholder. On behalf of itself and some other shareholders, Tiger opposed the sale, or, at the very least, sought an adjournment of the motion.

3 At the end of the hearing I indicated to counsel that I was satisfied the order should be granted. I made the requested order, with my reasons for doing so to follow, since the transaction was scheduled to close April 13, 2006. These are those reasons.

Some factual background

4 The defendants comprise SAMSys Technologies Inc., a North Carolina company, and its Canadian subsidiaries, SAMSys Incorporated, and Hamel-Davidson Corporation, Ontario and Nova Scotia companies. I will refer to the defendants collectively as SAMSys. SAMSys is a "small cap" publicly traded technology company. It is in the business of developing and marketing Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID's), a product that has been described as the next generation of bar codes. The product is used for things as diverse as inventory control, tracking animals, or reading transponders.

5 The plaintiff is SAMSys' first secured lender. It advanced a $6 million loan in August of 2005, pursuant to the terms of a debenture. To secure its obligations under the debenture, SAMSys and its subsidiaries secured the indebtedness by the usual panoply of General Security Agreements, guarantees, and share pledge agreements. Wellington registered the necessary financing statements or other similar documents concerning the security under the *Personal Property Security Act* of Ontario, or similar legislation in Nova Scotia and North Carolina.

6 One of the provisions of the debenture required SAMSys to maintain certain revenue thresholds. If it failed to do so, it was required to immediately repay $2 million of the debt. These circumstances occurred at the end of December, 2005, and $2 million was repaid. As a result of making this payment, SAMSys' cash resources dropped to about $4.7 million compared to the roughly $8.7 million it had reported in its financial statements dated December 31, 2005 for the period October to December, 2005.

7 SAMSys continued to experience financial pressure. Although it had estimated revenues of over $ 6 million for the first 6 months of the 2006 fiscal year, (that is from October 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006), its actual revenues for the period were only $1.62 million. There was concern its cash reserves would fall below $2 million by early May, thus putting it in breach of one of its covenants under the debenture. Around the same time, the company's Chief Executive Officer advised Wellington's CEO that SAMSys was utilizing its cash reserves at a rate of about $1 million per month.

8 Section 6.1(c) of the debenture defines one of the events of default as follows:

> The Corporation or any subsidiary becomes unable to satisfy its liabilities as they become due and/or the realizable value of the Corporation's assets is less than the aggregate sum of its liabilities.

9 Wellington took the position that the net realizable value of the corporation's assets was less than the aggregate sum of its liabilities, and delivered a notice of default dated March 28, 2006. Initially, SAMSys denied that it was in default. However, once it determined that there was no inherent underlying value in its development costs in its intellectual property, it conceded that the realizable value of its assets was less than the aggregate sum of its liabilities, and therefore default had occurred under the terms of the debenture.

10 SAMSys' Board of Directors was, and had been, well aware of the company's declining fortunes, and was actively seeking a solution. George Kypreos, the company's Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer has provided an affidavit in which he outline the steps the Board took to deal with SAMSys' financial situation.

11 He states that back in January of 2005, the Board retained DecisionPoint International, LLC, to advise the company about strategic alternatives available to it. Mr Kypreos describes DecisionPoint as a "boutique investment bank offering global merger and acquisition advisory services, including buy and sell-side assignments, to leading middle-market technology firms." DecisionPoint tried for 15 months to locate a strategic investor or buyer for all or part of SAMSys' business. The affidavit goes on to describe the marketing process, the list of potential targets who were identified and contacted, and parties who executed a confidentiality agreement and went on to do due diligence.

12 SAMSys also sought advice from TDSI (TD Securities Inc.) to assist in the process with advice about possible equity or debt transactions.

13 In late March of this year the Board announced that it had established a Special Committee of independent directors "to review and consider strategic alternatives available to the company for enhancing shareholder value including, but not limited to, business combinations and strategic partnerships."

14 According to Mr. Kapreos, SAMSys investigated the possibility of new financing, the possibility of being acquired by or merged into another company, the possibility of licensing its intellectual property rights, or selling some or all of its assets. With the input of the Special Committee, the Board concluded that it was in the best interests of the company to conclude a transaction involving the sale of its business.

15 Apparently, only Sirit Inc., a company with whom SAMSys had had intermittent negotiations over the years, showed any significant interest in a strategic transaction. After they completed their due diligence, however, Sirit indicated it was not interested in purchasing the shares of SAMSys. It negotiated the current transaction with the plaintiff, and SAMSys entered into the negotiations as well.

16 The Board was of the view that in light of their failure to effect a sale, the only remaining option for the company would be to cease operations. As Mr. Kapreos says in his affidavit, this is the only responsible course the Board could take under the circumstances.

17 As I have mentioned, the plaintiff entered into direct discussions with Sirit and was able to reach agreement on the proposed transaction. The transaction will see Sirit purchase all the shares of the North Carolina company, and purchase the remaining assets of the Ontario operations. The plaintiff will be repaid its debt, but there will be little or nothing for the remaining creditors who are owed about $1.5 million, and, needless to say, there will be nothing for the shareholders.

18 SAMSys supports the transaction, and indeed has signed the letter of intent. This itself is an act of default under the debenture, which gives the plaintiff the right to seek the appointment of a receiver. The second debenture holder was served with this motion, but did not appear, and apparently takes no position. No other creditor appeared, either.

19 PwC, in anticipation of this motion, conducted an independent analysis of the steps SAMSys has taken to market the company. Greg Watson, a Senior Vice-President of PwC has reviewed the preliminary liquidation analysis SAMSys prepared. PwC has discussed the company's financial status with management, and also reviewed the steps taken by DecisionPoint to market the company. Mr. Watson states, "it seems clear that the transaction proposed by the Plaintiff and Sirit is the only available alternative to maximize the value of realization on SAMSys' assets. Even if the company had sufficient cash to allow it to engage in yet another marketing process, there is no basis to expect that it would be able to obtain a better realization."

20 Importantly, Mr. Watson also points out that although the company had sought to realize value on its development costs concerning its intellectual property, "historically, in an insolvency context, buyers will only pay for a product that is ready for market. Buyers do not typically invest fresh cash to pay for development or other sunk costs." Mr. Kapreos confirms this view. He deposes that although SAMsys has invested over $2 million in its current product development project, it was unable to find anyone to value the investment without a market-ready product.

21 Mr. Watson's affidavit concludes with the following observation:

> In light of the breadth and lengthy duration of the marketing process undertaken by SAMSys and DecisionPoint, the absence of available alternatives, and significantly, the fact that SAMSys is quickly depleting its cash reserves, I do not believe that SAMSys can afford to undertake any further marketing efforts or that there would be any valuable purpose served by doing so. The price offered by Sirit is acceptable to the secured creditor and is the only available alternative to liquidation. As such, it represents the maximum realizable value for the property, assets and undertaking of SAMSys that is attainable in the circumstances.

Position of the parties

22 Wellington and SAMSys take the position that this transaction is the only viable alternative for the company. SAMSys has actively marketed itself over a lengthy period, with no success. If this sale is not approved, the Board takes the position the company will have to cease operations.

23 Tiger objects to the transaction on a number of grounds. First, it points to the fact that the company's shares were recently trading at 50 to 60 cents per share, suggesting there is equity in the company. It also says that since on March 31, 2006 SAMSys apparently had $3.5 million on hand, against a debt of $4 million to the plaintiff, it needs only to come up with an additional $500,000 to pay out Wellington, which might be available through equity financing. Tiger and the other shareholders have not proposed to supply this financing, nor have they proposed any viable alternative financing source.

24 Tiger also complains of the sale being essentially a liquidation, with almost nothing for the value of the company as a going concern. Tiger points to the lack of an appraisal, and is particularly concerned about the seeming lack of any value ascribed to SAMSys' assets, its value as an enterprise, and particularly the value of the development work the company has done

on a new RFID reader called the Saturn reader. Tiger says that the Saturn was almost ready to go to market, sometime in May. It says now the president of Sirit is scheduled to talk about Saturn on behalf of Sirit, replacing a SAMSys executive in that role.

25 Tiger suggests that as a result of Wellington's actions, the value of the company's shares plummeted over a matter of days, with a resulting $19 million of erosion in the value of the company. This is based on the share price of 50 cents/share on March 26, when the company's press release indicated it was looking at options. Then, on March 28, the company issued a new press release, disclosing it had received Wellington's default notice. Then the price dropped to 19 cents per share. This was followed by a TSX investigation, and the company's press release of March 31, indicating the intent to sell. Tiger complains that Wellington could, and should have handled the matter differently, thus preserving, rather than eroding value.

26 Tiger also complains about not knowing the details of the DecisionPoint marketing plan. The Kypreos affidavit does set out significant detail about the marketing plan, including the DecisionPoint engagement letter, the "teaser" document it prepared to send to potential interested parties, beginning a year ago, as well as the Management Presentation sent to the parties that executed a confidentiality agreement. The Kypreos affidavit also includes the TDSI engagement letter. It relates to their advisory services in connection with possible equity or debt transactions.

27 Tiger expresses concern about the lack of evidence about anyone wanting to acquire SAMSys' technology, or development costs.

28 In Tiger's view, the entire sale process is proceeding far too quickly, and is being forced on the shareholders. Tiger does not at this time, however, suggest that the Board has acted in any way that is contrary to its obligations to the company, its shareholders or its creditors.

29 Finally, Tiger expresses some suspicion about the real or perceived relationship between Wellington and either the purchaser Sirit, or its principals, particularly John Albright.

30 Although Tiger voices many complaints, and says it simply wants to block the sale, it has no suggestion as to how the company is to fund its ongoing obligations of $29,000 per day, if the motion is delayed or dismissed. It suggests that PwC should be appointed Receiver to develop and conduct a marketing plan, but does not offer to fund that process.

31 It is important to address these concerns in the context of the legal analysis required to assess the motion as a whole.

The law and analysis

32 Section 47(1) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* permits the appointment of an interim receiver where a notice is or is about to be sent under subsection 244(1) of the *Act.* Section 244(1) requires a secured creditor who intends to enforce its security against the property of an insolvent purpose to send notice of that intention to the insolvent person. Here, Wellington sent the prescribed notice, dated March 28, 2006.

33 First, I must address whether Wellington has a perfected security that entitles it to have given notice under section 244. Then I must look at the provisions of section 47(3), which require the court to find that the appointment of a receiver is necessary either to protect the debtor's estate or to protect the interests of the creditor who sent the section 244 notice. In that context, I must consider whether the proposed sale is reasonable. Lastly, I will address the concerns Tiger raises to see if they have an impact on whether the sale is reasonable or not.

34 Wellington has provided three legal opinions, one from Ontario, one from North Carolina and one from Nova Scotia, all opining that Wellington has a valid, perfected security over the property of the defendants in their respective jurisdictions. No one questions the validity of Wellington's security. I am satisfied it has a valid, perfected security over the defendants' property.

35 Next I must address the issue of whether the appointment of an interim receiver is necessary either to protect the debtor's estate or Wellington's interests. It is clear to me that a sale is the only way for the creditor to recover, and will provide maximum recovery for this creditor who stands in priority to all others. It is therefore necessary to appoint the receiver to effect a sale

in order to protect Wellington's interests. The next question is whether this sale is reasonable, and should it be immediately approved.

Is the proposed sale reasonable?

36 *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*[2] sets out the relevant considerations to determine whether a court should approve a proposed sale. Although *Soundair* centres on the issue of when, and if, the court should second-guess the recommendations of a receiver who has been appointed and has carried out the marketing process itself, its considerations are nevertheless apposite here, particularly since the proposed receiver has expressed the view that the marketing and sale process SAMSys undertook were appropriate.

37 *Soundair* confirms the duties of the court in considering whether a receiver who has sold property has acted properly. The court must do the following:

> (a) it should consider whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently;
>
> (b) it should consider the interests of all parties;
>
> (c) it should consider the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained;
>
> (d) it should consider whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

Although this is not technically a receiver's sale, applying the *Soundair* principles seems an appropriate route for the court to consider the reasonableness of the sale, particularly since the receiver is of the view that the process was reasonable, and no purpose would be served in a new marketing plan. As the Court of Appeal did in *Soundair*, I will discuss each of the factors in turn.

Has there been a sufficient effort to get the best price, and has the task been approached providently?

38 The Board spent 15 months trying to market the company and get the best price for it. Tiger suggests, somewhat inferentially, that Wellington undermined the process by negotiating directly with Sirit, who therefore must have known it could acquire SAMSys at a lower price by waiting until the company was desperate, and basically paying only enough to satisfy Wellington's security.

39 First, there is no evidence to support what is essentially an innuendo. Second, there is also no suggestion the Board has acted improperly, or contrary to any of its fiduciary obligations. A fifteen-month active marketing process bore no fruit. Sirit has been in negotiations, on and off, with SAMSys for many years. Sirit was not prepared to make an offer in the context of the general marketing process. SAMSys utilized the services of two professional firms to assist in helping to sell the company, but had no success. I must conclude that sufficient efforts were made to get the best price, and the sale, as the only option, is a provident one. The receiver's opinion confirms this view.

Consideration of the interests of the parties

40 In *Soundair*, the court confirmed the well-established principle that "the primary interest is that of the creditors of the debtor." The court goes on to say that there are also other persons whose interests require consideration. The court referred specifically to the interests of the debtor and those of the prospective purchaser. It did not mention the interests of the shareholders in this context. Here, the debtor supports the sale as the only viable option open to the company. The debtor's interests have clearly been considered. The prospective purchaser is the only potential purchaser. Its interests would be met by approving the sale.

41 The Board undertook the lengthy process of trying to sell all or part of SAMSys assets, shares, or undertaking. They approached the task on a number of levels, with the assistance of both DecisionPoint and TDSI. On reviewing the history of the Board's attempts, I cannot conclude that anyone's interests were improperly preferred over any other's.

The efficacy and integrity of the process obtaining the offer

42 The courts have long identified an important consideration as the integrity of the process by which the sale has been effected. Here, Tiger has suggested that there were other options open to the company. They say equity financing, for example, was an option instead of a sale. This was tried, and failed. They suggest other borrowing might have been available to pay out the balance of Wellington's loan, but have no concrete suggestions of where this money might have come from. Tiger candidly admitted the shareholders were not proposing to supply it.

Was there unfairness in the process?

43 Tiger does not really point to anything that is described as "unfair" in the marketing/sale process, other than some specific concerns that I will deal with below. I cannot conclude there was any unfairness in the process as that term is described in *Soundair*. I note that Mr. Watson of PwC deposes that he and a colleague had extensive conversations with the managing director of DecisionPoint, with Mr. Kypreos of SAMSys, and reviewed the advertisements DecisionPoint prepared, together with the Management Presentation issued to prospective purchasers. He reviewed the list of 35 parties DecisionPoint and SAMSys approached, and the control log of the 16 parties DecisionPoint had follow up efforts with. Mr. Watson concludes, "it seems clear that the transaction proposed by the Plaintiff and Sirit is the only available alternative to maximize the value of realization on SAMSys' assets. Even if the company had sufficient cash to allow it to engage in yet another marketing process, there is no basis to expect that it would be able to obtain a better realization." Mr. Watson speaks of the "breadth and lengthy duration" of the marketing process.

44 On the basis of the *Soundair* criteria, I would approve the sale. However, I must also address Tiger's concerns, to see if they have any effect on my final determination.

Tiger's additional concerns

45 Is there equity in the company, or is equity financing an option, as Tiger suggests? In my view, there is not. The trading price of the shares is but one indicator of value. I have reviewed the most recent financial statements of the company, for the year ended September 30, 2005, with comparative figures for 2004. Over that time period, the company's deficit increased from just under $27 million to over $39 million. Although sales figures were higher in the 2005 fiscal year, expenses were proportionally even higher, resulting in a loss for the year of nearly $11 million, compared with a loss of $7.5 million the previous fiscal year.

46 As I have already stated, the company's projected revenues for the first six months of its 2006 fiscal year fell short of projections by over $4 million, and the company was depleting its cash reserves by $1 million per month. It is clear the company is, and has been haemorrhaging money. Efforts at finding equity financing with the help of TDSI failed. I cannot see there is any merit to this complaint of Tiger's.

47 Tiger's next concern is about a liquidation-type sale, with no appraisal, and no value for what are commonly referred to as "sunk costs" for product development. The sale process has gone on for well over a year, with no buyer except for Sirit. The sale process itself provided confidential financial information to a number of prospective purchasers. Although many of these prospects went through the due diligence process, none was interested enough to make an offer. Even without an appraisal, I am satisfied, as is the Board, that the proposed sale is the maximum realization available for the assets, business and undertaking of SAMSys.

48 Tiger also expresses concern about the effect of Wellington's actions on share value. First, there are many reasons for share prices to rise and fall. Wellington quite properly was concerned about its security, having regard to SAMSys' failed revenue targets, significant expenses, and declining cash reserves. Tiger suggests that the default Wellington relies on is a "soft" default,

rather than SAMSys failing to pay monthly payments. The parties negotiated and agreed on all the default provisions. Wellington is as entitled to rely on any one of them as any other. The general RFID industry is apparently facing uncertainties, according to the affidavit of Mark McQueen. It is indeed unfortunate there will be no return for the shareholders, who are understandably upset about their investment going bad. That does not mean, however, that a secured lender need hold off on enforcing its security pursuant to any defined event of default.

49 As to Tiger's complaints about the lack of particularity of the marketing plan used in SAMSys' attempts to find a buyer, I am satisfied that the affidavit material sets out the plan with reasonable detail. It persuades me that the marketing efforts were reasonable, focused, and sensible, with the assistance of appropriate professional advice.

50 It is also clear to me that in situations like this, it would be extremely rare for a potential buyer to ascribe any value to an insolvent company's sunk development costs. I am not surprised there is no purchase value ascribed to these costs. I am also satisfied that potential buyers for these products in development were marketed as well, sadly with no results.

51 The marketing process as a whole has gone on for well over a year. It is true that the current transaction has happened quickly. However, the Board has considered it in the context of the overall efforts to effect a sale. While the process may appear rushed to the shareholders, I am not persuaded the proposed sale has been undertaken lightly, or without reasoned consideration by the Board and its Special Committee.

52 Lastly, I would like to address the suggestion that there is an improper or non-arms length relationship between Wellington and Sirit. Tiger says that John L. Albright sits on Wellington's advisory counsel, and a corporation called J.L. Albright Venture Partners holds over 21% of Sirit's shares. Tiger assumes that Mr. Albright and J.L. Albright Venture Partners do not deal at arms length. From these facts Tiger infers there is a non-arms length relationship between Wellington and Sirit.

53 In an affidavit sworn April 12, 2006, Mark McQueen, the CEO of Wellington, deals with the question of the relationship between Wellington and Sirit. He unequivocally states, "there is no economic relationship of any nature whatsoever between the secured creditor (Wellington-Financial) and either the purchaser, Sirit Inc. ("Sirit"), or its principals." Mr. McQueen concedes that Mr. Albright, one of the principals of one of Sirit's significant shareholders is a member of Wellington's unpaid Advisory Committee. He states, however, that the Committee has never met, and its members have no active role in Wellington's management. Thus, Mr. Albright and Sirit would have no active role in Wellington's management. In my view, this adequately answers Tiger's concerns about a non-arms length relationship.

54 For these reasons, I am not persuaded that the issues Tiger raises are sufficient to delay or deny the sale transaction. I am satisfied that the sale is necessary to protect Wellington's interests, and thus the requirements of s. 47(3) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* have been met, and a limited purpose receiver should be appointed to effect the sale.

Disposition

55 In the result, it is for these reasons that I granted the motion. As the parties have agreed, there will be no order as to costs.

Motion granted.

Footnotes

1 See R.I. Thornton and G.R. Azeff, *The Interim Receiver Under Section 47 of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act (Canada)*, Insolvency Institute of Canada, 13th annual Conference, October 24-27, 2002, at pages 3-4 and P. Farkas, *Sale of a Business: What Does the Court Expect of the Receiver*, Canadian Institute Third Annual Insolvency Law and Practice Conference, at page 3.

2 (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.)

TAB 5

2005 CarswellOnt 3126
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Bank of Montreal v. Trent Rubber Corp.

2005 CarswellOnt 3126, [2005] O.J. No. 3065, 13 C.B.R. (5th) 31, 140 A.C.W.S. (3d) 930

Bank of Montreal (Applicant) and Trent Rubber Corp., 947695 Ontario Ltd., Pilotte Marketing Corp., Trent Rubber Equipment Ltd., Cupples Inner Tubes of American Inc. and Trenvest Inc.

Cumming J.

Heard: July 12, 2005
Judgment: July 13, 2005
Docket: 05-CL-5836, 31-443801, 31-443802, 31-443803, 31-443804, 31-443805, 31-443806

Counsel: Mario Forte for Interim Receiver, RSM Richter Inc.
John Marshall for Bank of Montreal
Robert Harason for All Respondents
No one for Trustee under Proposal of Respondents, John Page

***Cumming J.*:**

The Motions

1 The Respondent corporations are collectively called the "Trent Group". RSM Richter Inc. ("Richter") is the interim receiver of the assets of each Respondent, appointed by Campbell J. April 11, 2005. Richter brings a motion to authorize a sale of assets of the Respondents and for approval of the Receiver's actions to date. Richter seeks authority to accept the liquidation proposal received from Corporate Assets Inc. ("CAI"), to seal the offers received through the Court approved marketing process, and to approve Richter's actions.

2 The Bank of Montreal ("Bank") is the primary secured creditor, with some $4.7 million owing to it by the Trent Group. The Bank brings a motion for an amended and restated receivership order going forward.

3 As interim receiver, Richter has been endeavouring to market the assets for the best price possible. This has culminated in the Fifth Report from Richter, after receiving four revised offers July 4, 2005 pursuant to a marketing process approved by Court order given by Cameron J. June 21, 2005.

4 The Respondents bring motions which seek to extend the time under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* ("*BIA*") for the filing of a proposal with the Official Receiver and to adjourn the motions of Richter and the Bank.

5 My decisions in respect of the above motions were given at the conclusion of the hearing with written reasons to follow. These are my reasons.

Analysis

6 Richter has provided as Exhibit "A" to its Fifth Report, which provides a summary of the revised offers received, the four offers and a comparative potential estimated realization, together with Richter's recommendation.

7 Richter concludes that CAI's proposal will likely realize the maximum amount for the creditors. Richter recommends that it be given authority to accept the net minimum guarantee proposal of CAI and enter into a liquidation/auction agreement with

CAI. In the judgment of Richter a liquidation of the assets will likely yield realizations higher than the best going-concern offer received. The Bank supports Richter's opinion and recommendation.

8 In my view, and I so find, Richter's opinion and recommendations are the prudent and best course of action. I mention that under each of the four bids the Bank would probably ultimately suffer a significant loss of at least a couple of million dollars.

9 One of the bidders is 2074253 Ontario Inc. ("2074"), controlled by Mr. Ron Bruhm, who has provided an affidavit in support of the Respondents in their motion to extend the time for the filing of a proposal and to adjourn Richter's and the Bank's motions. 2074 is the holding company for the shareholdings in the Trent Group. Mr. Bruhm is also a principal of Viceroy Rubber & Plastics Limited which has a secondary secured interest in the Respondent debtors' assets for debts of some $7 million.

10 The record evidences that the Trent Group has had significant financial problems for some time. The Bank delivered its notice of intention to enforce its security March 31, 2005.The filing of the notice of intention to make a proposal under s. 50.4(1) of the *BIA* by the Respondent debtors was made April 11, 2005. An extension was granted by Ground J. May 9, 2005. Campbell J. granted a second extension on June 6, 2005 to June 21, 2005. Mr. Bruhm is now of the view that it would take until at least August of this year to find another lender to finance a purchase transaction and the businesses continuing operations.

11 It is not disputed that the businesses are losing money and that the passage of time erodes the Bank's realization upon its security.

12 Mr. Bruhm favours a going-concern sale and that in theory would be in the best interests of the employees, the Town of Lindsay where the business is located and Mr. Bruhm himself as the indirect substantial shareholder and creditor of the Respondents. However, the record establishes that in reality it would not be in the best interests of the Bank to delay matters and that in any and all events the Bank will have a substantial loss.

13 The opinion of Richter is that the bid of CAI is superior to that of 2074 (and the other two bids). In my view, Richter's opinion is reasonable, considering all the circumstances. Indeed, the CAI bid is probably significantly superior.

14 The Respondents raise several criticisms in respect of the marketing process and Richter's actions. In my view, none of these allegations have any merit. Indeed, the criticisms, while nominally advanced on behalf of the Respondent debtors, are really advanced on behalf of Mr. Bruhm, the losing bidder if Richter's recommendations are accepted.

15 I emphasize that all of the principles articulated in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.) as being required of a receiver, have been met in the instant situation. The record establishes that Richter has acted properly and responsibly in accordance with its mandate, followed the Court sanctioned marketing process and acted in good faith and with fairness throughout.

16 Richter seeks a sealing order in respect of its Confidential Exhibit "A" to its Fifth Report. There will be some remaining assets of the Respondents after the sale of some of the assets to CAI. Richter and the Bank submit it would be potentially prejudicial to disclose the notional minimum values attributed to these assets before they are disposed of in an open market or to disclose the CAI offer itself prior to the closing of the transaction with CAI. I agree.

17 Moreover, there has been ample discussion in open Court as to the substance of Exhibit "A" so that there is not any real need to the disclosure of the details thereof to the debtors (in reality, to Mr. Bluhm). It is enough to say that it is reasonable to conclude that the CAI bid probably is far superior to any other bid and accordingly, should be accepted. A reasonable person in the position of Richter, on an objective test, would make the informed opinion (as seen from the record at hand) that the CAI bid was the best bid received and that it should be accepted.

18 Having said that, I will make one specific observation. The 2074 bid by Mr. Bluhm is in reality a bid for less than half its professed value because personal guarantees given to the Bank relating to the Respondent's indebtedness would, in effect, be removed if the bid were to be accepted.

Disposition

19 For the reasons given, the motions of the Respondent debtors for an extension of the filing date for a proposal are dismissed, the motion of Richter for authority to proceed with the sale to CAI, for approval of Richter's activities and for a sealing order is allowed (with the requisite Order signed), and the Bank's motion for an amended and restated receivership order going forward is allowed (with the requisite Amended and Restated Receivership Order signed).

Order accordingly.

TAB 6

2013 ONSC 6905
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Montrose Mortgage Corp. v. Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc.

2013 CarswellOnt 15278, 2013 ONSC 6905, 17 C.B.R. (6th) 169, 233 A.C.W.S. (3d) 638

Montrose Mortgage Corporation Ltd., Applicant and Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc., 1168614 Ontario Limited, Kingsway Arms (Walden Village) Inc., Kingsway Arms (Carleton Place) Inc., Respondents

D.M. Brown J.

Heard: November 5, 2013
Judgment: November 6, 2013
Docket: CV-13-10298-00CL

Counsel: J. Dietrich for Applicant
R. Jaipargas for proposed Receiver, Grant Thornton Limited

***D.M. Brown J.*:**

I. Application for approval of a "pre-pack" credit bid sale in a proposed receivership

1 Montrose Mortgage Corporation Ltd. applied for (i) an order appointing Grant Thornton Limited ("GTL") as receiver and manager of all assets, undertakings and properties of Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc., 1168614 Ontario Limited, Kingsway Arms (Walden Village) Inc. and Kingsway Arms (Carleton Place) Inc. (collectively the "Debtors"), as well as (ii) an order approving a purchase and sale agreement between the Receiver and 2391766 Ontario Inc. dated October 16, 2013, together with a related vesting order. The proposed sale essentially involved an indirect credit bid by the debtors' main secured creditor, Montrose, which was acting on the loans to the Debtors as agent for GMF Nominee Inc. ("Greystone").

2 On November 5, 2013, I granted and signed the orders sought. These are my reasons for so doing.

II. Material facts

3 The Debtors operated four retirement residences which werer home to about 351 residents and employed 220 employees. The Debtors were beneficially owned by several limited partnerships. Service of the application was made on those beneficial owners. Counsel for a number of the beneficial owners sent an email to applicant's counsel on November 4, 2013, advising that he had no instructions to appear at the hearing to oppose the relief requested; no other beneficial owner appeared.

4 The Debtors were operated by three related management companies: Kingsway Arms Management (Villa Orleans/St. Joseph) Inc., Kingsway Arms Management (at Walden Village) Inc. and Kingsway Arms Management (at Carleton Place) Inc. In its November 1, 2013 Supplemental Report Grant Thorton stated that the Property Managers had executed an agreement which contemplated the termination of the property management agreements upon the issuance of the Approval and Vesting Order.

5 As of August 31, 2013, the Debtors owed Montrose close to $36 million. Montrose had made demands for payment and had given *BIA* s. 244 notices back in March and December, 2012. As well, Montrose delivered notices of sale under the *PPSA* and *Mortgages Act*. The evidence disclosed that the Debtors were unable to repay or service that debt and were in default of the terms of the loans. Independent counsel to GTL delivered opinions that Montrose's security was valid and enforceable subject to the customary qualifications and assumptions.

6 In February, 2012, Montrose appointed GTL as monitor to review and report on the financial and operational condition of the Debtors. With Montrose's support, in March, 2012 one of the Debtors retained John A. Jenson Realty Inc. as listing agent to market, ultimately, each of the four retirement residences.

7 The application materials described in detail the efforts Jenson undertook to market the properties, which included advertisements, direct contact with potential purchasers, the preparation of a confidential information memorandum and granting access to data to those who made serious expressions of interest. Few offers resulted. Most offers, if accepted, would have resulted in a significant shortfall on the debt. In the first half of this year a more substantial offer emerged which resulted in the execution of a letter of intent, but the transaction did not proceed because the purchaser was unable to secure adequate financing.

8 Montrose obtained appraisals of the retirement residences from a professional appraiser, Altus Group Limited, and, in the case of the Carleton Place Retirement Residence, an additional appraisal from CBRE Limited. The Altus Group appraisals gave two valuation opinions for each property: one on an "as is" basis, and the other on a "stabilized" occupancy basis. I have reviewed those appraisals. Given that the occupancy rates for three of the residences were below the 80% level, with one at 57%, and Carleton Place was 88% occupied, I agreed with the submissions of the applicant that the "as is" basis valuations presented a more accurate picture of fair market value at this juncture.

9 In light of the failure of the marketing process to elicit satisfactory offers for the properties, Montrose applied for the appointment of a receiver over the properties in order to effect a credit bid sale for them. Greystone incorporated the Purchaser who proposed to acquire each Debtor's assets charged by Montrose's security for an amount equivalent to the total amount of all indebtedness owing to Montrose and to assume the prior ranking Desjardins Prior Charge of the Villa Orleans Retirement Residence. In addition, the Purchaser would assume the leasehold interest of the land on which the St. Joseph Retirement Residence is located; the landlord is the National Capital Commission. At the time of the hearing neither Desjardins nor the NCC had provided their formal consents to the proposed assumptions, but both indicated that they were processing Montrose's request. Under the terms of the proposed sale, the Purchaser assumed the risk of securing those consents.

III. Analysis

10 "Quick flip" or "pre-pack" transactions are becoming more common in the Ontario distress marketplace. In certain circumstances, a "quick flip" involving the appointment of a receiver and then immediately seeking court approval of a "pre-packaged" sale transaction may well represent the best, or only, commercial alternative to a liquidation. [1] In such situations the court still will assess the need for a receiver and the reasonableness of the proposed sale against the standard criteria set out in decisions such as *Bank of Nova Scotia v. Freure Village on Clair Creek* [2] and *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*, [3] respectively. However, courts will scrutinize with especial care the adequacy and the fairness of the sales and marketing process in "quick flip" transactions:

> Part of the duty of a receiver is to place before the court sufficient evidence to enable the court to understand the implications for all parties of any proposed sale and, in the case of a sale to a related party, the overall fairness of the proposed related-party transaction. As stated by Morawetz J. in the *Tool-Plas Systems Inc.* case:
>
> > [T]he Court should consider the impact on various parties and assess whether their respective positions and the proposed treatment that they will receive in the quick flip transaction would realistically be any different if an extended sales process were followed. [4]

The need for such a robust and transparent record is heightened even more where the proposed purchase involves a credit bid by one of the debtor's secured creditors, the practical effect of which usually is to foreclose on all subordinate creditors.

11 In the present case, I was satisfied from the evidence filed by Montrose that the appointment of a receiver was necessary to preserve the opportunity to continue to operate the retirement residences as going concerns, thereby ensuring a place to live for the residents and maintaining current levels of employment. The record revealed a professional and prolonged effort to elicit

interest in the properties from third party purchasers, but it appeared that market conditions were such that interest could not be generated at a level which would cover the senior secured indebtedness. As to the reasonableness of the credit bid, the appraisals provided the independent evidence necessary to conclude that the proposed sale price was reasonable in the circumstances. Finally, the proposed sale agreement gave proper treatment to claims in priority to that enjoyed by Montrose.

12 Given those circumstances, I concluded that it was just and convenient to appoint GTL as receiver of the Debtors and to approve the proposed sale.

13 Montrose asked for an order sealing large portions of the applicant's main affidavit and the confidential appendices to the GTL report on the basis of commercial sensitivity. I granted a sealing order which would remain in place until the earlier of the closing of the proposed sale or the further order of this court.

14 Finally, Montrose filed a USB key containing an electronic copy of its application materials, for which I thank it. I would observe that although I was able to read the materials on the USB key, I was not able to edit them because they were in "imaged" form. I would remind counsel that the Commercial List's *Guidelines for Preparing and Delivering Electronic Documents requested by Judges* require parties to perform Optical Character Recognition (OCR) within PDF to enable text searching. "Imaged", rather than "OCR'd" documents are of much less use to judges. I would encourage the Commercial List Bar to continue their efforts to train their administrative staffs to follow the scanning directions contained in the *Guidelines*.

Application granted.

Footnotes

1 *Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re* (2008), 48 C.B.R. (5th) 91 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List])

2 (1996), 40 C.B.R. (3d) 274 (Ont. Gen. Div. [Commercial List])

3 (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.)

4 *9-Ball Interests Inc. v. Traditional Life Sciences Inc.* (2012), 89 C.B.R. (5th) 78 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]), para. 30.

TAB 7

1996 CarswellOnt 4294
Ontario Court of Justice, General Division [Commercial List]

Morgan Trust Co. of Canada v. Falloncrest Financial Corp.

1996 CarswellOnt 4294, [1996] O.J. No. 3919, 66 A.C.W.S. (3d) 1073

Morgan Trust Company of Canada, Plaintiff v. Falloncrest Financial Corporation, Peter Fallon Jr., Mater's Management Ltd., 787266 Ontario Limited, 650620 Ontario Limited, 650621 Ontario Limited, 650622 Ontario Limited, 650623 Ontario Limited, 650624 Ontario Limited, 650625 Ontario Limited, 650619 Ontario Limited, 694726 Ontario Limited, 645166 Ontario Limited, 668321 Ontario Limited, 676072 Ontario Limited, 860179 Ontario Limited, 641727 Ontario Limited, 860618 Ontario Limited, 863951 Ontario Limited, 798334 Ontario Inc., The Verona Shopping Centre Inc., 820001 Ontario Inc., Alberto Docouto, 748749 Ontario Limited and Volante Developments Inc., Defendants v. Bernard Weber, Director of The Consumer Protection Division of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Intervenor

Farley J.

Judgment: October 15, 1996
Docket: Doc. B340/95

Counsel: *K. McElcheran and P. Huff*, for the Receiver.
A. Lenczner Q.C. and *R. Chapman*, for NIC.
R. Robertson, Q.C. and *J. Lancaster*, for Independent Advisory Counsel.
P. Spencer, for certain Investors.
M.R. Kaplan, for Alberto DoCouto.
S. Graff, for the Law Development Group (Mount Albert) Limited.
N.C. Murkar, for The Corporation of the Town of Ajax.

***Farley J.*:**

Endorsement

1 KPMG Inc as Receiver and Manager moved for an order authorizing and empowering it to proceed with and carry out the transaction contemplated by the Asset Purchase Agreement dated February 19 1996 as amended by agreement dated July 15, 1996 between it and Shields-Snow Inc. ("S-S") and upon the closing of the transactions contemplated in the Asset Purchase Agreement for a vesting order vesting title in the Mater's Group Properties in a public company organized for that purpose, free and clear of all mortgages, liens and charges. NIC by cross claim motion brought last Friday before the Thanksgiving Weekend requested an order requiring the Receiver to consider an offer from Alberto DoCouto in trust for a company to be incorporated, that the Receiver prepare a comparison between the DoCouto offer and that of S-S, that the Receiver circulate an information package and have the Investors vote upon the DoCouto offer, and that the Receiver report back the results of such vote to this Court.

2 The long and difficult history of this matter (which stretches back to 1990) is one of extreme bitterness. Please see the reasons for decision over this period given by Montgomery J. and myself. It would appear that recent developments are no exception to this unfortunate pattern. It is truly unfortunate for the various Investors since their original investment came a cropper and now continuous wrangling and sniping appear to have extended this receivership well beyond what anyone would have reasonably anticipated — and no doubt at a continuing cost — and one would have to reasonably think some considerable depreciation in the marketplace for these real estate assets as they gain and maintain an unpleasant aroma. In my reasons of November

10, 1995, I cautioned about the atmosphere of a poisoned well. Since that time, it would not appear that the atmosphere has improved, rather to the contrary. It would appear that Peter Fallon Sr. was conducting a campaign in and about May 24, 1996 to disparage the S-S transaction.

3 Not only must the vote which was conducted be taken in analysis in light of this poisoned well situation, one must also view the DoCouto offer and its reception by the NIC in that context. The Receiver swore that he did not receive the DoCouto offer of October 3, 1996 until October 7, 1996. This was not disputed but rather appears to be demonstrably confirmed by the fax marking on it showing that it was transmitted by fax (and not delivered as indicated) on October 7, 1996 at 11 a.m. The letter warns that the offer expires on October 7th at 5 p.m. DoCouto does not appear to have been so reticent in disclosing his offer to NIC since on October 3, 1996, Ashak Rustom wrote the other NIC members that DoCouto had been successful in obtaining financing and "the committee is wholeheartedly recommending acceptance of this deal". The Receiver advised DoCouto on October 9, 1996 that it had some itemized concerns with respect to his offer but indicated it would advise the Court of its existence if the offer were extended. Then curiously although NIC had previously "wholeheartedly recommended acceptance of this deal", DoCouto relates how after the offer was transmitted to the Receiver, DoCouto entered various discussions with representatives of NIC and as a result agreed to amend his offer. Then at the hearing today, DoCouto's counsel acknowledged that DoCouto was open to further negotiation with a view to eliminating the open ended subjective conditionality of this offer. I think it fair to observe that the offer if accepted without major modification would have given DoCouto in essence an option and would impinge upon the time frame after which S-S could walk away from its commitment with the Receiver. There was also an acknowledgement that the financing commitment was also highly conditional — and that funding would be obtained through syndication.

4 The timing and circumstances of the DoCouto offer would certainly lead one to a reasonable conclusion that there was a great deal of last minute manouvering going on — none of which would appear to be in the best interests of the Investors. Rather, it would appear that where there should be substance, there is smoke.

5 I pause to note that notwithstanding the longevity of the receivership and what appears to be a great desire of the Investors to have it terminated, the DoCouto offer contemplates that the Receiver would continue in place.

6 I also find i somewhat disingenuous for NIC and its counsel to propose that the Receiver do a comparison of the DoCouto offer and the S-S transaction since that is what NIC apparently has already done in "wholeheartedly recommending acceptance of this [initial DoCouto] deal" and counsel has prepared in the NIC factum a simplistic (and ill-conceived) comparison of the revised offer.

7 In accordance with my order of November 10, 1995 and the Asset Purchase Agreement, the Receiver is obliged to bring a motion for approval of the S-S transaction, based on such factors as the Receiver considers appropriate. It should be recognized that the initial attempts to sell the subject properties did not meet with success despite reasonable efforts. In November 1993, Montgomery J. agreed that the Receiver should be replaced by the Investors, since that was their wish, but he directed that the assets should be transferred to a public company with the statutory protection that would provide. It was NIC which introduced the Receiver to S-S. Then NIC had a change of mind. However, the Receiver appears to have diligently carried on the mandate proposed by Montgomery J. There have been delays involved in attempting to implement such, but it would not seem that fault lies with the Receiver (or S-S) for this result.

8 It would appear to me that the Receiver makes a quite valid point by asserting that while it would be most inappropriate to consider the DoCouto offer in the sense of accepting same, it provides a valuable instrument to measure the reasonability of the S-S transaction to see if it is in the ballpark. Where one applies appropriate discounts and adjustments to the DoCouto offer, it is quite clear that the S-S transaction is not unreasonable when measured against the DoCouto offer; rather it appears quite favourable. One must therefore question the objectivity of NIC in so strongly supporting the DoCouto proposal — to the extent of not even considering its subjective contingencies. One would hesitate to think that NIC had locked itself into an attitude of an "anybody but S-S/Receiver" recommendation campaign and it was unable to view matters objectively.

9 To reject the S-S transaction would I fear result in many of the subject properties continuing to become subject to tax sale procedures and be ultimately disposed of that way — to the complete loss of the Investors.

10 It would appear to me that there does not appear to be any other viable options to deal with the subject assets at this time, other than by transferring them to the public company under the Asset Purchase Agreement. The Receiver believes in the circumstances that that is fair and reasonable to the Investors and may improve the potential recovery on their investments over the remarketing and sale by the Receiver of individual properties before tax sales commence. The Receiver has rightly decided that the S-S transaction is in substance more beneficial to the Investors than the DoCouto offer.

11 It would seem to me that the conduct of the Receiver should be reviewed in light of the specific mandate given to it by the Court: see *Royal Bank v. Soundair* (1991), 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1 (Ont.C.A.). The Court should be reluctant to second guess the considered business decisions made by its receiver. I do not in this regard overlook the vote taken: 48% of Investors returned their ballots and of those, 93% voted against the S-S transaction. The Receiver felt that the ballot results may have been affected by the Peter Fallon Sr. campaign urging Investors to vote against the transaction. Of the 53% who did not vote, the Receiver assumed they must be indifferent to the transaction. However, it would not seem to me that the Receiver took into account the "usual inertia" in any vote situation — some people just do not get around to voting perhaps through illness, being out of town, being preoccupied with more important matters or mail not reaching them, etc. However, I do think it fair to observe that given the hotly contested nature of these proceedings, it is unusual that a large percentage would not vote. Therefore, it would seem to me to be a reasonable conclusion that a high percentage of those who did not vote were indifferent to the transaction. One must also take into account the continued and relevant opposition of NIC (and the aspect of whether its opposition to S-S/Receiver and its wholehearted support for the DoCouto offer is soundly based). See my comments in my November 10, 1995 reasons at p. 5 concerning NIC's "inappropriate strong language. It is unfortunate that this occurred at all; its impact, notwithstanding the retraction, will linger on".

12 I think it desirable to consider the four elements of duty as set out at p. 6 of *Soundair*. It would appear to me that the Receiver has reasonably and diligently worked to getting the best substantive (firm foundation) deal for the Investors. It shows that there was a canvassing of alternatives and a searching out. As discussed above, the DoCouto offer would tend to support the value of the S-S deal — and not lead one to a conclusion that the S-S transaction (and benefits to the Investors) was not a reasonable one. Galligan J.A. at p. 10 of *Soundair* stated:

> What those cases show is that the prices in other offers have relevance only if they show that the price contained in the offer accepted by the receiver was so unreasonably low as to demonstrate that the receiver was improvident in accepting it. I am of the opinion, therefore, that if they do not tend to show that the receiver was improvident, they should not be considered upon a motion to confirm a sale recommended by a court-appointed receiver. If they were, the process would be changed from sale by a receiver, subject to court approval, into an auction conducted by the court at the time approval is sought. In my opinion, the latter course is unfair to the person who has entered bona fide into an agreement with the receiver, can only lead to chaos, and must be discouraged.

13 As well as the interests of the Investors, one must consider the interests of S-S which apparently has patiently and painstakingly negotiated the subject transaction. It should not be spurned out of hand as a result of DoCouto's last minute, highly conditional offer being announced. Rather, one may well question the motives behind such offer. I note that it would of course be inappropriate for the Receiver to negotiate a deal with DoCouto while being bound by the S-S deal.

14 It would seem to me that if the DoCouto offer was allowed to derail the established process route, the integrity of the system would be thrown out the window. See Galligan J.A. at pp. 13-14 in *Soundair*:

> Finally, I refer to the reasoning of Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg*, supra, at p. 124 [O.R.]:
>
> > While every proper effort must always be made to assure maximum recovery consistent with the limitations inherent in the process, no method has yet been devised to entirely eliminate those limitations or to avoid their consequences. *Certainly it is not to be found in loosening the entire foundation of the system. Thus to compare the results of the*

process in this case with what might have been recovered in some other set of circumstances is neither logical nor practical. [Emphasis added.]

It is my opinion that the court must exercise extreme caution before it interferes with the process adopted by a receiver to sell an unusual asset. It is important that prospective purchasers know that, if they are acting in good faith, bargain seriously with a receiver and enter into an agreement with it, a court will not lightly interfere with the commercial judgment of the receiver to sell the asset to them.

15 Lastly, I can see no unfairness in the process adopted by the Receiver; rather, it was carrying out the mandate imposed on it by Montgomery J. and not otherwise challenged.

16 Galligan J.A. at p. 18 of *Soundair* noted that the views of the creditors in that case (urging that a higher offer be considered) should not override the considered judgment of the Receiver if it acted properly and providently.

17 As discussed in my endorsement in *Re Curragh Inc.* of May 8, 1994, one must consider the *Soundair* principles *in context* of the situation at hand. There is a very good discussion of the difficulties in these types of situations by Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. et al. v. Rosenberg et al.* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87 (HCJ). I think that the headnote captures the essence of concern at p. 89:

(2) The late offer of L Inc. should not be considered even though it was approximately $15 million higher than those the receiver recommended for approval, that is, approximately 3% of the aggregate of the purchase price of all the properties. To consider the offer at this date in the proceedings would make a mockery of the elaborate process devised and followed in the marketing of the property. Further, it would cause inevitable confusion and delay. There was no issue of unfairness towards L Inc. Rather, its belated offer was a blatant effort to circumvent the bidding process and to acquire the properties over those who had abided by the rules.

18 For the foregoing reasons, I would approve the Shields-Snow transaction. Subject to the conditions being met, there should be an appropriate vesting order. The Receiver and Law Development apparently have worked out a mechanism regarding the smooth implementation of the public company being worked into the development. I understand that Ajax is content with the Receiver's proposal to allow a tax sale certificate registration now so that the process would start afresh and this appears reasonable in the circumstances. NIC's cross motion is dismissed. If the order cannot be worked out amongst counsel, I can be spoken to October 28-30, 1996 at 9:30 a.m. The Receiver should be paid costs of $2,500 by NIC forthwith (NIC may wish to discuss sharing this obligation with DoCouto, but this should not interfere with the Receiver obtaining payment).

TAB 8

1999 CarswellOnt 3641
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Skyepharma PLC v. Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp.

1999 CarswellOnt 3641, [1999] O.J. No. 4300, [2000] B.P.I.R. 531, 12 C.B.R. (4th) 87, 92 A.C.W.S. (3d) 455, 96 O.T.C. 172

Skyepharma PLC, Plaintiff and Hyal Pharmaceutical Corporation, Defendant

Farley J.

Heard: October 20, 1999
Judgment: October 24, 1999
Docket: 99-CL-3479

Counsel: *Steven Golick* and *Robin Schwill*, for Receivers of Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp., Pricewaterhouse Coopers Incorporation.
Berl Nadler and *James Doris*, for Skyepharma PLC.
S.L. Secord, for Cangene Corporation.
Robert J. Chadwick, for Bioglan Pharma PLC.

***Farley J.*:**

Endorsement

1 PWC as court appointed receiver of Hyal made a motion before Ground, J. on Friday, October 15, 1999 for an order approving and authorizing the Receiver's acceptance of an agreement of purchase and sale with Skye designated as Plan C, the issuance of a vesting order as contemplated in Plan C so as to effect the closing of the transaction contemplated therein and the authority to take all steps necessary to complete the transaction as contemplated therein without further order of the court. Ground J. who had not been previously involved in this receivership adjourned the matter to me, but he expressed some question as to the activity of the Receiver as set out in his oral reasons, no doubt aided by Mr. Chadwick's very able and persuasive advocacy as to such points (Mr. Chadwick at the hearing before me referred to these as the Ground/Chadwick points). Further, I am given to understand that Ground, J. did not have available to him the Confidential Supplement to the Third Report which would have no doubt greatly assisted. As a result, it appears, of the complexity of what was available for sale by the Receiver which may be of interest to the various interested parties (and specifically Skye, Bioglan and Cangene) and the significant tax loss of Hyal, there were potentially various considerations and permutations which centred around either asset sales and/or a sale of shares. Thus it is, in my view, helpful to have a general overview of all the circumstances affecting the proposed sale by the Receiver so that the situation may be viewed in context — as opposed to isolating on one element, sentence or word. To have one judge in a case hearing matters such as this is an objective of the Commercial List so as to facilitate this overview.

2 Ground J. ordered that the Confidential Supplement to the Receiver's Third Report be distributed forthwith to the service list. It appears this treatment was also accorded the Confidential Supplement to the Fourth Report. These Confidential Supplements contained specific details of the bids, discussions and the analysis of same by the Receiver and were intended to be sealed pending the completion of the sale process at which time such material would be unsealed. If the bid, auction or other sale process were to be reopened, then while from one aspect the potential bidders would all be on an equal footing, knowing what everyone's then present position was as of the Receiver's motion before Ground J., but from a practical point of view, one or more of the bidders would be put at a disadvantage since the Receiver was presenting what had been advanced as "the best offer" (at least to just before the subject motion) whereas now the others would know what they had as a realistic target. The best offer would have to be improved from a procedural point of view. Conceivably, Skye has shot its bolt completely; Bioglan on the other hand, in effect, declined to put its "best intermediate offer" forward, anticipating that it would be favoured with

an opportunity to negotiate further with the Receiver and it now appears that it is willing to up the ante. The Receiver's views of the present offers is now known which would hinder its negotiating ability for a future deal in this case. Unfortunately, this engenders the situation of an unruly courthouse auction with some parties having advantages and others disadvantages in varying degrees, something which is the very opposite of what was advocated in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.) as desirable.

3 Through its activities as authorized by the court, the Receiver has significantly increased the initial indications from the various interested persons. In a motion to approve a sale by a receiver, the court should place a great deal of confidence in the receiver's expert business judgement particularly where the assets (as here) are "unusual" and the process used to sell these is complex. In order to support the role of any receiver and to avoid commercial chaos in receivership sales, it is extremely desirable that perspective participants in the sale process know that a court will not likely interfere with a receiver's dealings to sell to the selected participant and that the selected participant have the confidence that it will not be back-doored in some way. See *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at pp 5, 9-10, 12 and *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87 (Ont. H.C.). The court should assume that the receiver has acted properly unless the contrary is clearly demonstrated: see *Royal Bank v. Soundair* of pp.5 and 11. Specifically the court's duty is to consider as per *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at p.6:

> (a) whether the receiver made a sufficient effort to obtain the best price and did not act improvidently;
>
> (b) the interests of all parties;
>
> (c) the efficacy and integrity of the process by which the receiver obtained offers; and
>
> (d) whether the working out of the process was unfair.

4 As to the providence of the sale, a receiver's conduct is to be reviewed in light of the (objective) information a receiver had and not with the benefit of hindsight: *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at p.7. A receiver's duty is not to obtain the best possible price but to do everything reasonably possible in the circumstances with a view to obtaining the best price: see *Greyvest Leasing Inc. v. Merkur* (1994), 8 P.P.S.A.C. (2d) 203 (Ont. Gen. Div.) at para. 45. Other offers are irrelevant unless they demonstrate that the price in the proposed sale was so unreasonably low that it shows the receiver as acting improvidently in accepting it. It is the receiver's sale not the sale by the court: *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at pp. 9-10.

5 In deciding to accept an offer, a receiver is entitled to prefer a bird in the hand to two in the bush. The receiver, after a reasonable analysis of the risks, advantages and disadvantages of each offer (or indication of interest if only advanced that far) may accept an unconditional offer rather than risk delay or jeopordize closing due to conditions which are beyond the receiver's control. Furthermore, the receiver is obviously reasonable in preferring any unconditional offer to a conditional offer: See *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* at p. 107 where Anderson J. stated:

> The proposition that conditional offers would be considered equally with unconditional offers is so palpably ridiculous commercially that it is difficult to credit that any sensible businessman would say it, or if said, that any sensible businessman would accept it.

See also *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at p. 8. Obviously if there are conditions in offers, they must be analyzed by the receiver to determine whether they are within the receiver's control or if they appear to be in the circumstances as minor or very likely to be fulfilled. This involves the game theory known as mini-max where the alternatives are gridded with a view to maximizing the reward at the same time as minimizing the risk. Size and certainty does matter.

6 Although the interests of the debtor and purchaser are also relevant, on a sale of assets, the receiver's primary concern is to protect the interests of the debtor's creditors. Where the debtor cannot meet statutory solvency requirements, then in accord with the Plimsoll line philosophy, the shareholders are not entitled to receive payments in priority or partial priority to the creditors. Shareholders are not creditors and in a liquidation, shareholders rank below the creditors. See *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at p. 12 and *Re Central Capital Corp.* (1996), 38 C.B.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.) at pp.31-41 (per Weiler, J.A.) and pp. 50-53 (Laskin, J.A.).

7 Provided a receiver has acted reasonably, prudently and not arbitrarily, a court should not sit as in an appeal from a receiver's decision, reviewed in detail every element of the procedure by which the receiver made the decision (so long as that procedure fits with the authorized process specified by the court if a specific order to that affect has been issued). To do so would be futile and duplicative. It would emasculate the role of the receiver and make it almost inevitable that the final negotiation of every sale would take place on the motion for approval. See *Royal Bank v. Soundair* at p. 14 and *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* at p. 109.

8 Unsuccessful bidders have no standing to challenge a receiver's motion to approve the sale to another candidate. They have no legal or proprietary right as technically they are not affected by the order. They have no interest in the fundamental question of whether the court's approval is in the best interest of the parties directly involved. See *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* at pp. 114-119 and *British Columbia Development Corp. v. Spun Cast Industries Ltd.* (1977), 26 C.B.R. (N.S.) 28 (B.C. S.C.) at pp. 30-31. The corollary of this is that no weight should be given to the support offered by a creditor *qua* creditor as to its offer to purchase the assets.

9 It appears to me that on first blush the Receiver here conducted itself appropriately in all regards as to the foregoing concerns. However, before confirming that interim conclusion, I will take into account the objections of Bioglan and Cangene as they have shoehorned into this approval motion. I note that Skye and Cangene are substantial creditors of Hyal and this indebtedness preceded the receivership; Bioglan has acquired by assignment since the receivership a relatively modest debt of approximately $40,000.

10 On September 28, 1999, I granted an order with respect to the sale process from thereon in. In para. 3 of the order there is reference to October 8, 1999 but it appears to me that this is obviously an error and should be the same October 6, 1999 as in para. 2 as in my endorsement I felt "the deadline should not be 5:00 p.m. Friday, October 8/99 but rather 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, October 6/99." Bioglan had not been as forthcoming as Skye and Cangene and it was the Receiver's considered opinion (which I felt was well grounded and therefore accepted) that the Receiver should negotiate with the Exclusive Parties as identified to the court in the Confidential Supplement to the Third Report (with Skye and Cangene as named in the Confidential Supplement). These negotiations were to be with a view to attempting to finalizing with one of these two parties an agreement which the Receiver could recommend to the court. While perhaps inelegantly phrased, the deadline of 5:00 p.m. on October 6, 1999 was as to the offerers putting forward their best and irrevocable offer as to one or more of the combinations and permutations available. Both Cangene and Skye submitted their offers (Cangene one deal and Skye three independent alternatives — all four of which were detailed and complex) immediately before the 5:00 p.m. October 6, 1999 time. It would not seem to me that either of them was under a misimpression as to what was to be accomplished by that time. It would be unreasonable from every business angle to expect that the Receiver would have to rather instantly choose in minutes and therefore without the benefit of reflection as to which of the proposals would be the best choice for acceptance subject to court approval; the Receiver was merely stating the obvious in para. 10 of its Confidential Supplement to the Fourth Report. Para. 31 should not be interpreted as completely boxing in the Receiver; the Receiver could reject all three Skye offers if it felt that appropriate. The Receiver must have a reasonable period to do its analysis and it did (with the intervening Thanksgiving weekend) by October 13, 1999. In my view, it is reasonable and obvious in the context of the receivership and the various proceedings before this court that the finalizing of the agreement by 5:00 p.m. October 6, 1999 did not mean that the Receiver had to select its choice and execute (in the sense of "sign") the agreement by that deadline. Rather the reasonable interpretation of that deadline is as set out above. Bioglan, not being one of the selected and authorized Exclusive Parties did not, of course, present any offer. It had not got over the September 21, 1999 hurdle as a result of the Receiver's reasonable analysis of its proposal before that date. The September 28, 1999 order, authorized and directed the Receiver to go with the two parties which looked as if they were the best bets as candidates to come up with the most favourable deal. As for the question of "realizing the superior value inherent in the respective Exclusive Parties' offers", when viewed in context brings into play the aforesaid concerns about creditors having priority over shareholders and that in a liquidation the creditors must be paid in full before any return to the shareholders can be considered. It was possible that the exclusive parties or one of them may have made an offer which would have discharged all debts and in an "attached" share deal offered something to the shareholders, especially in light of the significant tax losses in Hyal. That did not happen. No one could force the Exclusive Parties to make such a favourable offer if they chose not to. The Receiver operated properly in selecting the Skye C Plan as the most appropriate one in light of the short fall in the total

debts. I note that a share deal over and above the Skye C Plan has not been ruled out for future negotiations as such would not be in conflict with that recommended deal and if structured appropriately. Bioglan in my view has in essence voluntarily exited the race and notwithstanding that it could have made a further (and better) offer even in light of the September 28, 1999 order, it chose not to attempt to re-enter the race.

11 I would also note that in the fact situation of this case where Skye is such a substantial creditor of Hyal that the $1 million letter of credit it proposes as a full indemnity as to any applicable clawback appears reasonable in the circumstances as what we are truly looking at is this indemnity to protect the minority creditors. Thus Skye's substantial creditor position in essence supplements the letter of credit amount (or substitutes for a part of the full portion).

12 It is obvious that it would only have been appropriate for the Receiver to have gone back to the well (and canvassed Bioglan) if none of the offers from the Exclusive Parties had been acceptable. However the Skye Plan C one was acceptable and has been recommended by the Receiver for approval by this court.

13 As for Cangene, it has submitted that the Receiver has misunderstood one of its conditions. I note that the Receiver noted that it felt that Cangene may have made an error in too hastily composing its offer. However, the Cangene offer had other unacceptable conditions which would prevent it on the Receiver's analysis from being the Receiver's first choice.

14 Then Cangene submitted that the Receiver erred in not revealing the Nadler letter which threatened a claim for damages in certain circumstances. Clearly it would have been preferable for the Receiver to have made complete disclosure of such a significant contingent liability. However, it seems to me that Cangene can scarcely claim that it was disadvantaged since it was previously directly informed by Mr. Nadler as counsel for Skye of their counterclaim. There being no material prejudice to Cangene, I do not see that this results in the Receiver having blotted its copybook so badly as to taint the process so that it is irretrievably flawed.

15 I therefore see no impediment, and every reason, to approve the Skye Plan C deal and I understand that, notwithstanding the (interim) negative news from the United States FDA process, Skye is prepared to close forthwith. The Receiver's recommendation as to the Skye Plan C is accepted and I approve that transaction.

16 It does not appear that the other aspects of the motion were intended to be dealt with on the Wednesday, October 20, 1999 hearing date. They should be rescheduled at a convenient date.

17 Order to issue accordingly.

Motion granted.

TAB 9

2012 ONSC 2788
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

9-Ball Interests Inc. v. Traditional Life Sciences Inc.

2012 CarswellOnt 5829, 2012 ONSC 2788, 19 P.P.S.A.C. (3d) 211, 215 A.C.W.S. (3d) 797, 89 C.B.R. (5th) 78

9-Ball Interests Inc. (Applicant) and Traditional Life Sciences Inc. (Respondent)

D.M. Brown J.

Heard: May 8, 2012
Judgment: May 14, 2012
Docket: CV-12-9705-00CL

Counsel: A. Sambasivan for Applicant, 9-Ball Interests Inc.
R. B. Bissell for Proposed Receiver, Fuller Landau Group Inc.

***D.M. Brown J.*:**

I. Application to appoint a receiver by a related person and to approve a sale to a related person

1 This is an application to appoint a receiver over the property of a debtor and to secure court approval of the immediate sale of that property to a third party. The distinctive feature of this application is that the applicant secured creditor, debtor and purchaser are related entities, sharing common ownership.

2 The secured creditor, 9-Ball Interests Inc., applies under section 243(1) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3 and section 101 of *The Courts of Justice Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C-43, for the appointment of a receiver of all the assets, undertaking and properties of the debtor, Traditional Life Sciences Inc. ("TLS"). The Fuller Landau Group Inc. ("Fuller Landau") has consented to act as receiver. 9-Ball also seeks the grant of authority to Fuller Landau to enter into a transaction to sell the property of TLS to 2323201 Ontario Inc. (the "Purchaser").

3 Robert Carscadden owns 9-Ball and, indirectly owns TLS because 9-Ball owns all the shares of TLS. Mr. Carscadden also owns the Purchaser.

4 For the reasons set out below, I dismiss the application.

II. The evidence

A. The business of TLS

5 TLS was incorporated in November, 2009 and operates an on-line retail store at www.Zwell.ca. TLS primarily sells a range of natural health supplements, consisting of seven Zwell-branded products and 20 other products. Over the past two or so years TLS has developed a customer base of about 4,000 customers.

6 The TLS business has a small physical footprint. It rents about 300 square feet of office space. TLS does not have any salaried employees; instead, it retains the services of two contract staff for marketing and IT support. The company also pays fees to Mr. Carscadden and Richard Parkinson for management and consulting services. Payments to contract employees are current; TLS has no employee source obligations to Canada Revenue Agency. Payment of consulting fees is in arrears.

7 TLS has three key third party contracts: a licence to use the trademark "Bioenergy Ribose"; a distribution agreement with Neptune Technologies & Bioresources; and a credit card processing agreement.

B. The unsecured debt of TLS

8 As of April 20, 2012 the total unsecured debt of TLS amounted to $1,738,537.53 consisting of:

> (i) unsecured trade debt of approximately $1.009 million. The largest trade creditor provided promotional and marketing services. The second largest unsecured creditor is 9-Ball to whom TLS owed $192,400 for management services provided since incorporation;
>
> (ii) convertible debt of $629,520, including $25,000 advanced by 9-Ball; and,
>
> (iii) non-convertible debt of $100,000 in respect of a development loan made by another party.

C. The secured debt of TLS

9 As noted, prior to 2012 the applicant, 9-Ball, had advanced funds to TLS by way of convertible debt and had provided management services for which it had not been paid. In early 2012 9-Ball decided that it would only advance further funds for working capital on a secured basis. On February 21, 2012, 9-Ball and TLS entered into a loan agreement for up to $500,000. The funds would be made available in tranches of $25,000, with each evidenced by notations entered on a promissory grid note. The obligations of TLS were secured by a General Security Agreement of the same date. On February 21, 2012, 9-Ball registered its security interest against TLS under the *Personal Property Security Act*. As a result of that registration 9-Ball became the sole secured creditor of TLS.

10 The annotated promissory note grid filed by Mr. Carscadden recorded that 9-Ball had made five advances to TLS of $25,000 each from March 21 through to April 4, 2012, a period of two weeks. The unaudited balance sheet of TLS for the year ended December 31, 2011 showed that liabilities ($1.658 million) exceeded assets ($0.145 million), and the statement of income and earnings showed a net loss of $835,830 for 2011 and an accumulated deficit of $1.523 million.

D. The retainer of Fuller Landau

11 According to an April 27, 2012 Report filed by Fuller Landau, TLS retained it on February 14, 2012 to review and assess go-forward options. After that initial engagement, on March 19, 2012 9-Ball engaged it as a consultant to market TLS for sale.

E. The demand

12 On April 23, 2012, less than three weeks after advancing its last $25,000 tranche of funding, 9-Ball made a written demand on TLS for the $125,000 (plus interest) lent under the Loan Agreement and issued a *BIA* s. 244 notice of intent to enforce security. The same day TLS provided its written consent to an early enforcement of the security.

13 Fuller Landau reported that it had retained a law firm to provide an independent opinion on the security held by 9-Ball and that the law firm reported that the applicant had a valid and enforceable charge over the assets of TLS.

F. The current financial situation of TLS

14 Mr. Cascadden deposed that despite his efforts, TLS has no access to further funding. He did not provide a current figure for the assets of TLS, but reported the book value of certain assets as at two dates:

> (i) December 31, 2011: HST receivable, prepaid expenses and capital assets: $61,645;
>
> (ii) March 31, 2012: inventory and work in progress: $69,424.

As mentioned, unaudited financial statements as at December 31, 2011 were filed. According to the Fuller Landau report, as of March 31, 2012 the book value of prepaid expenses, capital assets and intangible assets totaled $23,882.

G. The attempt to sell the assets of TLS

15 Fuller Landau reported that on March 19, 2012, 9-Ball engaged it as a consultant to market TLS for sale. This would have been a few days before 9-Ball began to advance funds to TLS on a secured basis. Yet, in the section of its Report describing the options it considered for TLS, Fuller Landau reported that "as 9-Ball indicated unwillingness to compromise its secured debt a proposal was considered inadvisable". I have difficulty understanding that statement since, from the chronology set out in the Report, 9-Ball retained Fuller Landau to commence a sale process before 9-Ball had become a secured creditor of TLS.

16 In any event, Fuller Landau reported that it took the following steps to market and sell TLS:

(i) It placed an ad in the March 19, 2012 edition of the Globe and Mail stipulating an April 2, 2012 offer deadline;

(ii) It provided 10 of the 13 parties who responded with a confidential initial information package;

(iii) Three of those parties conducted limited due diligence over the telephone;

(iv) None of the 13 respondents submitted an offer to purchase; and,

(v) It contacted 14 strategic purchasers to inform them of the sale process; none submitted an offer to purchase.

By the April 2 offer deadline Fuller Landau had received only one offer to purchase, that from the related Purchaser, 2323201 Ontario Inc.

17 Under the proposed Agreement of Purchase and Sale, the Purchaser would buy from the Receiver the company's personal property, inventory, receivables, intellectual property, books and records, contracts and specified tax refunds. Schedules to the Agreement attributed the following values to certain purchased assets: (i) intellectual property, website - $20,439.30; (ii) inventory, at cost - $57,148.34; and (iii) personal property, being one computer and some furniture - $1,968.04.

18 The proposed purchase price, which would be payable on closing, was filed on a confidential basis. Suffice it to say the proposed purchase price exceeds the reported book value of the purchased assets as well as the secured debt owing to 9-Ball.

19 9-Ball seeks a vesting order from the court which would vest the purchased assets in the Purchaser free and clear of any liens, including any charge by the Receiver. Closing would take place no later than 11 days after the granting of the vesting order.

20 Fuller Landau reported that it did not believe that any continued sales process would result in a better offer than that contained in the proposed Agreement. Fuller Landau recommended the proposed Agreement because in the event of a forced liquidation "it is anticipated that the Applicant could suffer a greater shortfall in comparison to the proposed Agreement." Fuller Landau further reported:

> Although the Sale Agreement, after related professional fee enforcement costs, will not result in any recovery to any of the unsecured creditors, the Sale Agreement represents the best realization opportunity for all interested stakeholders in accordance with their respective priorities in the Assets.

21 Mr. Carscadden deposed that "most of the unsecured creditor group are aware of the sale of the business of TLS and do not oppose the Sale Transaction." No communication from any creditor was filed on the motion. That said, the applicant filed an affidavit of service attesting to service of the materials on other creditors and no person appeared on the return of the application.

III. Analysis

22 The Court has the power to appoint a receiver or receiver and manager where it is "just or convenient" to do so under either section 101 of the *Courts of Justice Act* or section 243(1) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*. The general principle guiding a court's consideration of whether to appoint a receiver was stated by Blair J. (as he then was) in *Bank of Nova Scotia v. Freure Village on Clair Creek*:

> In deciding whether or not to do so, [the court] must have regard to all of the circumstances but in particular the nature of the property and the rights and interests of all parties in relation thereto. The fact that the moving party has a right under its security to appoint a receiver is an important factor to be considered but so, in such circumstances, is the question of whether or not an appointment by the Court is necessary to enable the receiver-manager to carry out its work and duties more efficiently...It is not essential that the moving party, a secured creditor, establish that it will suffer irreparable harm if a receiver-manager is not appointed...
>
> . . .
>
> [T]he "just or convenient" question becomes one of the Court determining, in the exercise of its discretion, whether it is more in the interests of all concerned to have the receiver appointed by the Court or not. This, of course, involves an examination of all the circumstances which I have outlined earlier in this endorsement, including the potential costs, the relationship between the debtor and the creditors, the likelihood of maximizing the return on and preserving the subject property and the best way of facilitating the work and duties of the receiver-manager. [1]

23 A court appointment of a receiver may become necessary where it is anticipated that a privately appointed receiver would encounter problems in taking possession of the debtor's property, where a privately appointed receiver has encountered such problems, where there are numerous creditors exercising their remedies simultaneously against the debtor, or where there are priority issues: [2]

> The court appointment in these situations ensures that the protection of the assets is sanctioned by the formal authority of the court and provides a forum where the stakeholders can determine their rights. Once a court appointment is invoked, the court-appointed receiver, the security holder, and any person who has a vested interest in the debtor's equity may apply to the court for advice and directions. [3]

In the *Freure Village* case Blair J. appointed a receiver where the evidence disclosed that a deadlock existed between the secured creditor and the debtor and there was the prospect of extensive litigation should the secured creditor seek to appoint a private receiver. [4]

24 Notwithstanding the power granted to a secured creditor by the security documents to appoint a private receiver, such a remedy has its drawbacks:

> The main disadvantage of a privately appointed receivership is that the security holder and the receiver never really know when the administration is concluded. Subject to limitation periods, the receiver does not get formally discharged and does not get protected from lawsuits. [5]

25 In the present case the applicant, 9-Ball, possesses under section 5.2(a) of its General Security Agreement with TLS the power to appoint a private receiver. Given the very close relationship between the secured creditor and the debtor, no prospect exists of resistance to the appointment of a private receiver. As the narrative disclosed, on the day 9-Ball delivered its *BIA* section 244 notice TLS waived the 10-day notice period. Moreover, 9-Ball is the only secured creditor of TLS: no complexity of secured claims exists which necessitates the court-appointment of a receiver to ensure that the company's affairs are managed with an even-hand for the benefit of all contending claimants. Further, TLS has no employees and only a handful of contract consultants. This is not a case where some threat to "turn off the lights" would result in a significant loss of jobs, necessitating the appointment of a receiver to bring stability to a company's operations. In sum, the circumstances typically necessitating the appointment of a receiver by the court are not present in this case, and the applicant did not include in its materials specific evidence identifying the need for a court order in order to ensure the receiver could do its job.

26 I am left to infer from the materials that the reason the applicant seeks the court-appointment of a receiver has more to do with the terms of the approval of the proposed sale — i.e. effectively dispensing with the requirement to comply with Part V of the *PPSA* which would apply in the case of the appointment of a private receiver - than with the need of the secured creditor for

the assistance of the court in enforcing its rights or for assistance to enable the receiver to perform its duties. In the present case, the applicant, 9-Ball, a few days before it became a secured creditor of TLS, retained Fuller Landau to conduct the marketing and sales process. Fuller Landau is recommending that the court approve a proposed sales agreement with 9-Ball and the form of vesting order sought would vest all title in the assets of TLS into the Purchaser free and clear of any security interests "or other financial or monetary claims", secured or unsecured.

27 As Morawetz J. observed in *Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re* [2008 CarswellOnt 6258 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List])], while a "quick flip" transaction is not the usual form of transaction by a receiver, in certain circumstances it may the best, or only, alternative. [6] In such circumstances courts still have applied the principles out in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*: [7] a court should consider (i) whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently, (ii) the interests of all parties, (iii) the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained, and (iv) whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process. [8]

28 Since it is part of the very essence of a receiver's function to make business judgments based on the information then available to it, a court should reject the recommendation of a receiver based on such judgment only in the most exceptional circumstances. [9] As Farley J. stated in *Skyepharma PLC v. Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp.*:

> In a motion to approve a sale by a receiver, the court should place a great deal of confidence in the receiver's expert business judgment particularly where the assets (as here) are "unusual" and the process used to sell these is complex.

He continued:

> Provided a receiver has acted reasonably, prudently and not arbitrarily, a court should not sit as in an appeal from a receiver's decision... [10]

29 Applicant's counsel referred me to two cases where this Court has approved "quick flip" transactions: *Fund 321 Ltd. Partnership v. Samsys Technologies Inc.* [11] and the *Tool-Plas Systems* case. The *Fund 321* case did not involve a "quick flip" to a related party; rather, the company had marketed the company for a long time before applying to court for an appointment and approval of a "quick flip". *Tool-Plas* did involve a "quick flip" to a related party, but the transaction was not in the nature of a credit bid and the receiver had opined that the proposed purchase price exceeded both a going concern and a liquidation value of the assets.

30 Part of the duty of a receiver is to place before the court sufficient evidence to enable the court to understand the implications for all parties of any proposed sale and, in the case of a sale to a related party, the overall fairness of the proposed related-party transaction. As stated by Morawetz J. in the *Tool-Plas* case:

> [T]he Court should consider the impact on various parties and assess whether their respective positions and the proposed treatment that they will receive in the quick flip transaction would realistically be any different if an extended sales process were followed. [12]

I conclude, for three reasons, that insufficient evidence has been placed before me to assess properly both the request to appoint a receiver and the request for approval of the proposed Agreement.

31 First, it appears that TLS granted 9-Ball a security interest in its assets at a time when it was insolvent. Mr. Carscadden deposed that the security granted by TLS to 9-Ball was supported by new consideration. However, his affidavit did not append the supporting documentation for such new consideration, such as extracts from the bank records of TLS evidencing receipt of the advanced funds. I could not see any statement in the Fuller Landau Report that it had gone behind the security documents to satisfy itself that 9-Ball had advanced funds. Although Fuller Landau reported that it had retained independent counsel to review the applicant's security, the resulting opinion letter was not included in the materials placed before me. Consequently, I do not know what inquiries the law firm made to render its opinion. Given the timing of the grant of security to a related party — TLS was insolvent at the time — and the practical role that security is playing in the proposed sale of assets — Mr. Carscadden

effectively would pay money through the Purchaser to the proposed Receiver which would be paid out as a distribution to another of his wholly-owned companies, 9-Ball, making the transaction closely resemble a credit bid — evidence demonstrating that close scrutiny had been made by the proposed Receiver of the validity of 9-Ball's security should have been placed before the court. It was not.

32 Second, the lack of such evidence about the validity of the security held by 9-Ball is particularly troublesome in this case because Fuller Landau reported that a proposal under the *BIA* was not a viable option for TLS because "9-Ball indicated unwillingness to compromise its secured debt". This was secured debt incurred *after* 9-Ball had retained Fuller Landau to put in place a marketing and sales program. That sequence of events demands a greater level of factual transparency than is present in this case.

33 Third, neither 9-Ball nor Fuller Landau filed any valuation of the assets of TLS in support of the request to approve the proposed Agreement. Fuller Landau did not explain why it had decided not to secure valuations, even valuations from liquidators. As a result, I am left to assess the reasonableness of the proposed purchase price without the benefit of any independent valuations, and the book values of certain assets placed in evidence were not supported by extracts from the financial records of TLS or any comment from the company's accountant about their reasonableness. Although Fuller Landau exposed the assets of TLS to the market, the sale process was short in duration and almost cursory in nature. Accordingly, I lack the evidentiary basis to assess whether the proposed Receiver acted to get the best price and did not act improvidently. In addition, I lack the evidentiary basis to ascertain whether the consideration to be received is superior to the consideration that would be received under any other offer made in accordance with the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition — e.g. no evidence of an offer or valuation from a liquidation firm was filed.

34 The absence of such evidence, when coupled with the absence of any evidence as to the need for an appointment by the court to enable the receiver to carry out its work and duties more efficiently, leads me to conclude that in the circumstances disclosed by the evidence filed it would not be just or convenient to appoint Fuller Landau as the receiver of TLS or to approve the proposed Agreement. Accordingly, I decline to grant the order requested. I dismiss the application, without prejudice to the ability of the applicant to re-apply on better evidence.

35 As to the materials about the proposed Agreement filed by the Receiver on a confidential basis, having considered the principles set out in *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, [13] I conclude that it is appropriate to grant the requested sealing orders for those materials in order to protect the integrity of this and any subsequent sale process, and I grant the sealing order sought by the applicant in paragraph 1(g) of its Notice of Application.

Application dismissed.

Footnotes

1 (Ont. Gen. Div. [Commercial List]), paras. 10, 12 (citations omitted).

2 Frank Bennett, *Bennett on Receiverships, Third Edition* (Toronto: Carswell, 2011), p. 35.

3 Frank Bennett, *Bennett on Bankruptcy, 13th Edition, 2011* (Toronto: CCH, 2011), p. 620.

4 *Bank of Nova Scotia*, *supra.*, para. 13.

5 Bennett, *supra.*, p. 621.

6 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

7 (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.).

8 *Ibid.*, para. 16. *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87 (Ont. H.C.), para. 12.

9 *Crown Trust*, *supra.*, paras. 80 and 81.

10 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]), paras. 3 and 7.

11 (2006), 21 C.B.R. (5th) 1 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List])

12 *Tool-Plas*, *supra.*, para. 15.

13 [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.).

TAB 10

2003 CarswellOnt 4083
Ontario Superior Court of Justice

Morganite Canada Corp. v. Wolfhollow Properties Inc.

2003 CarswellOnt 4083, [2003] O.J. No. 4272, 126 A.C.W.S. (3d) 53, 47 C.B.R. (4th) 89

MORGANITE CANADA CORPORATION (Applicant) v. WOLFHOLLOW PROPERTIES INC. ET AL. (Respondents)

Ground J.

Heard: October 20, 2003
Judgment: October 24, 2003
Docket: 02-CL-004692

Counsel: Steven Weisz, Virginia Jones for Deloitte & Touche Inc., Receiver
A.G. Formosa for Wolfhollow Properties Inc., 404928 Ontario Limited
Harvey Chaiton for Morganite Canada Corporation
Diana W. Dimmer for City of Toronto

***Ground J.*:**

1 The sale of the subject property (the "Property") to Priestly Demolition Inc. ("Priestly") recommended by DeLoitte & Touche Inc. as Receiver of the Property (the "Receiver") is opposed only by Wolfhollow Properties Inc. and 404928 Ontario Limited (collectively "Wolfhollow").

2 Wolfhollow is a former owner of the Property and remains liable on a vendor take-back mortgage to the Applicant, Morganite Canada Corporation ("Morganite"), in respect of which the amount of approximately $1.3 million dollars are owing for principal and interest. Wolfhollow is also an unsuccessful bidder for the Property, being one of four parties which submitted offers pursuant to the second solicitation for offers issued by the Receiver.

3 Wolfhollow is also the beneficiary of an indemnity provided by Morganite to it, and subsequently to the owner of the Property, to indemnify those persons for losses incurred as a result of the failure of Morganite to carry out remediation work with respect to the in-ground contamination of the property (the "DCM Contamination"). The Agreement of Purchase and Sale between Morganite and Wolfhollow provided that any amounts payable to Wolfhollow pursuant to such indemnify may be set off by Wolfhollow against payments due under the vendor take-back mortgage.

4 Wolfhollow's objection to the acceptance of the Priestly offer is not on the basis that the Wolfhollow offer was a better offer, but that the process followed by the Receiver in marketing and soliciting offers for the Property was fundamentally flawed. It is the position of Wolfhollow that the second solicitation for offers, being on the basis of a standard form of offer pursuant to which the purchaser assumed the obligation for the clean-up of the DCM Contamination, was not reasonably likely to elicit the best possible price for the Property and that prospective purchasers would have paid more for the Property if they did not have to assume the clean-up costs of the DCM Contamination.

5 I have several problems with this submission. First, the original solicitation for offers, based on an information package, did not specify the manner in which clean-up costs would be dealt with and the court is advised that five offers were received dealing with clean-up costs in a variety of ways. In addition, the second solicitation for offers specifically provided that the Receiver would consider offers that did not conform to the standard form of offer and, in fact, the offer submitted by Wolfhollow did not conform in several respects, including the provision for responsibility for clean-up costs of the DCM Contamination.

6 Second, the Property would appear, from the materials before this court, to be in a deplorable condition and would not be marketable or useable unless both the DCM Contamination and the above-ground waste and contamination were cleaned up to the satisfaction of the Ministry of the Environment and the City of Toronto. The Receiver was in a position where it could not accept an offer for the Property which was not acceptable to Morganite, the Ministry of the Environment and the City of Toronto with respect to the responsibility for clean-up costs. The offer from Priestly contains an assumption of liability for the clean-up costs of the DCM Contamination and a security deposit therefore, an agreement to clean up the above-ground contamination within 120 (extendable to 180) days, an agreement with the City of Toronto to forgive over $400,000 in realty tax arrears upon satisfactory clean-up of the Property and the approval of the Ministry of the Environment to the proposed transaction. None of the other offers received by the Receiver included all such provisions.

7 Third, I am satisfied from the material before the court that, overall, the Receiver has complied with its obligation to canvass the market in a reasonable and efficacious manner and has not acted improvidently. Accordingly, this is not a situation where the court should vary from the general principle that the court will be loathe to interfere with the business judgment of a Receiver and refuse to approve a transaction recommended by the Receiver acting properly in the fulfillment of its obligations as an officer of the court.

8 Moreover, it seems to me that the predominant concern of Wolfhollow is that its right to take the position that the value to Morganite of the assumption by Priestly of liability for the clean-up costs of the DCM Contamination should be set off against the amount owing on the vendor take-back mortgage. I know of no basis on which the approval of the Priestly offer would adversely impact on Wolfhollow's ability to take such a position or any other position which it wishes to take *via a vis* Morganite with respect to the vendor take-back mortgage. However, these are matters for another day and are not before this court.

9 Accordingly, an order will issue on the terms of the order filed with this court as Scheduled "B" to the Notice of Motion.

10 Any party wishing to make submissions as to the costs of this proceeding, may make brief written submissions to me on or before November 21, 2003.

Motion granted.

TAB 11

2002 SCC 41, 2002 CSC 41
Supreme Court of Canada

Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)

2002 CarswellNat 822, 2002 CarswellNat 823, 2002 SCC 41, 2002 CSC 41, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522, [2002] S.C.J. No. 42, 113 A.C.W.S. (3d) 36, 18 C.P.R. (4th) 1, 20 C.P.C. (5th) 1, 211 D.L.R. (4th) 193, 223 F.T.R. 137 (note), 287 N.R. 203, 40 Admin. L.R. (3d) 1, 44 C.E.L.R. (N.S.) 161, 93 C.R.R. (2d) 219, J.E. 2002-803, REJB 2002-30902

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, Appellant v. Sierra Club of Canada, Respondent and The Minister of Finance of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Minister of International Trade of Canada and the Attorney General of Canada, Respondents

McLachlin C.J.C., Gonthier, Iacobucci, Bastarache, Binnie, Arbour, LeBel JJ.

Heard: November 6, 2001
Judgment: April 26, 2002
Docket: 28020

Proceedings: reversing (2000), 2000 CarswellNat 970, (sub nom. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. v. Sierra Club of Canada) 187 D.L.R. (4th) 231, 256 N.R. 1, 24 Admin. L.R. (3d) 1, [2000] 4 F.C. 426, 182 F.T.R. 284 (note), 2000 CarswellNat 3271, [2000] F.C.J. No. 732 (Fed. C.A.); affirming (1999), 1999 CarswellNat 2187, [2000] 2 F.C. 400, 1999 CarswellNat 3038, 179 F.T.R. 283, [1999] F.C.J. No. 1633 (Fed. T.D.)

Counsel: *J. Brett Ledger* and *Peter Chapin*, for appellant
Timothy J. Howard and *Franklin S. Gertler*, for respondent Sierra Club of Canada
Graham Garton, Q.C., and *J. Sanderson Graham*, for respondents Minister of Finance of Canada, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Minister of International Trade of Canada, and Attorney General of Canada

The judgment of the court was delivered by *Iacobucci J.*:

I. Introduction

1 In our country, courts are the institutions generally chosen to resolve legal disputes as best they can through the application of legal principles to the facts of the case involved. One of the underlying principles of the judicial process is public openness, both in the proceedings of the dispute, and in the material that is relevant to its resolution. However, some material can be made the subject of a confidentiality order. This appeal raises the important issues of when, and under what circumstances, a confidentiality order should be granted.

2 For the following reasons, I would issue the confidentiality order sought and, accordingly, would allow the appeal.

II. Facts

3 The appellant, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. ("AECL"), is a Crown corporation that owns and markets CANDU nuclear technology, and is an intervener with the rights of a party in the application for judicial review by the respondent, the Sierra Club of Canada ("Sierra Club"). Sierra Club is an environmental organization seeking judicial review of the federal government's decision to provide financial assistance in the form of a $1.5 billion guaranteed loan relating to the construction and sale of two CANDU nuclear reactors to China by the appellant. The reactors are currently under construction in China, where the appellant is the main contractor and project manager.

4 The respondent maintains that the authorization of financial assistance by the government triggered s. 5(1)(b) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, S.C. 1992, c. 37 ("CEAA"), which requires that an environmental assessment be undertaken before a federal authority grants financial assistance to a project. Failure to undertake such an assessment compels cancellation of the financial arrangements.

5 The appellant and the respondent Ministers argue that the CEAA does not apply to the loan transaction, and that if it does, the statutory defences available under ss. 8 and 54 apply. Section 8 describes the circumstances where Crown corporations are required to conduct environmental assessments. Section 54(2)(b) recognizes the validity of an environmental assessment carried out by a foreign authority provided that it is consistent with the provisions of the CEAA.

6 In the course of the application by Sierra Club to set aside the funding arrangements, the appellant filed an affidavit of Dr. Simon Pang, a senior manager of the appellant. In the affidavit, Dr. Pang referred to and summarized certain documents (the "Confidential Documents"). The Confidential Documents are also referred to in an affidavit prepared by Dr. Feng, one of AECL's experts. Prior to cross-examining Dr. Pang on his affidavit, Sierra Club made an application for the production of the Confidential Documents, arguing that it could not test Dr. Pang's evidence without access to the underlying documents. The appellant resisted production on various grounds, including the fact that the documents were the property of the Chinese authorities and that it did not have authority to disclose them. After receiving authorization by the Chinese authorities to disclose the documents on the condition that they be protected by a confidentiality order, the appellant sought to introduce the Confidential Documents under R. 312 of the *Federal Court Rules, 1998*, SOR/98-106, and requested a confidentiality order in respect of the documents.

7 Under the terms of the order requested, the Confidential Documents would only be made available to the parties and the court; however, there would be no restriction on public access to the proceedings. In essence, what is being sought is an order preventing the dissemination of the Confidential Documents to the public.

8 The Confidential Documents comprise two Environmental Impact Reports on Siting and Construction Design (the "EIRs"), a Preliminary Safety Analysis Report (the "PSAR"), and the supplementary affidavit of Dr. Pang, which summarizes the contents of the EIRs and the PSAR. If admitted, the EIRs and the PSAR would be attached as exhibits to the supplementary affidavit of Dr. Pang. The EIRs were prepared by the Chinese authorities in the Chinese language, and the PSAR was prepared by the appellant with assistance from the Chinese participants in the project. The documents contain a mass of technical information and comprise thousands of pages. They describe the ongoing environmental assessment of the construction site by the Chinese authorities under Chinese law.

9 As noted, the appellant argues that it cannot introduce the Confidential Documents into evidence without a confidentiality order; otherwise, it would be in breach of its obligations to the Chinese authorities. The respondent's position is that its right to cross-examine Dr. Pang and Dr. Feng on their affidavits would be effectively rendered nugatory in the absence of the supporting documents to which the affidavits referred. Sierra Club proposes to take the position that the affidavits should therefore be afforded very little weight by the judge hearing the application for judicial review.

10 The Federal Court of Canada, Trial Division, refused to grant the confidentiality order and the majority of the Federal Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal. In his dissenting opinion, Robertson J.A. would have granted the confidentiality order.

III. Relevant Statutory Provisions

11 *Federal Court Rules, 1998*, SOR/98-106

> 151.(1) On motion, the Court may order that material to be filed shall be treated as confidential.
>
> (2) Before making an order under subsection (1), the Court must be satisfied that the material should be treated as confidential, notwithstanding the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

IV. Judgments below

A. Federal Court of Canada, Trial Division, [2000] 2 F.C. 400

12 Pelletier J. first considered whether leave should be granted pursuant to R. 312 to introduce the supplementary affidavit of Dr. Pang to which the Confidential Documents were filed as exhibits. In his view, the underlying question was that of relevance, and he concluded that the documents were relevant to the issue of the appropriate remedy. Thus, in the absence of prejudice to the respondent, the affidavit should be permitted to be served and filed. He noted that the respondents would be prejudiced by delay, but since both parties had brought interlocutory motions which had contributed to the delay, the desirability of having the entire record before the court outweighed the prejudice arising from the delay associated with the introduction of the documents.

13 On the issue of confidentiality, Pelletier J. concluded that he must be satisfied that the need for confidentiality was greater than the public interest in open court proceedings, and observed that the argument for open proceedings in this case was significant given the public interest in Canada's role as a vendor of nuclear technology. As well, he noted that a confidentiality order was an exception to the rule of open access to the courts, and that such an order should be granted only where absolutely necessary.

14 Pelletier J. applied the same test as that used in patent litigation for the issue of a protective order, which is essentially a confidentiality order. The granting of such an order requires the appellant to show a subjective belief that the information is confidential and that its interests would be harmed by disclosure. In addition, if the order is challenged, then the person claiming the benefit of the order must demonstrate objectively that the order is required. This objective element requires the party to show that the information has been treated as confidential, and that it is reasonable to believe that its proprietary, commercial and scientific interests could be harmed by the disclosure of the information.

15 Concluding that both the subjective part and both elements of the objective part of the test had been satisfied, he nevertheless stated: "However, I am also of the view that in public law cases, the objective test has, or should have, a third component which is whether the public interest in disclosure exceeds the risk of harm to a party arising from disclosure" (para. 23).

16 A very significant factor, in his view, was the fact that mandatory production of documents was not in issue here. The fact that the application involved a voluntary tendering of documents to advance the appellant's own cause as opposed to mandatory production weighed against granting the confidentiality order.

17 In weighing the public interest in disclosure against the risk of harm to AECL arising from disclosure, Pelletier J. noted that the documents the appellant wished to put before the court were prepared by others for other purposes, and recognized that the appellant was bound to protect the confidentiality of the information. At this stage, he again considered the issue of materiality. If the documents were shown to be very material to a critical issue, "the requirements of justice militate in favour of a confidentiality order. If the documents are marginally relevant, then the voluntary nature of the production argues against a confidentiality order" (para. 29). He then decided that the documents were material to a question of the appropriate remedy, a significant issue in the event that the appellant failed on the main issue.

18 Pelletier J. also considered the context of the case and held that since the issue of Canada's role as a vendor of nuclear technology was one of significant public interest, the burden of justifying a confidentiality order was very onerous. He found that AECL could expunge the sensitive material from the documents, or put the evidence before the court in some other form, and thus maintain its full right of defence while preserving the open access to court proceedings.

19 Pelletier J. observed that his order was being made without having perused the Confidential Documents because they had not been put before him. Although he noted the line of cases which holds that a judge ought not to deal with the issue of a confidentiality order without reviewing the documents themselves, in his view, given their voluminous nature and technical content as well as his lack of information as to what information was already in the public domain, he found that an examination of these documents would not have been useful.

20 Pelletier J. ordered that the appellant could file the documents in current form, or in an edited version if it chose to do so. He also granted leave to file material dealing with the Chinese regulatory process in general and as applied to this project, provided it did so within 60 days.

B. Federal Court of Appeal, [2000] 4 F.C. 426

(1) Evans J.A. (Sharlow J.A. concurring)

21 At the Federal Court of Appeal, AECL appealed the ruling under R. 151 of the *Federal Court Rules, 1998*, and Sierra Club cross-appealed the ruling under R. 312.

22 With respect to R. 312, Evans J.A. held that the documents were clearly relevant to a defence under s. 54(2)(b), which the appellant proposed to raise if s. 5(1)(b) of the CEAA was held to apply, and were also potentially relevant to the exercise of the court's discretion to refuse a remedy even if the Ministers were in breach of the CEAA. Evans J.A. agreed with Pelletier J. that the benefit to the appellant and the court of being granted leave to file the documents outweighed any prejudice to the respondent owing to delay and thus concluded that the motions judge was correct in granting leave under R. 312.

23 On the issue of the confidentiality order, Evans J.A. considered R. 151, and all the factors that the motions judge had weighed, including the commercial sensitivity of the documents, the fact that the appellant had received them in confidence from the Chinese authorities, and the appellant's argument that without the documents it could not mount a full answer and defence to the application. These factors had to be weighed against the principle of open access to court documents. Evans J.A. agreed with Pelletier J. that the weight to be attached to the public interest in open proceedings varied with context and held that, where a case raises issues of public significance, the principle of openness of judicial process carries greater weight as a factor in the balancing process. Evans J.A. noted the public interest in the subject matter of the litigation, as well as the considerable media attention it had attracted.

24 In support of his conclusion that the weight assigned to the principle of openness may vary with context, Evans J.A. relied upon the decisions in *AB Hassle v. Canada (Minister of National Health & Welfare)*, [2000] 3 F.C. 360 (Fed. C.A.), where the court took into consideration the relatively small public interest at stake, and *Ethyl Canada Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)* (1998), 17 C.P.C. (4th) 278 (Ont. Gen. Div.), at p. 283, where the court ordered disclosure after determining that the case was a significant constitutional case where it was important for the public to understand the issues at stake. Evans J.A. observed that openness and public participation in the assessment process are fundamental to the CEAA, and concluded that the motions judge could not be said to have given the principle of openness undue weight even though confidentiality was claimed for a relatively small number of highly technical documents.

25 Evans J.A. held that the motions judge had placed undue emphasis on the fact that the introduction of the documents was voluntary; however, it did not follow that his decision on the confidentiality order must therefore be set aside. Evans J.A. was of the view that this error did not affect the ultimate conclusion for three reasons. First, like the motions judge, he attached great weight to the principle of openness. Secondly, he held that the inclusion in the affidavits of a summary of the reports could go a long way to compensate for the absence of the originals, should the appellant choose not to put them in without a confidentiality order. Finally, if AECL submitted the documents in an expunged fashion, the claim for confidentiality would rest upon a relatively unimportant factor, i.e., the appellant's claim that it would suffer a loss of business if it breached its undertaking with the Chinese authorities.

26 Evans J.A. rejected the argument that the motions judge had erred in deciding the motion without reference to the actual documents, stating that it was not necessary for him to inspect them, given that summaries were available and that the documents were highly technical and incompletely translated. Thus, the appeal and cross-appeal were both dismissed.

(2) Robertson J.A. (dissenting)

27 Robertson J.A. disagreed with the majority for three reasons. First, in his view, the level of public interest in the case, the degree of media coverage, and the identities of the parties should not be taken into consideration in assessing an application for a confidentiality order. Instead, he held that it was the nature of the evidence for which the order is sought that must be examined.

28 In addition, he found that without a confidentiality order, the appellant had to choose between two unacceptable options: either suffering irreparable financial harm if the confidential information was introduced into evidence or being denied the right to a fair trial because it could not mount a full defence if the evidence was not introduced.

29 Finally, he stated that the analytical framework employed by the majority in reaching its decision was fundamentally flawed as it was based largely on the subjective views of the motions judge. He rejected the contextual approach to the question of whether a confidentiality order should issue, emphasizing the need for an objective framework to combat the perception that justice is a relative concept, and to promote consistency and certainty in the law.

30 To establish this more objective framework for regulating the issuance of confidentiality orders pertaining to commercial and scientific information, he turned to the legal rationale underlying the commitment to the principle of open justice, referring to *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326 (S.C.C.). There, the Supreme Court of Canada held that open proceedings foster the search for the truth, and reflect the importance of public scrutiny of the courts.

31 Robertson J.A. stated that, although the principle of open justice is a reflection of the basic democratic value of accountability in the exercise of judicial power, in his view, the principle that justice itself must be secured is paramount. He concluded that justice as an overarching principle means that exceptions occasionally must be made to rules or principles.

32 He observed that, in the area of commercial law, when the information sought to be protected concerns "trade secrets," this information will not be disclosed during a trial if to do so would destroy the owner's proprietary rights and expose him or her to irreparable harm in the form of financial loss. Although the case before him did not involve a trade secret, he nevertheless held that the same treatment could be extended to commercial or scientific information which was acquired on a confidential basis and attached the following criteria as conditions precedent to the issuance of a confidentiality order (at para. 13):

> (1) the information is of a confidential nature as opposed to facts which one would like to keep confidential; (2) the information for which confidentiality is sought is not already in the public domain; (3) on a balance of probabilities the party seeking the confidentiality order would suffer irreparable harm if the information were made public; (4) the information is relevant to the legal issues raised in the case; (5) correlatively, the information is "necessary" to the resolution of those issues; (6) the granting of a confidentiality order does not unduly prejudice the opposing party; and (7) the public interest in open court proceedings does not override the private interests of the party seeking the confidentiality order. The onus in establishing that criteria one to six are met is on the party seeking the confidentiality order. Under the seventh criterion, it is for the opposing party to show that a *prima facie* right to a protective order has been overtaken by the need to preserve the openness of the court proceedings. In addressing these criteria one must bear in mind two of the threads woven into the fabric of the principle of open justice: the search for truth and the preservation of the rule of law. As stated at the outset, I do not believe that the perceived degree of public importance of a case is a relevant consideration.

33 In applying these criteria to the circumstances of the case, Robertson J.A. concluded that the confidentiality order should be granted. In his view, the public interest in open court proceedings did not override the interests of AECL in maintaining the confidentiality of these highly technical documents.

34 Robertson J.A. also considered the public interest in the need to ensure that site-plans for nuclear installations were not, for example, posted on a web-site. He concluded that a confidentiality order would not undermine the two primary objectives underlying the principle of open justice: truth and the rule of law. As such, he would have allowed the appeal and dismissed the cross-appeal.

V. Issues

35

A. What is the proper analytical approach to be applied to the exercise of judicial discretion where a litigant seeks a confidentiality order under R. 151 of the *Federal Court Rules, 1998*?

B. Should the confidentiality order be granted in this case?

VI. Analysis

A. The Analytical Approach to the Granting of a Confidentiality Order

(1) The General Framework: Herein the Dagenais Principles

36 The link between openness in judicial proceedings and freedom of expression has been firmly established by this Court. In *Canadian Broadcasting Corp. v. New Brunswick (Attorney General)*, [1996] 3 S.C.R. 480 (S.C.C.) [hereinafter *New Brunswick*], at para. 23, La Forest J. expressed the relationship as follows:

> The principle of open courts is inextricably tied to the rights guaranteed by s. 2(b). Openness permits public access to information about the courts, which in turn permits the public to discuss and put forward opinions and criticisms of court practices and proceedings. While the freedom to express ideas and opinions about the operation of the courts is clearly within the ambit of the freedom guaranteed by s. 2(b), so too is the right of members of the public to obtain information about the courts in the first place.

Under the order sought, public access and public scrutiny of the Confidential Documents would be restricted; this would clearly infringe the public's freedom of expression guarantee.

37 A discussion of the general approach to be taken in the exercise of judicial discretion to grant a confidentiality order should begin with the principles set out by this Court in *Dagenais v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 835 (S.C.C.). Although that case dealt with the common law jurisdiction of the court to order a publication ban in the criminal law context, there are strong similarities between publication bans and confidentiality orders in the context of judicial proceedings. In both cases a restriction on freedom of expression is sought in order to preserve or promote an interest engaged by those proceedings. As such, the fundamental question for a court to consider in an application for a publication ban or a confidentiality order is whether, in the circumstances, the right to freedom of expression should be compromised.

38 Although in each case freedom of expression will be engaged in a different context, the *Dagenais* framework utilizes overarching *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* principles in order to balance freedom of expression with other rights and interests, and thus can be adapted and applied to various circumstances. As a result, the analytical approach to the exercise of discretion under R. 151 should echo the underlying principles laid out in *Dagenais*, *supra*, although it must be tailored to the specific rights and interests engaged in this case.

39 *Dagenais*, *supra*, dealt with an application by four accused persons under the court's common law jurisdiction requesting an order prohibiting the broadcast of a television programme dealing with the physical and sexual abuse of young boys at religious institutions. The applicants argued that because the factual circumstances of the programme were very similar to the facts at issue in their trials, the ban was necessary to preserve the accuseds' right to a fair trial.

40 Lamer C.J. found that the common law discretion to order a publication ban must be exercised within the boundaries set by the principles of the *Charter*. Since publication bans necessarily curtail the freedom of expression of third parties, he adapted the pre-*Charter* common law rule such that it balanced the right to freedom of expression with the right to a fair trial of the accused in a way which reflected the substance of the test from *R. v. Oakes*, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103 (S.C.C.). At p. 878 of *Dagenais*, Lamer C.J. set out his reformulated test:

> A publication ban should only be ordered when:

(a) Such a ban is *necessary* in order to prevent a real and substantial risk to the fairness of the trial, because reasonably available alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and

(b) The salutary effects of the publication ban outweigh the deleterious effects to the free expression of those affected by the ban. [Emphasis in original.]

41 In *New Brunswick*, *supra*, this Court modified the *Dagenais* test in the context of the related issue of how the discretionary power under s. 486(1) of the *Criminal Code* to exclude the public from a trial should be exercised. That case dealt with an appeal from the trial judge's order excluding the public from the portion of a sentencing proceeding for sexual assault and sexual interference dealing with the specific acts committed by the accused on the basis that it would avoid "undue hardship" to both the victims and the accused.

42 La Forest J. found that s. 486(1) was a restriction on the s. 2(b) right to freedom of expression in that it provided a "discretionary bar on public and media access to the courts": *New Brunswick*, *supra*, at para. 33; however, he found this infringement to be justified under s. 1 provided that the discretion was exercised in accordance with the *Charter*. Thus, the approach taken by La Forest J. at para. 69 to the exercise of discretion under s. 486(1) of the *Criminal Code*, closely mirrors the *Dagenais* common law test:

(a) the judge must consider the available options and consider whether there are any other reasonable and effective alternatives available;

(b) the judge must consider whether the order is limited as much as possible; and

(c) the judge must weigh the importance of the objectives of the particular order and its probable effects against the importance of openness and the particular expression that will be limited in order to ensure that the positive and negative effects of the order are proportionate.

In applying this test to the facts of the case, La Forest J. found that the evidence of the potential undue hardship consisted mainly in the Crown's submission that the evidence was of a "delicate nature" and that this was insufficient to override the infringement on freedom of expression.

43 This Court has recently revisited the granting of a publication ban under the court's common law jurisdiction in *R. v. Mentuck*, 2001 SCC 76 (S.C.C.), and its companion case *R. v. E. (O.N.)*, 2001 SCC 77 (S.C.C.). In *Mentuck*, the Crown moved for a publication ban to protect the identity of undercover police officers and operational methods employed by the officers in their investigation of the accused. The accused opposed the motion as an infringement of his right to a fair and public hearing under s. 11(d) of the *Charter*. The order was also opposed by two intervening newspapers as an infringement of their right to freedom of expression.

44 The Court noted that, while *Dagenais* dealt with the balancing of freedom of expression on the one hand, and the right to a fair trial of the accused on the other, in the case before it, both the right of the accused to a fair and public hearing, and freedom of expression weighed in favour of denying the publication ban. These rights were balanced against interests relating to the proper administration of justice, in particular, protecting the safety of police officers and preserving the efficacy of undercover police operations.

45 In spite of this distinction, the Court noted that underlying the approach taken in both *Dagenais* and *New Brunswick* was the goal of ensuring that the judicial discretion to order publication bans is subject to no lower a standard of compliance with the *Charter* than legislative enactment. This goal is furthered by incorporating the essence of s. 1 of the *Charter* and the *Oakes* test into the publication ban test. Since this same goal applied in the case before it, the Court adopted a similar approach to that taken in *Dagenais*, but broadened the *Dagenais* test (which dealt specifically with the right of an accused to a fair trial) such that it could guide the exercise of judicial discretion where a publication ban is requested in order to preserve *any* important aspect of the proper administration of justice. At para. 32, the Court reformulated the test as follows:

A publication ban should only be ordered when:

> (a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to the proper administration of justice because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and
>
> (b) the salutary effects of the publication ban outweigh the deleterious effects on the rights and interests of the parties and the public, including the effects on the right to free expression, the right of the accused to a fair and public trial, and the efficacy of the administration of justice.

46 The Court emphasized that under the first branch of the test, three important elements were subsumed under the "necessity" branch. First, the risk in question must be a serious risk well-grounded in the evidence. Second, the phrase "proper administration of justice" must be carefully interpreted so as not to allow the concealment of an excessive amount of information. Third, the test requires the judge ordering the ban to consider not only whether reasonable alternatives are available, but also to restrict the ban as far as possible without sacrificing the prevention of the risk.

47 At para. 31, the Court also made the important observation that the proper administration of justice will not necessarily involve *Charter* rights, and that the ability to invoke the *Charter* is not a necessary condition for a publication ban to be granted:

> The [common law publication ban] rule can accommodate orders that must occasionally be made in the interests of the administration of justice, which encompass more than fair trial rights. As the test is intended to "reflect . . . the substance of the *Oakes* test", *we cannot require that Charter rights be the only legitimate objective of such orders any more than we require that government action or legislation in violation of the Charter be justified exclusively by the pursuit of another Charter right*. [Emphasis added.]

The Court also anticipated that, in appropriate circumstances, the *Dagenais* framework could be expanded even further in order to address requests for publication bans where interests other than the administration of justice were involved.

48 *Mentuck* is illustrative of the flexibility of the *Dagenais* approach. Since its basic purpose is to ensure that the judicial discretion to deny public access to the courts is exercised in accordance with *Charter* principles, in my view, the *Dagenais* model can and should be adapted to the situation in the case at bar where the central issue is whether judicial discretion should be exercised so as to exclude confidential information from a public proceeding. As in *Dagenais*, *New Brunswick* and *Mentuck*, granting the confidentiality order will have a negative effect on the *Charter* right to freedom of expression, as well as the principle of open and accessible court proceedings, and, as in those cases, courts must ensure that the discretion to grant the order is exercised in accordance with *Charter* principles. However, in order to adapt the test to the context of this case, it is first necessary to determine the particular rights and interests engaged by this application.

(2) The Rights and Interests of the Parties

49 The immediate purpose for AECL's confidentiality request relates to its commercial interests. The information in question is the property of the Chinese authorities. If the appellant were to disclose the Confidential Documents, it would be in breach of its contractual obligations and suffer a risk of harm to its competitive position. This is clear from the findings of fact of the motions judge that AECL was bound by its commercial interests and its customer's property rights not to disclose the information (para. 27), and that such disclosure could harm the appellant's commercial interests (para. 23).

50 Aside from this direct commercial interest, if the confidentiality order is denied, then in order to protect its commercial interests, the appellant will have to withhold the documents. This raises the important matter of the litigation context in which the order is sought. As both the motions judge and the Federal Court of Appeal found that the information contained in the Confidential Documents was relevant to defences available under the CEAA, the inability to present this information hinders the appellant's capacity to make full answer and defence or, expressed more generally, the appellant's right, as a civil litigant, to present its case. In that sense, preventing the appellant from disclosing these documents on a confidential basis infringes its right to a fair trial. Although in the context of a civil proceeding this does not engage a *Charter* right, the right to a fair trial

generally can be viewed as a fundamental principle of justice: *M. (A.) v. Ryan*, [1997] 1 S.C.R. 157 (S.C.C.), at para. 84, *per* L'Heureux-Dubé J. (dissenting, but not on that point). Although this fair trial right is directly relevant to the appellant, there is also a general public interest in protecting the right to a fair trial. Indeed, as a general proposition, all disputes in the courts should be decided under a fair trial standard. The legitimacy of the judicial process alone demands as much. Similarly, courts have an interest in having all relevant evidence before them in order to ensure that justice is done.

51 Thus, the interests which would be promoted by a confidentiality order are the preservation of commercial and contractual relations, as well as the right of civil litigants to a fair trial. Related to the latter are the public and judicial interests in seeking the truth and achieving a just result in civil proceedings.

52 In opposition to the confidentiality order lies the fundamental principle of open and accessible court proceedings. This principle is inextricably tied to freedom of expression enshrined in s. 2(b) of the *Charter*: *New Brunswick*, *supra*, at para. 23. The importance of public and media access to the courts cannot be understated, as this access is the method by which the judicial process is scrutinized and criticized. Because it is essential to the administration of justice that justice is done and is *seen* to be done, such public scrutiny is fundamental. The open court principle has been described as "the very soul of justice," guaranteeing that justice is administered in a non-arbitrary manner: *New Brunswick*, *supra*, at para. 22.

(3) Adapting the Dagenais Test to the Rights and Interests of the Parties

53 Applying the rights and interests engaged in this case to the analytical framework of *Dagenais* and subsequent cases discussed above, the test for whether a confidentiality order ought to be granted in a case such as this one should be framed as follows:

> A confidentiality order under R. 151 should only be granted when:
>
> > (a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and
> >
> > (b) the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

54 As in *Mentuck*, *supra*, I would add that three important elements are subsumed under the first branch of this test. First, the risk in question must be real and substantial, in that the risk is well-grounded in the evidence and poses a serious threat to the commercial interest in question.

55 In addition, the phrase "important commercial interest" is in need of some clarification. In order to qualify as an "important commercial interest," the interest in question cannot merely be specific to the party requesting the order; the interest must be one which can be expressed in terms of a public interest in confidentiality. For example, a private company could not argue simply that the existence of a particular contract should not be made public because to do so would cause the company to lose business, thus harming its commercial interests. However, if, as in this case, exposure of information would cause a breach of a confidentiality agreement, then the commercial interest affected can be characterized more broadly as the general commercial interest of preserving confidential information. Simply put, if there is no general principle at stake, there can be no "important commercial interest" for the purposes of this test. Or, in the words of Binnie J. in *Re N. (F.)*, [2000] 1 S.C.R. 880, 2000 SCC 35 (S.C.C.), at para. 10, the open court rule only yields" where the *public* interest in confidentiality outweighs the public interest in openness" (emphasis added).

56 In addition to the above requirement, courts must be cautious in determining what constitutes an "important commercial interest." It must be remembered that a confidentiality order involves an infringement on freedom of expression. Although the balancing of the commercial interest with freedom of expression takes place under the second branch of the test, courts must be alive to the fundamental importance of the open court rule. See generally Muldoon J. in *Eli Lilly & Co. v. Novopharm Ltd.* (1994), 56 C.P.R. (3d) 437 (Fed. T.D.), at p. 439.

57 Finally, the phrase "reasonably alternative measures" requires the judge to consider not only whether reasonable alternatives to a confidentiality order are available, but also to restrict the order as much as is reasonably possible while preserving the commercial interest in question.

B. Application of the Test to this Appeal

(1) Necessity

58 At this stage, it must be determined whether disclosure of the Confidential Documents would impose a serious risk on an important commercial interest of the appellant, and whether there are reasonable alternatives, either to the order itself or to its terms.

59 The commercial interest at stake here relates to the objective of preserving contractual obligations of confidentiality. The appellant argues that it will suffer irreparable harm to its commercial interests if the confidential documents are disclosed. In my view, the preservation of confidential information constitutes a sufficiently important commercial interest to pass the first branch of the test as long as certain criteria relating to the information are met.

60 Pelletier J. noted that the order sought in this case was similar in nature to an application for a protective order which arises in the context of patent litigation. Such an order requires the applicant to demonstrate that the information in question has been treated at all relevant times as confidential and that on a balance of probabilities its proprietary, commercial and scientific interests could reasonably be harmed by the disclosure of the information: *AB Hassle v. Canada (Minister of National Health & Welfare)* (1998), 83 C.P.R. (3d) 428 (Fed. T.D.), at p. 434. To this I would add the requirement proposed by Robertson J.A. that the information in question must be of a "confidential nature" in that it has been" accumulated with a reasonable expectation of it being kept confidential" (para. 14) as opposed to "facts which a litigant would like to keep confidential by having the courtroom doors closed" (para. 14).

61 Pelletier J. found as a fact that the *AB Hassle* test had been satisfied in that the information had clearly been treated as confidential both by the appellant and by the Chinese authorities, and that, on a balance of probabilities, disclosure of the information could harm the appellant's commercial interests (para. 23). As well, Robertson J.A. found that the information in question was clearly of a confidential nature as it was commercial information, consistently treated and regarded as confidential, that would be of interest to AECL's competitors (para. 16). Thus, the order is sought to prevent a serious risk to an important commercial interest.

62 The first branch of the test also requires the consideration of alternative measures to the confidentiality order, as well as an examination of the scope of the order to ensure that it is not overly broad. Both courts below found that the information contained in the Confidential Documents was relevant to potential defences available to the appellant under the CEAA and this finding was not appealed at this Court. Further, I agree with the Court of Appeal's assertion (para. 99) that, given the importance of the documents to the right to make full answer and defence, the appellant is, practically speaking, compelled to produce the documents. Given that the information is necessary to the appellant's case, it remains only to determine whether there are reasonably alternative means by which the necessary information can be adduced without disclosing the confidential information.

63 Two alternatives to the confidentiality order were put forward by the courts below. The motions judge suggested that the Confidential Documents could be expunged of their commercially sensitive contents, and edited versions of the documents could be filed. As well, the majority of the Court of Appeal, in addition to accepting the possibility of expungement, was of the opinion that the summaries of the Confidential Documents included in the affidavits could go a long way to compensate for the absence of the originals. If either of these options is a reasonable alternative to submitting the Confidential Documents under a confidentiality order, then the order is not necessary, and the application does not pass the first branch of the test.

64 There are two possible options with respect to expungement, and, in my view, there are problems with both of these. The first option would be for AECL to expunge the confidential information without disclosing the expunged material to the

parties and the court. However, in this situation the filed material would still differ from the material used by the affiants. It must not be forgotten that this motion arose as a result of Sierra Club's position that the summaries contained in the affidavits should be accorded little or no weight without the presence of the underlying documents. Even if the relevant information and the confidential information were mutually exclusive, which would allow for the disclosure of all the information relied on in the affidavits, this relevancy determination could not be tested on cross-examination because the expunged material would not be available. Thus, even in the best case scenario, where only irrelevant information needed to be expunged, the parties would be put in essentially the same position as that which initially generated this appeal in the sense that at least some of the material relied on to prepare the affidavits in question would not be available to Sierra Club.

65 Further, I agree with Robertson J.A. that this best case scenario, where the relevant and the confidential information do not overlap, is an untested assumption (para. 28). Although the documents themselves were not put before the courts on this motion, given that they comprise thousands of pages of detailed information, this assumption is at best optimistic. The expungement alternative would be further complicated by the fact that the Chinese authorities require prior approval for any request by AECL to disclose information.

66 The second option is that the expunged material be made available to the Court and the parties under a more narrowly drawn confidentiality order. Although this option would allow for slightly broader public access than the current confidentiality request, in my view, this minor restriction to the current confidentiality request is not a viable alternative given the difficulties associated with expungement in these circumstances. The test asks whether there are *reasonably* alternative measures; it does not require the adoption of the absolutely least restrictive option. With respect, in my view, expungement of the Confidential Documents would be a virtually unworkable and ineffective solution that is not reasonable in the circumstances.

67 A second alternative to a confidentiality order was Evans J.A.'s suggestion that the summaries of the Confidential Documents included in the affidavits" may well go a long way to compensate for the absence of the originals" (para. 103). However, he appeared to take this fact into account merely as a factor to be considered when balancing the various interests at stake. I would agree that at this threshold stage to rely on the summaries alone, in light of the intention of Sierra Club to argue that they should be accorded little or no weight, does not appear to be a "reasonably alternative measure" to having the underlying documents available to the parties.

68 With the above considerations in mind, I find the confidentiality order necessary in that disclosure of the Confidential Documents would impose a serious risk on an important commercial interest of the appellant, and that there are no reasonably alternative measures to granting the order.

(2) The Proportionality Stage

69 As stated above, at this stage, the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the appellant's right to a fair trial, must be weighed against the deleterious effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right to free expression, which, in turn, is connected to the principle of open and accessible court proceedings. This balancing will ultimately determine whether the confidentiality order ought to be granted.

(a) Salutary Effects of the Confidentiality Order

70 As discussed above, the primary interest that would be promoted by the confidentiality order is the public interest in the right of a civil litigant to present its case or, more generally, the fair trial right. Because the fair trial right is being invoked in this case in order to protect commercial, not liberty, interests of the appellant, the right to a fair trial in this context is not a *Charter* right; however, a fair trial for all litigants has been recognized as a fundamental principle of justice: *Ryan*, *supra*, at para. 84. It bears repeating that there are circumstances where, in the absence of an affected *Charter* right, the proper administration of justice calls for a confidentiality order: *Mentuck*, *supra*, at para. 31. In this case, the salutary effects that such an order would have on the administration of justice relate to the ability of the appellant to present its case, as encompassed by the broader fair trial right.

71 The Confidential Documents have been found to be relevant to defences that will be available to the appellant in the event that the CEAA is found to apply to the impugned transaction and, as discussed above, the appellant cannot disclose the documents without putting its commercial interests at serious risk of harm. As such, there is a very real risk that, without the confidentiality order, the ability of the appellant to mount a successful defence will be seriously curtailed. I conclude, therefore, that the confidentiality order would have significant salutary effects on the appellant's right to a fair trial.

72 Aside from the salutary effects on the fair trial interest, the confidentiality order would also have a beneficial impact on other important rights and interests. First, as I discuss in more detail below, the confidentiality order would allow all parties and the court access to the Confidential Documents, and permit cross-examination based on their contents. By facilitating access to relevant documents in a judicial proceeding, the order sought would assist in the search for truth, a core value underlying freedom of expression.

73 Second, I agree with the observation of Robertson J.A. that, as the Confidential Documents contain detailed technical information pertaining to the construction and design of a nuclear installation, it may be in keeping with the public interest to prevent this information from entering the public domain (para. 44). Although the exact contents of the documents remain a mystery, it is apparent that they contain technical details of a nuclear installation, and there may well be a substantial public security interest in maintaining the confidentiality of such information.

(b) Deleterious Effects of the Confidentiality Order

74 Granting the confidentiality order would have a negative effect on the open court principle, as the public would be denied access to the contents of the Confidential Documents. As stated above, the principle of open courts is inextricably tied to the s. 2(b) *Charter* right to freedom of expression, and public scrutiny of the courts is a fundamental aspect of the administration of justice: *New Brunswick, supra*, at paras. 22-23. Although as a *general* principle, the importance of open courts cannot be overstated, it is necessary to examine, in the context of this case, the *particular* deleterious effects on freedom of expression that the confidentiality order would have.

75 Underlying freedom of expression are the core values of (1) seeking the truth and the common good, (2) promoting self-fulfilment of individuals by allowing them to develop thoughts and ideas as they see fit, and (3) ensuring that participation in the political process is open to all persons: *Irwin Toy Ltd. c. Québec (Procureur général)*, [1989] 1 S.C.R. 927 (S.C.C.), at p. 976, *R. v. Keegstra*, [1990] 3 S.C.R. 697 (S.C.C.), *per* Dickson C.J., at pp. 762-764. *Charter* jurisprudence has established that the closer the speech in question lies to these core values, the harder it will be to justify a s. 2(b) infringement of that speech under s. 1 of the *Charter*: *Keegstra*, *supra*, at pp. 760-761. Since the main goal in this case is to exercise judicial discretion in a way which conforms to *Charter* principles, a discussion of the deleterious effects of the confidentiality order on freedom of expression should include an assessment of the effects such an order would have on the three core values. The more detrimental the order would be to these values, the more difficult it will be to justify the confidentiality order. Similarly, minor effects of the order on the core values will make the confidentiality order easier to justify.

76 Seeking the truth is not only at the core of freedom of expression, but it has also been recognized as a fundamental purpose behind the open court rule, as the open examination of witnesses promotes an effective evidentiary process: *Edmonton Journal*, *supra*, *per* Wilson J., at pp. 1357-1358. Clearly, the confidentiality order, by denying public and media access to documents relied on in the proceedings, would impede the search for truth to some extent. Although the order would not exclude the public from the courtroom, the public and the media would be denied access to documents relevant to the evidentiary process.

77 However, as mentioned above, to some extent the search for truth may actually be *promoted* by the confidentiality order. This motion arises as a result of Sierra Club's argument that it must have access to the Confidential Documents in order to test the accuracy of Dr. Pang's evidence. If the order is denied, then the most likely scenario is that the appellant will not submit the documents, with the unfortunate result that evidence which may be relevant to the proceedings will not be available to Sierra Club or the court. As a result, Sierra Club will not be able to fully test the accuracy of Dr. Pang's evidence on cross-examination.

In addition, the court will not have the benefit of this cross-examination or documentary evidence, and will be required to draw conclusions based on an incomplete evidentiary record. This would clearly impede the search for truth in this case.

78 As well, it is important to remember that the confidentiality order would restrict access to a relatively small number of highly technical documents. The nature of these documents is such that the general public would be unlikely to understand their contents, and thus they would contribute little to the public interest in the search for truth in this case. However, in the hands of the parties and their respective experts, the documents may be of great assistance in probing the truth of the Chinese environmental assessment process, which would, in turn, assist the court in reaching accurate factual conclusions. Given the nature of the documents, in my view, the important value of the search for truth which underlies both freedom of expression and open justice would be promoted to a greater extent by submitting the Confidential Documents under the order sought than it would by denying the order, and thereby preventing the parties and the court from relying on the documents in the course of the litigation.

79 In addition, under the terms of the order sought, the only restrictions on these documents relate to their public distribution. The Confidential Documents would be available to the court and the parties, and public access to the proceedings would not be impeded. As such, the order represents a fairly minimal intrusion into the open court rule, and thus would not have significant deleterious effects on this principle.

80 The second core value underlying freedom of speech, namely, the promotion of individual self-fulfilment by allowing open development of thoughts and ideas, focuses on individual expression, and thus does not closely relate to the open court principle which involves institutional expression. Although the confidentiality order would restrict individual access to certain information which may be of interest to that individual, I find that this value would not be significantly affected by the confidentiality order.

81 The third core value, open participation in the political process, figures prominently in this appeal, as open justice is a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. This connection was pointed out by Cory J. in *Edmonton Journal*, *supra*, at p. 1339:

> It can be seen that freedom of expression is of fundamental importance to a democratic society. It is also essential to a democracy and crucial to the rule of law that the courts are seen to function openly. The press must be free to comment upon court proceedings to ensure that the courts are, in fact, seen by all to operate openly in the penetrating light of public scrutiny.

Although there is no doubt as to the importance of open judicial proceedings to a democratic society, there was disagreement in the courts below as to whether the weight to be assigned to the open court principle should vary depending on the nature of the proceeding.

82 On this issue, Robertson J.A. was of the view that the nature of the case and the level of media interest were irrelevant considerations. On the other hand, Evans J.A. held that the motions judge was correct in taking into account that this judicial review application was one of significant public and media interest. In my view, although the public nature of the case may be a factor which strengthens the importance of open justice in a particular case, the level of media interest should not be taken into account as an independent consideration.

83 Since cases involving public institutions will generally relate more closely to the core value of public participation in the political process, the public nature of a proceeding should be taken into consideration when assessing the merits of a confidentiality order. It is important to note that this core value will *always* be engaged where the open court principle is engaged owing to the importance of open justice to a democratic society. However, where the political process is also engaged by the *substance* of the proceedings, the connection between open proceedings and public participation in the political process will increase. As such, I agree with Evans J.A. in the court below, where he stated, at para. 87:

> While all litigation is important to the parties, and there is a public interest in ensuring the fair and appropriate adjudication of all litigation that comes before the courts, some cases raise issues that transcend the immediate interests of the parties and the general public interest in the due administration of justice, and have a much wider public interest significance.

84 This motion relates to an application for judicial review of a decision by the government to fund a nuclear energy project. Such an application is clearly of a public nature, as it relates to the distribution of public funds in relation to an issue of demonstrated public interest. Moreover, as pointed out by Evans J.A., openness and public participation are of fundamental importance under the CEAA. Indeed, by their very nature, environmental matters carry significant public import, and openness in judicial proceedings involving environmental issues will generally attract a high degree of protection. In this regard, I agree with Evans J.A. that the public interest is engaged here more than it would be if this were an action between private parties relating to purely private interests.

85 However, with respect, to the extent that Evans J.A. relied on media interest as an indicium of public interest, this was an error. In my view, it is important to distinguish *public* interest from *media* interest, and I agree with Robertson J.A. that media exposure cannot be viewed as an impartial measure of public interest. It is the public *nature* of the proceedings which increases the need for openness, and this public nature is not necessarily reflected by the media desire to probe the facts of the case. I reiterate the caution given by Dickson C.J. in *Keegstra*, *supra*, at p. 760, where he stated that, while the speech in question must be examined in light of its relation to the core values," we must guard carefully against judging expression according to its popularity."

86 Although the public interest in open access to the judicial review application *as a whole* is substantial, in my view, it is also important to bear in mind the nature and scope of the information for which the order is sought in assigning weight to the public interest. With respect, the motions judge erred in failing to consider the narrow scope of the order when he considered the public interest in disclosure, and consequently attached excessive weight to this factor. In this connection, I respectfully disagree with the following conclusion of Evans J.A., at para. 97:

> Thus, having considered the nature of this litigation, and having assessed the extent of public interest in the openness of the proceedings in the case before him, the Motions Judge cannot be said in all the circumstances to have given this factor undue weight, even though confidentiality is claimed for only three documents among the small mountain of paper filed in this case, and their content is likely to be beyond the comprehension of all but those equipped with the necessary technical expertise.

Open justice is a fundamentally important principle, particularly when the substance of the proceedings is public in nature. However, this does not detract from the duty to attach weight to this principle in accordance with the specific limitations on openness that the confidentiality order would have. As Wilson J. observed in *Edmonton Journal*, *supra*, at pp. 1353-1354:

> One thing seems clear and that is that one should not balance one value at large and the conflicting value in its context. To do so could well be to pre-judge the issue by placing more weight on the value developed at large than is appropriate in the context of the case.

87 In my view, it is important that, although there is significant public interest in these proceedings, open access to the judicial review application would be only slightly impeded by the order sought. The narrow scope of the order coupled with the highly technical nature of the Confidential Documents significantly temper the deleterious effects the confidentiality order would have on the public interest in open courts.

88 In addressing the effects that the confidentiality order would have on freedom of expression, it should also be borne in mind that the appellant may not have to raise defences under the CEAA, in which case the Confidential Documents would be irrelevant to the proceedings, with the result that freedom of expression would be unaffected by the order. However, since the necessity of the Confidential Documents will not be determined for some time, in the absence of a confidentiality order, the appellant would be left with the choice of either submitting the documents in breach of its obligations or withholding the documents in the hopes that either it will not have to present a defence under the CEAA or that it will be able to mount a successful defence in the absence of these relevant documents. If it chooses the former option, and the defences under the CEAA are later found not to apply, then the appellant will have suffered the prejudice of having its confidential and sensitive

information released into the public domain with no corresponding benefit to the public. Although this scenario is far from certain, the possibility of such an occurrence also weighs in favour of granting the order sought.

89 In coming to this conclusion, I note that if the appellant is not required to invoke the relevant defences under the CEAA, it is also true that the appellant's fair trial right will not be impeded, even if the confidentiality order is not granted. However, I do not take this into account as a factor which weighs in favour of denying the order because, if the order is granted and the Confidential Documents are not required, there will be no deleterious effects on *either* the public interest in freedom of expression *or* the appellant's commercial interests or fair trial right. This neutral result is in contrast with the scenario discussed above where the order is denied and the possibility arises that the appellant's commercial interests will be prejudiced with no corresponding public benefit. As a result, the fact that the Confidential Documents may not be required is a factor which weighs in favour of granting the confidentiality order.

90 In summary, the core freedom of expression values of seeking the truth and promoting an open political process are most closely linked to the principle of open courts, and most affected by an order restricting that openness. However, in the context of this case, the confidentiality order would only marginally impede, and in some respects would even promote, the pursuit of these values. As such, the order would not have significant deleterious effects on freedom of expression.

VII. Conclusion

91 In balancing the various rights and interests engaged, I note that the confidentiality order would have substantial salutary effects on the appellant's right to a fair trial, and freedom of expression. On the other hand, the deleterious effects of the confidentiality order on the principle of open courts and freedom of expression would be minimal. In addition, if the order is not granted and in the course of the judicial review application the appellant is not required to mount a defence under the CEAA, there is a possibility that the appellant will have suffered the harm of having disclosed confidential information in breach of its obligations with no corresponding benefit to the right of the public to freedom of expression. As a result, I find that the salutary effects of the order outweigh its deleterious effects, and the order should be granted.

92 Consequently, I would allow the appeal with costs throughout, set aside the judgment of the Federal Court of Appeal, and grant the confidentiality order on the terms requested by the appellant under R. 151 of the *Federal Court Rules, 1998*.

Appeal allowed.

Pourvoi accueilli.

TAB 12

2021 SCC 25, 2021 CSC 25
Supreme Court of Canada

Sherman Estate v. Donovan

2021 CarswellOnt 8339, 2021 CarswellOnt 8340, 2021 SCC 25, 2021 CSC 25, 331 A.C.W.S. (3d) 489, 458 D.L.R. (4th) 361, 66 C.P.C. (8th) 1, 67 E.T.R. (4th) 163, 72 C.R. (7th) 223, EYB 2021-391973

Estate of Bernard Sherman and Trustees of the Estate and Estate of Honey Sherman and Trustees of the Estate (Appellants) and Kevin Donovan and Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. (Respondents) and Attorney General of Ontario, Attorney General of British Columbia, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Income Security Advocacy Centre, Ad IDEM/Canadian Media Lawyers Association, Postmedia Network Inc., CTV, a Division of Bell Media Inc., Global News, a division of Corus Television Limited Partnership, The Globe and Mail Inc., Citytv, a division of Rogers Media Inc., British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, HIV Legal Network and Mental Health Legal Committee (Interveners)

Wagner C.J.C., Moldaver, Karakatsanis, Brown, Rowe, Martin, Kasirer JJ.

Heard: October 6, 2020
Judgment: June 11, 2021
Docket: 38695

Proceedings: affirming *Donovan v. Sherman Estate* (2019), 56 C.P.C. (8th) 82, 47 E.T.R. (4th) 1, 2019 CarswellOnt 6867, 2019 ONCA 376, C.W. Hourigan J.A., Doherty J.A., Paul Rouleau J.A. (Ont. C.A.); reversing *Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. v. Sherman Estate* (2018), 41 E.T.R. (4th) 126, 2018 CarswellOnt 13017, 2018 ONSC 4706, 28 C.P.C. (8th) 102, 417 C.R.R. (2d) 321, S.F. Dunphy J. (Ont. S.C.J.)

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Adam Goldenberg, for Intervener, British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
Khalid Janmohamed, for Interveners, HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, the HIV Legal Network and the Mental Health Legal Committee

Kasirer J. **(Wagner C.J.C. and Moldaver, Karakatsanis, Brown, Rowe and Martin JJ. concurring):**

I. Overview

1 This Court has been resolute in recognizing that the open court principle is protected by the constitutionally-entrenched right of freedom of expression and, as such, it represents a central feature of a liberal democracy. As a general rule, the public can attend hearings and consult court files and the press — the eyes and ears of the public — is left free to inquire and comment on the workings of the courts, all of which helps make the justice system fair and accountable.

2 Accordingly, there is a strong presumption in favour of open courts. It is understood that this allows for public scrutiny which can be the source of inconvenience and even embarrassment to those who feel that their engagement in the justice system brings intrusion into their private lives. But this discomfort is not, as a general matter, enough to overturn the strong presumption that the public can attend hearings and that court files can be consulted and reported upon by the free press.

3 Notwithstanding this presumption, exceptional circumstances do arise where competing interests justify a restriction on the open court principle. Where a discretionary court order limiting constitutionally-protected openness is sought — for example, a sealing order, a publication ban, an order excluding the public from a hearing, or a redaction order — the applicant must demonstrate, as a threshold requirement, that openness presents a serious risk to a competing interest of public importance. That this requirement is considered a high bar serves to maintain the strong presumption of open courts. Moreover, the protection of open courts does not stop there. The applicant must still show that the order is necessary to prevent the risk and that, as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of that order restricting openness outweigh its negative effects.

4 This appeal turns on whether concerns advanced by persons seeking an exception to the ordinarily open court file in probate proceedings — the concerns for privacy of the affected individuals and their physical safety — amount to important public interests that are at such serious risk that the files should be sealed. The parties to this appeal agree that physical safety is an important public interest that could justify a sealing order but disagree as to whether that interest would be at serious risk, in the circumstances of this case, should the files be unsealed. They further disagree whether privacy is in itself an important interest that could justify a sealing order. The appellants say that privacy is a public interest of sufficient import that can justify limits on openness, especially in light of the threats individuals face as technology facilitates widespread dissemination of personally sensitive information. They argue that the Court of Appeal was mistaken to say that personal concerns for privacy, without more, lack the public interest component that is properly the subject-matter of a sealing order.

5 This Court has, in different settings, consistently championed privacy as a fundamental consideration in a free society. Pointing to cases decided in other contexts, the appellants contend that privacy should be recognized here as a public interest that, on the facts of this case, substantiates their plea for orders sealing the probate files. The respondents resist, recalling that privacy has generally been seen as a poor justification for an exception to openness. After all, they say, virtually every court proceeding entails some disquiet for the lives of those concerned and these intrusions on privacy must be tolerated because open courts are essential to a healthy democracy.

6 This appeal offers, then, an occasion to decide whether privacy can amount to a public interest in the open court jurisprudence and, if so, whether openness puts privacy at serious risk here so as to justify the kind of orders sought by the appellants.

7 For the reasons that follow, I propose to recognize an aspect of privacy as an important public interest for the purposes of the relevant test from *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522. Proceedings in open court can lead to the dissemination of highly sensitive personal information that would result not just in discomfort or embarrassment, but in an affront to the affected person's dignity. Where this narrower dimension of privacy, rooted in what I see as the public interest in protecting human dignity, is shown to be at serious risk, an exception to the open court principle may be justified.

8 In this case, and with this interest in mind, it cannot be said that the risk to privacy is sufficiently serious to overcome the strong presumption of openness. The same is true of the risk to physical safety here. The Court of Appeal was right in the circumstances to set aside the sealing orders and I would therefore dismiss the appeal.

II. Background

9 Prominent in business and philanthropic circles, Bernard Sherman and Honey Sherman were found dead in their Toronto home in December of 2017. Their deaths had no apparent explanation and generated intense public interest and press scrutiny. In January of the following year, the Toronto Police Service announced that the deaths were being investigated as homicides. As the present matter came before the courts, the identity and motive of those responsible remained unknown.

10 The couple's estates and estate trustees (collectively the "Trustees") [1] sought to stem the intense press scrutiny prompted by the events. The Trustees hoped to see to the orderly transfer of the couple's property, at arm's length from what they saw as the public's morbid interest in the unexplained deaths and the curiosity around apparently great sums of money involved.

11 When the time came to obtain certificates of appointment of estate trustee from the Superior Court of Justice, the Trustees sought a sealing order so that the estate trustees and beneficiaries ("affected individuals") might be spared any further intrusions into their privacy and be protected from what was alleged to be a risk to their safety. The Trustees argued that if the information in the court files was revealed to the public, the safety of the affected individuals would be at risk and their privacy compromised as long as the deaths were unexplained and those responsible for the tragedy remained at large. In support of their request, they argued that there was a real and substantial risk that the affected individuals would suffer serious harm from the public exposure of the materials in the circumstances.

12 Initially granted, the sealing orders were challenged by Kevin Donovan, a journalist who had written a series of articles on the couple's deaths, and Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd., for which he wrote (collectively the "Toronto Star"). [2] The Toronto Star said the orders violated its constitutional rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as well as the attending principle that the workings of the courts should be open to the public as a means of guaranteeing the fair and transparent administration of justice.

III. Proceedings Below

A. Ontario Superior Court of Justice, 2018 ONSC 4706, 41 E.T.R. (4th) 126 (Dunphy J.)

13 In addressing whether the circumstances warranted interference with the open court principle, the application judge relied on this Court's judgment in *Sierra Club* . He noted that a confidentiality order should only be granted when: "(1) such an order is necessary ... to prevent a serious risk to an important interest because reasonable alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and (2) the salutary effects of the confidentiality order outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression and the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings" (para. 13(d)).

14 The application judge considered whether the Trustees' interests would be served by granting the sealing orders. In his view, the Trustees had correctly identified two legitimate interests in support of making an exception to the open court principle: "protecting the privacy and dignity of victims of crime and their loved ones" and "a reasonable apprehension of risk on behalf of those known to have an interest in receiving or administering the assets of the deceased" (paras. 22-25). With respect to the first interest, the application judge found that "[t]he degree of intrusion on that privacy and dignity has already been extreme and ... excruciating" (para. 23). For the second interest, although he noted that "it would have been preferable to include objective evidence of the gravity of that risk from, for example, the police responsible for the investigation", he concluded that "the lack of such evidence is not fatal" (para. 24). Rather, the necessary inferences could be drawn from the circumstances notably the "willingness of the perpetrator(s) of the crimes to resort to extreme violence to pursue whatever motive existed" (*ibid.*). He concluded that the "current uncertainty" was the source of a reasonable apprehension of the risk of harm and, further, that the foreseeable harm was "grave" (*ibid.*).

15 The application judge ultimately accepted the Trustees' submission that these interests "very strongly outweigh" what he called the proportionately narrow public interest in the "essentially administrative files" at issue (paras. 31 and 33). He therefore concluded that the harmful effects of the sealing orders were substantially outweighed by the salutary effects on the rights and interests of the affected individuals.

16 Finally, the application judge considered what order would protect the affected individuals while infringing upon the open court principle to the minimum extent possible. He decided no meaningful part of either file could be disclosed if one were to make the redactions necessary to protect the interests he had identified. Open-ended sealing orders did not, however, sit well with him. The application judge therefore sealed the files for an initial period of two years, with the possibility of renewal.

B. Court of Appeal for Ontario, 2019 ONCA 376, 47 E.T.R. (4th) 1 **(Doherty, Rouleau and Hourigan JJ.A.)**

17 The Toronto Star's appeal was allowed, unanimously, and the sealing orders were lifted.

18 The Court of Appeal considered the two interests advanced before the application judge in support of the orders to seal the probate files. As to the need to protect the privacy and dignity of the victims of violent crime and their loved ones, it recalled that the kind of interest that is properly protected by a sealing order must have a public interest component. Citing *Sierra Club*, the Court of Appeal wrote that "[p]ersonal concerns cannot, without more, justify an order sealing material that would normally be available to the public under the open court principle" (para. 10). It concluded that the privacy interest for which the Trustees sought protection lacked this quality of public interest.

19 While it recognized the personal safety of individuals as an important public interest generally, the Court of Appeal wrote that there was no evidence in this case that could warrant a finding that disclosure of the contents of the estate files posed a real risk to anyone's physical safety. The application judge had erred on this point: "the suggestion that the beneficiaries and trustees are somehow at risk because the Shermans were murdered is not an inference, but is speculation. It provides no basis for a sealing order" (para. 16).

20 The Court of Appeal concluded that the Trustees had failed the first stage of the test for obtaining orders sealing the probate files. It therefore allowed the appeal and set aside the orders.

C. Subsequent Proceedings

21 The Court of Appeal's order setting aside the sealing orders has been stayed pending the disposition of this appeal. The Toronto Star brought a motion to adduce new evidence on this appeal, comprised of land titles documents, transcripts of the cross-examination of a detective on the murder investigation, and various news articles. This evidence, it says, supports the conclusion that the sealing orders should be lifted. The motion was referred to this panel.

IV. Submissions

22 The Trustees have appealed to this Court seeking to restore the sealing orders made by the application judge. In addition to contesting the motion for new evidence, they maintain that the orders are necessary to prevent a serious risk to the privacy and physical safety of the affected individuals and that the salutary effects of sealing the court probate files outweigh the harmful effects of limiting court openness. The Trustees argue that two legal errors led the Court of Appeal to conclude otherwise.

23 First, they submit the Court of Appeal erred in holding that privacy is a personal concern that cannot, without more, constitute an important interest under *Sierra Club* . The Trustees say the application judge was right to characterize privacy and dignity as an important public interest which, as it was subject to a serious risk, justified the orders. They ask this Court to recognize that privacy in itself is an important public interest for the purposes of the analysis.

24 Second, the Trustees submit that the Court of Appeal erred in overturning the application judge's conclusion that there was a serious risk of physical harm. They argue that the Court of Appeal failed to recognize that courts have the ability to draw reasonable inferences by applying reason and logic even in the absence of specific evidence of the alleged risk.

25 The Trustees say that these errors led the Court of Appeal to mistakenly set aside the sealing orders. In answer to questions at the hearing, the Trustees acknowledged that an order redacting certain documents in the file or a publication ban could assist in addressing some of their concerns, but maintained neither is a reasonable alternative to the sealing orders in the circumstances.

26 The Trustees submit further that the protection of these interests outweighs the deleterious effects of the orders. They argue that the importance of the open court principle is attenuated by the nature of these probate proceedings. Given that it is non-contentious and not strictly speaking necessary for the transfer of property at death, probate is a court proceeding of an "administrative" character, which diminishes the imperative of applying the open court principle here (paras. 113-14).

27 The Toronto Star takes the position that the Court of Appeal made no mistake in setting aside the sealing orders and that the appeal should be dismissed. In the Toronto Star's view, while privacy can be an important interest where it evinces a public component, the Trustees have only identified a subjective desire for the affected individuals in this case to avoid further publicity, which is not inherently harmful. According to the Toronto Star and some of the interveners, the Trustees' position would allow that measure of inconvenience and embarrassment that arises in every court proceeding to take precedence over the interest in court openness protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in which all of society has a stake. The Toronto Star argues further that the information in the court files is not highly sensitive. On the issue of whether the sealing orders were necessary to protect the affected individuals from physical harm, the Toronto Star submits that the Court of Appeal was right to conclude that the Trustees had failed to establish a serious risk to this interest.

28 In the alternative, even if there were a serious risk to one or another important interest, the Toronto Star says the sealing orders are not necessary because the risk could be addressed by an alternative, less onerous order. Furthermore, it says the orders are not proportionate. In seeking to minimize the importance of openness in probate proceedings, the Trustees invite an inflexible approach to balancing the effects of the order that is incompatible with the principle that openness applies to all court proceedings. In any event, there is a public interest in openness specifically here, given that the certificates sought can affect the rights of third parties and that openness ensures the fairness of the proceedings, whether they are contested or not.

V. Analysis

29 The outcome of the appeal turns on whether the application judge should have made the sealing orders pursuant to the test for discretionary limits on court openness from this Court's decision in *Sierra Club* .

30 Court openness is protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and is essential to the proper functioning of our democracy (Canadian Broadcasting Corp. v. New Brunswick (Attorney General), [1996] 3 S.C.R. 480, at para. 23; Vancouver Sun (Re), 2004 SCC 43, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 332, at paras. 23-26). Reporting on court proceedings by a free press is often said to be inseparable from the principle of open justice. "In reporting what has been said and done at a public trial, the media serve as the eyes and ears of a wider public which would be absolutely entitled to attend but for purely practical reasons cannot do so" (*Khuja v. Times Newspapers Ltd*, 2017 UKSC 49, [2019] A.C. 161 (U.K. S.C.), at para. 16, citing *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326, at pp. 1326-39, per Cory J.). Limits on openness in service of other public interests have been recognized, but sparingly and always with an eye to preserving a strong presumption that justice should proceed in public view (*Dagenais v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 835, at p. 878; R. v. Mentuck, 2001 SCC 76, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 442, at paras. 32-39; *Sierra Club*, at para. 56). The test for discretionary limits on court openness is directed at maintaining this presumption while offering sufficient flexibility for courts to protect these other public interests where they arise (*Mentuck*, at para. 33). The parties agree that this is the appropriate framework of analysis for resolving this appeal.

31 The parties and the courts below disagree, however, about how this test applies to the facts of this case and this calls for clarification of certain points of the *Sierra Club* analysis. Most centrally, there is disagreement about how an important interest in the protection of privacy could be recognized such that it would justify limits on openness, and in particular when privacy can be a matter of public concern. The parties bring two settled principles of this Court's jurisprudence to bear in support of their respective positions. First, this Court has often observed that privacy is a fundamental value necessary to the preservation of a free and democratic society (*Lavigne v. Canada (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages)*, 2002 SCC 53, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 773, at para. 25; Dagg v. Canada (Minister of Finance), [1997] 2 S.C.R. 403, at paras. 65-66, per La Forest J. (dissenting but not on this point); *New Brunswick*, at para. 40). Courts have invoked privacy, in some instances, as the basis for an exception to openness under the *Sierra Club* test (see, e.g., R. v. Henry, 2009 BCCA 86, 270 B.C.A.C. 5, at paras. 11 and 17). At the same time, the jurisprudence acknowledges that some degree of privacy loss — resulting in inconvenience, even in upset or embarrassment — is inherent in any court proceeding open to the public (*New Brunswick*, at para. 40). Accordingly, upholding the presumption of openness has meant recognizing that neither individual sensibilities nor mere personal discomfort associated with participating in judicial proceedings are likely to justify the exclusion of the public from court (*Attorney General of Nova Scotia v. MacIntyre*, [1982] 1 S.C.R. 175, at p. 185; *New Brunswick*, at para. 41). Determining the role of privacy in the *Sierra*

Club analysis requires reconciling these two ideas, which is the nub of the disagreement between the parties. The right of privacy is not absolute; the open court principle is not without exceptions.

32 For the reasons that follow, I disagree with the Trustees that the ostensibly unbounded privacy interest they invoke qualifies as an important public interest within the meaning of *Sierra Club* . Their broad claim fails to focus on the elements of privacy that are deserving of public protection in the open court context. That is not to say, however, that privacy can never ground an exceptional measure such as the sealing orders sought in this case. While the mere embarrassment caused by the dissemination of personal information through the open court process does not rise to the level justifying a limit on court openness, circumstances do exist where an aspect of a person's private life has a plain public interest dimension.

33 Personal information disseminated in open court can be more than a source of discomfort and may result in an affront to a person's dignity. Insofar as privacy serves to protect individuals from this affront, it is an important public interest relevant under *Sierra Club* . Dignity in this sense is a related but narrower concern than privacy generally; it transcends the interests of the individual and, like other important public interests, is a matter that concerns the society at large. A court can make an exception to the open court principle, notwithstanding the strong presumption in its favour, if the interest in protecting core aspects of individuals' personal lives that bear on their dignity is at serious risk by reason of the dissemination of sufficiently sensitive information. The question is not whether the information is "personal" to the individual concerned, but whether, because of its highly sensitive character, its dissemination would occasion an affront to their dignity that society as a whole has a stake in protecting.

34 This public interest in privacy appropriately focuses the analysis on the impact of the dissemination of sensitive personal information, rather than the mere fact of this dissemination, which is frequently risked in court proceedings and is necessary in a system that privileges court openness. It is a high bar — higher and more precise than the sweeping privacy interest relied upon here by the Trustees. This public interest will only be seriously at risk where the information in question strikes at what is sometimes said to be the core identity of the individual concerned: information so sensitive that its dissemination could be an affront to dignity that the public would not tolerate, even in service of open proceedings.

35 I hasten to say that applicants for an order making exception to the open court principle cannot content themselves with an unsubstantiated claim that this public interest in dignity is compromised any more than they could by an unsubstantiated claim that their physical integrity is endangered. Under *Sierra Club*, the applicant must show on the facts of the case that, as an important interest, this dignity dimension of their privacy is at "serious risk". For the purposes of the test for discretionary limits on court openness, this requires the applicant to show that the information in the court file is sufficiently sensitive such that it can be said to strike at the biographical core of the individual and, in the broader circumstances, that there is a serious risk that, without an exceptional order, the affected individual will suffer an affront to their dignity.

36 In the present case, the information in the court files was not of this highly sensitive character that it could be said to strike at the core identity of the affected persons; the Trustees have failed to show how the lifting of the sealing orders engages the dignity of the affected individuals. I am therefore not convinced that the intrusion on their privacy raises a serious risk to an important public interest as required by *Sierra Club* . Moreover, as I shall endeavour to explain, there was no serious risk of physical harm to the affected individuals by lifting the sealing orders. Accordingly, this is not an appropriate case in which to make sealing orders, or any order limiting access to these court files. In the circumstances, the admissibility of the Toronto Star's new evidence is moot. I propose to dismiss the appeal.

A. The Test for Discretionary Limits on Court Openness

37 Court proceedings are presumptively open to the public (*MacIntyre*, at p. 189; A.B. v. Bragg Communications Inc., 2012 SCC 46, [2012] 2 S.C.R. 567, at para. 11).

38 The test for discretionary limits on presumptive court openness has been expressed as a two-step inquiry involving the necessity and proportionality of the proposed order (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53). Upon examination, however, this test rests upon three core prerequisites that a person seeking such a limit must show. Recasting the test around these three prerequisites, without

altering its essence, helps to clarify the burden on an applicant seeking an exception to the open court principle. In order to succeed, the person asking a court to exercise discretion in a way that limits the open court presumption must establish that:

(1) court openness poses a serious risk to an important public interest;

(2) the order sought is necessary to prevent this serious risk to the identified interest because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and,

(3) as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects.

Only where all three of these prerequisites have been met can a discretionary limit on openness — for example, a sealing order, a publication ban, an order excluding the public from a hearing, or a redaction order — properly be ordered. This test applies to all discretionary limits on court openness, subject only to valid legislative enactments (Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. v. Ontario, 2005 SCC 41, [2005] 2 S.C.R. 188, at paras. 7 and 22).

39 The discretion is structured and controlled in this way to protect the open court principle, which is understood to be constitutionalized under the right to freedom of expression at s. 2(b) of the Charter (New Brunswick, at para. 23). Sustained by freedom of expression, the open court principle is one of the foundations of a free press given that access to courts is fundamental to newsgathering. This Court has often highlighted the importance of open judicial proceedings to maintaining the independence and impartiality of the courts, public confidence and understanding of their work and ultimately the legitimacy of the process (see, e.g., *Vancouver Sun*, at paras. 23-26). In *New Brunswick*, La Forest J. explained the presumption in favour of court openness had become "'one of the hallmarks of a democratic society'" (citing *Re Southam Inc. and The Queen (No.1)*, (1983), 41 O.R. (2d) 113 (C.A.), at p. 119), that "acts as a guarantee that justice is administered in a non-arbitrary manner, according to the rule of law ... thereby fostering public confidence in the integrity of the court system and understanding of the administration of justice" (para. 22). The centrality of this principle to the court system underlies the strong presumption — albeit one that is rebuttable — in favour of court openness (para. 40; *Mentuck*, at para. 39).

40 The test ensures that discretionary orders are subject to no lower standard than a legislative enactment limiting court openness would be (*Mentuck*, at para. 27; *Sierra Club*, at para. 45). To that end, this Court developed a scheme of analysis by analogy to the *Oakes* test, which courts use to understand whether a legislative limit on a right guaranteed under the Charter is reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society (*Sierra Club*, at para. 40, citing *R. v. Oakes*, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103; see also *Dagenais*, at p. 878; *Vancouver Sun*, at para. 30).

41 The recognized scope of what interests might justify a discretionary exception to open courts has broadened over time. In *Dagenais*, Lamer C.J. spoke of a requisite risk to the "fairness of the trial" (p. 878). In *Mentuck*, Iacobucci J. extended this to a risk affecting the "proper administration of justice" (para. 32). Finally, in *Sierra Club*, Iacobucci J., again writing for a unanimous Court, restated the test to capture any serious risk to an "important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation" (para. 53). He simultaneously clarified that the important interest must be expressed as a public interest. For example, on the facts of that case, a harm to a particular business interest would not have been sufficient, but the "general commercial interest of preserving confidential information" was an important interest because of its public character (para. 55). This is consistent with the fact that this test was developed in reference to the *Oakes* jurisprudence that focuses on the "pressing and substantial" objective of legislation of general application (*Oakes*, at pp. 138-39; see also Mentuck, at para. 31). The term "important interest" therefore captures a broad array of public objectives.

42 While there is no closed list of important public interests for the purposes of this test, I share Iacobucci J.'s sense, explained in *Sierra Club*, that courts must be "cautious" and "alive to the fundamental importance of the open court rule" even at the earliest stage when they are identifying important public interests (para. 56). Determining what is an important public interest can be done in the abstract at the level of general principles that extend beyond the parties to the particular dispute (para. 55). By contrast, whether that interest is at "serious risk" is a fact-based finding that, for the judge considering the appropriateness of an order, is necessarily made in context. In this sense, the identification of, on the one hand, an important interest and, on the other, the seriousness of the risk to that interest are, theoretically at least, separate and qualitatively distinct operations. An

order may therefore be refused simply because a valid important public interest is not at serious risk on the facts of a given case or, conversely, that the identified interests, regardless of whether they are at serious risk, do not have the requisite important public character as a matter of general principle.

43 The test laid out in *Sierra Club* continues to be an appropriate guide for judicial discretion in cases like this one. The breadth of the category of "important interest" transcends the interests of the parties to the dispute and provides significant flexibility to address harm to fundamental values in our society that unqualified openness could cause (see, e.g., P. M. Perell and J. W. Morden, *The Law of Civil Procedure in Ontario* (4th ed. 2020), at para. 3.185; J. Bailey and J. Burkell, "Revisiting the Open Court Principle in an Era of Online Publication: Questioning Presumptive Public Access to Parties' and Witnesses' Personal Information" (2016), 48 Ottawa L. Rev. 143, at pp. 154-55). At the same time, however, the requirement that a serious risk to an important interest be demonstrated imposes a meaningful threshold necessary to maintain the presumption of openness. Were it merely a matter of weighing the benefits of the limit on court openness against its negative effects, decision-makers confronted with concrete impacts on the individuals appearing before them may struggle to put adequate weight on the less immediate negative effects on the open court principle. Such balancing could be evasive of effective appellate review. To my mind, the structure provided by *Dagenais*, *Mentuck*, and *Sierra Club* remains appropriate and should be affirmed.

44 Finally, I recall that the open court principle is engaged by all judicial proceedings, whatever their nature (*MacIntyre* at pp. 185-86; *Vancouver Sun*, at para. 31). To the extent the Trustees suggested, in their arguments about the negative effects of the sealing orders, that probate in Ontario does not engage the open court principle or that the openness of these proceedings has no public value, I disagree. The certificates the Trustees sought from the court are issued under the seal of that court, thereby bearing the imprimatur of the court's authority. The court's decision, even if rendered in a non-contentious setting, will have an impact on third parties, for example by establishing the testamentary paper that constitutes a valid will (see *Otis v. Otis*, (2004), 7 E.T.R. (3d) 221 (Ont. S.C.), at paras. 23-24). Contrary to what the Trustees argue, the matters in a probate file are not quintessentially private or fundamentally administrative. Obtaining a certificate of appointment of estate trustee in Ontario is a court proceeding and the fundamental rationale for openness — discouraging mischief and ensuring confidence in the administration of justice through transparency — applies to probate proceedings and thus to the transfer of property under court authority and other matters affected by that court action.

45 It is true that other non-probate estate planning mechanisms may allow for the transfer of wealth outside the ordinary avenues of testate or intestate succession — that is the case, for instance, for certain insurance and pension benefits, and for certain property held in co-ownership. But this does not change the necessarily open court character of probate proceedings. That non-probate transfers keep certain information related to the administration of an estate out of public view does not mean that the Trustees here, by seeking certificates from the court, somehow do not engage this principle. The Trustees seek the benefits that flow from the public judicial probate process: transparency ensures that the probate court's authority is administered fairly and efficiently (*Vancouver Sun*, at para. 25; *New Brunswick*, at para. 22). The strong presumption in favour of openness plainly applies to probate proceedings and the Trustees must satisfy the test for discretionary limits on court openness.

B. The Public Importance of Privacy

46 As mentioned, I disagree with the Trustees that an unbounded interest in privacy qualifies as an important public interest under the test for discretionary limits on court openness. Yet in some of its manifestations, privacy does have social importance beyond the person most immediately concerned. On that basis, it cannot be excluded as an interest that could justify, in the right circumstances, a limit to court openness. Indeed, the public importance of privacy has been recognized by this Court in various settings, and this sheds light on why the narrower aspect of privacy related to the protection of dignity is an important public interest.

47 I respectfully disagree with the manner in which the Court of Appeal disposed of the claim by the Trustees that there is a serious risk to the interest in protecting personal privacy in this case. For the appellate judges, the privacy concerns raised by the Trustees amounted to "[p]ersonal concerns" which cannot, "without more", satisfy the requirement from *Sierra Club* that an important interest be framed as a public interest (para. 10). The Court of Appeal in our case relied, at para. 10, on *H. (M.E.) v. Williams*, 2012 ONCA 35, 108 O.R. (3d) 321, in which it was held that "[p]urely personal interests cannot justify

non-publication or sealing orders" (para. 25). Citing as authority judgments of this Court in *MacIntyre* and *Sierra Club*, the court continued by observing that "personal concerns of a litigant, including concerns about the very real emotional distress and embarrassment that can be occasioned to litigants when justice is done in public, will not, standing alone, satisfy the necessity branch of the test" (para. 25). Respectfully stated, the emphasis that the Court of Appeal placed on personal concerns as a means of deciding that the sealing orders failed to meet the necessity requirement in this case and in *Williams* is, I think, mistaken. Personal concerns that relate to aspects of the privacy of an individual who is before the courts can coincide with a public interest in confidentiality.

48 Like the Court of Appeal, I do agree with the view expressed particularly in the pre-*Charter* case of *MacIntyre*, that where court openness results in an intrusion on privacy which disturbs the "sensibilities of the individuals involved" (p. 185), that concern is generally insufficient to justify a sealing or like order and does not amount to an important public interest under *Sierra Club* . But I disagree with the Court of Appeal in this case and in *Williams* that this is because the intrusion only occasions "personal concerns". Certain personal concerns — even "without more" — can coincide with important public interests within the meaning of *Sierra Club* . To invoke the expression of Binnie J. in F.N. (Re), 2000 SCC 35, [2000] 1 S.C.R. 880, at para. 10, there is a "public interest in confidentiality" that is felt, first and foremost, by the person involved and is most certainly a personal concern. Even in *Williams*, the Court of Appeal was careful to note that where, without privacy protection, an individual would face "a substantial risk of serious debilitating emotional ... harm", an exception to openness should be available (paras. 29-30). The means of discerning whether a privacy interest reflects a "public interest in confidentiality" is therefore not whether the interest reflects or is rooted in "personal concerns" for the privacy of the individuals involved. Some personal concerns relating to privacy overlap with public interests in confidentiality. These interests in privacy can be, in my view, important public interests within the meaning of *Sierra Club* . It is true that an individual's privacy is pre-eminently important to that individual. But this Court has also long recognized that the protection of privacy is, in a variety of settings, in the interest of society as a whole.

49 The proposition that privacy is important, not only to the affected individual but to our society, has deep roots in the jurisprudence of this Court outside the context of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. This background helps explain why privacy cannot be rejected as a mere personal concern. However, the key differences in these contexts are such that the public importance of privacy cannot be transposed to open courts without adaptation. Only specific aspects of privacy interests can qualify as important public interests under *Sierra Club* .

50 In the context of s. 8 of the Charter and public sector privacy legislation, La Forest J. cited American privacy scholar Alan F. Westin for the proposition that privacy is a fundamental value of the modern state, first in *R. v. Dyment*, [1988] 2 S.C.R. 417, at pp. 427-28 (concurring), and then in Dagg, at para. 65 (dissenting but not on this point). In the latter case, La Forest J. wrote: "The protection of privacy is a fundamental value in modern, democratic states. An expression of an individual's unique personality or personhood, privacy is grounded on physical and moral autonomy — the freedom to engage in one's own thoughts, actions and decisions" (para. 65 (citations omitted)). That statement was endorsed unanimously by this Court in Lavigne, at para. 25.

51 Further, in Alberta (Information and Privacy Commissioner) v. United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 401 2013 SCC 62, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 733 (“UFCW”), decided in the context of a statute regulating the use of information by organizations, the objective of providing an individual with some control over their information was recognized as "intimately connected to individual autonomy, dignity and privacy, self-evidently significant social values" (para. 24). The importance of privacy, its "quasi-constitutional status" and its role in protecting moral autonomy continues to find expression in our recent jurisprudence (see, e.g., Lavigne, at para. 24; *Bragg*, at para. 18, per Abella J., citing TorontoStar Newspaper Ltd. v. Ontario, 2012 ONCJ 27, 289 C.C.C. (3d) 549, at paras. 40-41 and 44; Douez v. Facebook, Inc., 2017 SCC 33, [2017] 1 S.C.R. 751, at para. 59). In *Douez*, Karakatsanis, Wagner (as he then was) and Gascon JJ. underscored this same point, adding that "the growth of the Internet, virtually timeless with pervasive reach, has exacerbated the potential harm that may flow from incursions to a person's privacy interests" (para. 59).

52 Privacy as a public interest is underlined by specific aspects of privacy protection present in legislation at the federal and provincial levels (see, e.g., Privacy Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-21; Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, S.C. 2000, c. 5 (“PIPEDA”); Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31; Charter of Human

Rights and Freedoms, CQLR, c. C-12, s. 5; *Civil Code of Québec*, arts. 35 to 41). [3] Further, in assessing the constitutionality of a legislative exception to the open court principle, this Court has recognized that the protection of individual privacy can be a pressing and substantial objective (*Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1345, per Cory J.; see also the concurring reasons of Wilson J., at p. 1354, in which "the public interest in protecting the privacy of litigants generally in matrimonial cases against the public interest in an open court process" was explicitly noted). There is also continued support for the social and public importance of individual privacy in the academic literature (see, e.g., A. J. Cockfield, "Protecting the Social Value of Privacy in the Context of State Investigations Using New Technologies" (2007), 40 U.B.C. L. Rev. 41, at p. 41; K. Hughes, "A Behavioural Understanding of Privacy and its Implications for Privacy Law" (2012), 75 *Modern L. Rev*. 806, at p. 823; P. Gewirtz, "Privacy and Speech" (2001), *Sup. Ct. Rev*. 139, at p. 139). It is therefore inappropriate, in my respectful view, to dismiss the public interest in protecting privacy as merely a personal concern. This does not mean, however, that privacy generally is an important public interest in the context of limits on court openness.

53 The fact that the case before the application judge concerned individuals who were advancing their own privacy interests, which were undeniably important to them as individuals, does not mean that there is no public interest at stake. In *F.N. (Re)*, this was the personal interest that young offenders had in remaining anonymous in court proceedings as a means of encouraging their personal rehabilitation (para. 11). All of society had a stake, according to Binnie J., in the young person's personal prospect for rehabilitation. This same idea from *F.N. (Re)* was cited in support of finding the interest in *Sierra Club* to be a public interest. That interest, rooted first in an agreement of personal concern to the contracting parties involved, was a private matter that evinced, alongside its personal interest to the parties, a "public interest in confidentiality" (*Sierra Club*, at para. 55). Similarly, while the Trustees have a personal interest in preserving their privacy, this does not mean that the public has no stake in this same interest because — as this Court has made clear — it is related to moral autonomy and dignity which are pressing and substantial concerns.

54 In this appeal, the Toronto Star suggests that legitimate privacy concerns would be effectively protected by a discretionary order where there is "something more" to elevate them beyond personal concerns and sensibilities (R.F., at para. 73). The Income Security Advocacy Centre, by way of example, submits that privacy serves the public interests of preventing harm and of ensuring individuals are not dissuaded from accessing the courts. I agree that these concepts are related, but in my view care must be taken not to conflate the public importance of privacy with that of other interests; aspects of privacy, such as dignity, may constitute important public interests in and of themselves. A risk to personal privacy may be tied to a risk to psychological harm, as it was in *Bragg* (para. 14; see also J. Rossiter, Law of Publication Bans, Private Hearings and Sealing Orders (loose-leaf), s. 2.4.1). But concerns for privacy may not always coincide with a desire to avoid psychological harm, and may focus instead, for example, on protecting one's professional standing (see, e.g., R. v. Paterson(1998), 102 B.C.A.C. 200, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88). Similarly, there may be circumstances where the prospect of surrendering the personal information necessary to pursue a legal claim may deter an individual from bringing that claim (see S. v. Lamontagne, 2020 QCCA 663, at paras. 34-35 (CanLII)). In the same way, the prospect of surrendering sensitive commercial information would have impaired the conduct of the party's defence in *Sierra Club* (at para. 71), or could pressure an individual into settling a dispute prematurely (K. Eltis, *Courts, Litigants and the Digital Age* (2nd ed. 2016), at p. 86). But this does not necessarily mean that a public interest in privacy is wholly subsumed by such concerns. I note, for example, that access to justice concerns do not apply where the privacy interest to be protected is that of a third party to the litigation, such as a witness, whose access to the courts is not at stake and who has no choice available to terminate the litigation and avoid any privacy impacts (see, e.g., Himel v. Greenberg, 2010 ONSC 2325, 93 R.F.L. (6th) 357, at para. 58; see also Rossiter, s. 2.4.2(2)). In any event, the recognition of these related and valid important public interests does not answer the question as to whether aspects of privacy in and of themselves are important public interests and does not diminish the distinctive public character of privacy, considered above.

55 Indeed, the specific harms to privacy occasioned by open courts have not gone unnoticed nor been discounted as merely personal concerns. Courts have exercised their discretion to limit court openness in order to protect personal information from publicity, including to prevent the disclosure of sexual orientation (see, e.g., *Paterson*, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88), HIV status (see, e.g., A.B. v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2017 FC 629, at para. 9 (CanLII)) and a history of substance abuse and criminality (see, e.g., R. v. Pickton, 2010 BCSC 1198, at paras. 11 and 20 (CanLII)). This need to reconcile the public interest in privacy with the open court principle has been highlighted by this Court (see, e.g., *Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1353, per Wilson

J.). Writing extra-judicially, McLachlin C.J. explained that "[i]f we are serious about peoples' private lives, we must preserve a modicum of privacy. Equally, if we are serious about our justice system, we must have open courts. The question is how to reconcile these dual imperatives in a fair and principled way" ("Courts, Transparency and Public Confidence: To the Better Administration of Justice" (2003), 8 Deakin L. Rev. 1, at p. 4). In seeking that reconciliation, the question becomes whether the relevant dimension of privacy amounts to an important public interest that, when seriously at risk, would justify rebutting the strong presumption favouring open courts.

C. The Important Public Interest in Privacy Bears on the Protection of Individual Dignity

56 While the public importance of privacy has clearly been recognized by this Court in various settings, caution is required in deploying this concept in the test for discretionary limits on court openness. It is a matter of settled law that open court proceedings by their nature can be a source of discomfort and embarrassment and these intrusions on privacy are generally seen as of insufficient importance to overcome the presumption of openness. The Toronto Star has raised the concern that recognizing privacy as an important public interest will lower the burden for applicants because the privacy of litigants will, in some respects, always be at risk in court proceedings. I agree that the requirement to show a serious risk to an important interest is a key threshold component of the analysis that must be preserved in order to protect the open court principle. The recognition of a public interest in privacy could threaten the strong presumption of openness if privacy is cast too broadly without a view to its public character.

57 Privacy poses challenges in the test for discretionary limits on court openness because of the necessary dissemination of information that openness implies. It bears recalling that when Dickson J., as he then was, wrote in *MacIntyre* that "covertness is the exception and openness the rule", he was explicitly treating a privacy argument, returning to and dismissing the view, urged many times before, "that the 'privacy' of litigants *requires* that the public be excluded from court proceedings" (p. 185 (emphasis added)). Dickson J. rejected the view that personal privacy concerns require closed courtroom doors, explaining that "[a]s a general rule the sensibilities of the individuals involved are no basis for exclusion of the public from judicial proceedings" (p. 185).

58 Though writing before *Dagenais*, and therefore not commenting on the specific steps of the analysis as we now understand them, to my mind, Dickson J. was right to recognize that the open court principle brings necessary limits to the right to privacy. While individuals may have an expectation that information about them will not be revealed in judicial proceedings, the open court principle stands presumptively in opposition to that expectation. For example, in *Lac d'Amiante du Québec Ltée v. 2858-0702 Québec Inc.*, 2001 SCC 51, [2001] 2 S.C.R. 743, LeBel J. held that "a party who institutes a legal proceeding waives his or her right to privacy, at least in part" (para. 42). *MacIntyre* and cases like it recognize — in stating that openness is the rule and covertness the exception — that the right to privacy, however defined, in some measure gives way to the open court ideal. I share the view that the open court principle presumes that this limit on the right to privacy is justified.

59 The Toronto Star is therefore right to say that the privacy of individuals will very often be at some risk in court proceedings. Disputes between and concerning individuals that play out in open court necessarily reveal information that may have otherwise remained out of public view. Indeed, much like the Court of Appeal in this case, courts have explicitly adverted to this concern when concluding that mere inconvenience is insufficient to cross the initial threshold of the test (see, e.g., *3834310* Canada inc. v. Chamberland2004 CanLII 4122(Que. C.A.), at para. 30). Saying that any impact on individual privacy is sufficient to establish a serious risk to an important public interest for the purposes of the test for discretionary limits on court openness could render this initial requirement moot. Many cases would turn on the balancing at the proportionality stage. Such a development would amount to a departure from *Sierra Club*, which is the appropriate framework and one which must be preserved.

60 Further, recognizing an important interest in privacy generally could prove to be too open-ended and difficult to apply. Privacy is a complex and contextual concept (*Dagg*, at para. 67; see also B. McIsaac, K. Klein and S. Brown, *The Law of Privacy in Canada* (loose-leaf), vol. 1, at pp. 1-4; D. J. Solove, "Conceptualizing Privacy" (2002), 90 Cal. L. Rev. 1087, at p. 1090). Indeed, this Court has described the nature of limits of privacy as being in a state of "theoretical disarray" (R. v. Spencer, 2014 SCC 43, [2014] 2 S.C.R. 212, at para. 35). Much turns on the context in which privacy is invoked. I agree with the Toronto Star that a bald recognition of privacy as an important interest in the context of the test for discretionary limits on court openness,

as the Trustees advance here, would invite considerable confusion. It would be difficult for courts to measure a serious risk to such an interest because of its multi-faceted nature.

61 While I acknowledge these concerns have merit, I disagree that they require that privacy never be considered in determining whether there is a serious risk to an important public interest. I reach this conclusion for two reasons. First, the problem of privacy's complexity can be attenuated by focusing on the purpose underlying the public protection of privacy as it is relevant to the judicial process, in order to fix precisely on that aspect which transcends the interests of the parties in this context. That narrower dimension of privacy is the protection of dignity, an important public interest that can be threatened by open courts. Indeed, rather than attempting to apply a single unwieldy concept of privacy in all contexts, this Court has generally fixed on more specific privacy interests tailored to the particular situation (*Spencer*, at para. 35; *Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1362, per Wilson J.). That is what must be done here, with a view to identifying the public aspect of privacy that openness might inappropriately undermine.

62 Second, I recall that in order to pass the first stage of the analysis one must not simply invoke an important interest, but must also overcome the presumption of openness by showing a serious risk to this interest. The burden of showing a risk to such an interest on the facts of a given case constitutes the true initial threshold on the person seeking to restrict openness. It is never sufficient to plead a recognized important public interest on its own. The demonstration of a serious risk to this interest is still required. What is important is that the interest be accurately defined to capture only those aspects of privacy that engage legitimate public objectives such that showing a serious risk to that interest remains a high bar. In this way, courts can effectively maintain the guarantee of presumptive openness.

63 Specifically, in order to preserve the integrity of the open court principle, an important public interest concerned with the protection of dignity should be understood to be seriously at risk only in limited cases. Nothing here displaces the principle that covertness in court proceedings must be exceptional. Neither the sensibilities of individuals nor the fact that openness is disadvantageous, embarrassing or distressing to certain individuals will generally on their own warrant interference with court openness (*MacIntyre*, at p. 185; *New Brunswick*, at para. 40; *Williams*, at para. 30; Coltsfoot Publishing Ltd. v. Foster-Jacques, 2012 NSCA 83, 320 N.S.R. (2d) 166, at para. 97). These principles do not preclude recognizing the public character of a privacy interest as important when it is related to the protection of dignity. They merely require that a serious risk be shown to exist in respect of this interest in order to justify, exceptionally, a limit on openness, as is the case with any important public interest under *Sierra Club* . As Professors Sylvette Guillemard and Séverine Menétrey explain, [TRANSLATION] "[t]he confidentiality of the proceedings may be justified, in particular, in order to protect the parties' privacy .... However, the jurisprudence indicates that embarrassment or shame is not a sufficient reason to order that proceedings be held *in camera* or to impose a publication ban" (*Comprendre la procédure civile québécoise* (2nd ed. 2017), at p. 57).

64 How should the privacy interest at issue be understood as raising an important public interest relevant to the test for discretionary limits on court openness in this context? It is helpful to recall that the orders below were sought to limit access to documents and information in the court files. The Trustees' argument on this point focused squarely on the risk of immediate and widespread dissemination of the personally identifying and other sensitive information contained in the sealed materials by the Toronto Star. The Trustees submit that this dissemination would constitute an unwarranted intrusion into the privacy of the affected individuals beyond the upset they have already suffered as a result of the publicity associated with the death of the Shermans.

65 In my view, there is value in leaving individuals free to restrict when, how and to what extent highly sensitive information about them is communicated to others in the public sphere, because choosing how we present ourselves in public preserves our moral autonomy and dignity as individuals. This Court has had occasion to underscore the connection between the privacy interest engaged by open courts and the protection of dignity specifically. For example, in *Edmonton Journal*, Wilson J. noted that the impugned provision which would limit publication about matrimonial proceedings addressed "a somewhat different aspect of privacy, one more closely related to the protection of one's dignity ... namely the personal anguish and loss of dignity that may result from having embarrassing details of one's private life printed in the newspapers" (pp. 1363-64). In *Bragg*, as a further example, the protection of a young person's ability to control sensitive information was said to foster respect for "dignity, personal integrity and autonomy" (para. 18, citing Toronto Star Newspaper Ltd., at para. 44).

66 Consistent with this jurisprudence, I note by way of example that the Quebec legislature expressly highlighted the preservation of dignity when the *Sierra Club* test was codified in the Code of Civil Procedure, CQLR, c. C-25.01 ("C.C.P."), art. 12 (see also Ministère de la Justice, *Commentaires de la ministre de la Justice: Code de procédure civile*, *chapitre C-25.01* (2015), art. 12). Under art. 12 *C.C.P.*, a discretionary exception to the open court principle can be made by the court if "public order, in particular the preservation of the dignity of the persons involved or the protection of substantial and legitimate interests", requires it.

67 The concept of public order evidences flexibility analogous to the concept of an important public interest under *Sierra Club* yet it recalls that the interest invoked transcends, in importance and consequence, the purely subjective sensibilities of the persons affected. Like the "important public interest" that must be at serious risk to justify the sealing orders in the present appeal, public order encompasses a wide array of general principles and imperative norms identified by a legislature and the courts as fundamental to a given society (see Goulet v. Transamerica Life Insurance Co. of Canada, 2002 SCC 21, [2002] 1 S.C.R. 719, at paras. 42-44, citing *Godbout v. Longueuil (Ville de)*, [1995] R.J.Q. 2561 (C.A.), at p. 2570, aff'd [1997] 3 S.C.R. 844). As one Quebec judge wrote, referring to *Sierra Club* prior to the enactment of art. 12 *C.C.P.*, the interest must be understood as defined [TRANSLATION] "in terms of a public interest in confidentiality" (see *3834310 Canada inc.*, at para. 24, per Gendreau J.A. for the court of appeal). From among the various considerations that make up the concept of public order and other legitimate interests to which art. 12 *C.C.P.* alludes, it is significant that dignity, and not an untailored reference to either privacy, harm or access to justice, was given pride of place. Indeed, it is that narrow aspect of privacy considered to be a fundamental right that courts had fixed upon before the enactment of art. 12 *C.C.P.* — [TRANSLATION] "what is part of one's personal life, in short, what constitutes a minimum personal sphere" (*Godbout*, at p. 2569, per Baudouin J.A.; see also A. v. B.1990 CanLII 3132(Que. C.A.), at para. 20, per Rothman J.A.).

68 The "preservation of the dignity of the persons involved" is now consecrated as the archetypal public order interest in art. 12 *C.C.P.* It is the exemplar of the *Sierra Club* important public interest in confidentiality that stands as justification for an exception to openness (S. Rochette and J.-F. Côté, "Article 12", in L. Chamberland, ed., *Le grand collectif*: *Code de procédure civile — Commentaires et annotations* (5th ed. 2020), vol. 1, at p. 102; D. Ferland and B. Emery, *Précis de procédure civile du Québec* (6th ed. 2020), vol. 1, at para. 1-111). Dignity gives concrete expression to this public order interest because all of society has a stake in its preservation, notwithstanding its personal connections to the individuals concerned. This codification of *Sierra Club* 's notion of important public interest highlights the superordinate importance of human dignity and the appropriateness of limiting court openness on this basis as against an overbroad understanding of privacy that might be otherwise unsuitable to the open court context.

69 Consistent with this idea, understanding privacy as predicated on dignity has been advanced as useful in connection with challenges brought by digital communications (K. Eltis, "The Judicial System in the Digital Age: Revisiting the Relationship between Privacy and Accessibility in the Cyber Context" (2011), 56 McGill L.J. 289, at p. 314).

70 It is also significant, in my view, that the application judge in this case explicitly recognized, in response to the relevant arguments from the Trustees, an interest in "protecting the privacy *and dignity* of victims of crime and their loved ones" (para. 23 (emphasis added)). This elucidates that the central concern for the affected individuals on this point is not merely protecting their privacy for its own sake but privacy where it coincides with the public character of the dignity interests of these individuals.

71 Violations of privacy that cause a loss of control over fundamental personal information about oneself are damaging to dignity because they erode one's ability to present aspects of oneself to others in a selective manner (D. Matheson, "Dignity and Selective Self-Presentation", in I. Kerr, V. Steeves and C. Lucock, eds., *Lessons from the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy and Identity in a Networked Society* (2009), 319, at pp. 327-28; L. M. Austin, "Re-reading Westin" (2019), 20 *Theor. Inq. L.* 53, at pp. 66-68; Eltis (2016), at p. 13). Dignity, used in this context, is a social concept that involves presenting core aspects of oneself to others in a considered and controlled manner (see generally Matheson, at pp. 327-28; Austin, at pp. 66-68). Dignity is eroded where individuals lose control over this core identity-giving information about themselves, because a highly sensitive aspect of who they are that they did not consciously decide to share is now available to others and may shape how they are seen

in public. This was even alluded to by La Forest J., dissenting but not on this point, in *Dagg*, where he referred to privacy as "[a]n expression of an individual's unique personality or personhood" (para. 65).

72 Where dignity is impaired, the impact on the individual is not theoretical but could engender real human consequences, including psychological distress (see generally Bragg, at para. 23). La Forest J., concurring, observed in *Dyment* that privacy is essential to the well-being of individuals (p. 427). Viewed in this way, a privacy interest, where it shields the core information associated with dignity necessary to individual well-being, begins to look much like the physical safety interest also raised in this case, the important and public nature of which is neither debated, nor, in my view, seriously debatable. The administration of justice suffers when the operation of courts threatens physical well-being because a responsible court system is attuned to the physical harm it inflicts on individuals and works to avoid such effects. Similarly, in my view, a responsible court must be attuned and responsive to the harm it causes to other core elements of individual well-being, including individual dignity. This parallel helps to understand dignity as a more limited dimension of privacy relevant as an important public interest in the open court context.

73 I am accordingly of the view that protecting individuals from the threat to their dignity that arises when information revealing core aspects of their private lives is disseminated through open court proceedings is an important public interest for the purposes of the test.

74 Focusing on the underlying value of privacy in protecting individual dignity from the exposure of private information in open court overcomes the criticisms that privacy will always be at risk in open court proceedings and is theoretically complex. Openness brings intrusions on personal privacy in virtually all cases, but dignity as a public interest in protecting an individual's core sensibility is more rarely in play. Specifically, and consistent with the cautious approach to the recognition of important public interests, this privacy interest, while determined in reference to the broader factual setting, will be at serious risk only where the sensitivity of the information strikes at the subject's more intimate self.

75 If the interest is ultimately about safeguarding a person's dignity, that interest will be undermined when the information reveals something sensitive about them as an individual, as opposed to generic information that reveals little if anything about who they are as a person. Therefore the information that will be revealed by court openness must consist of intimate or personal details about an individual — what this Court has described in its jurisprudence on s. 8 of the Charter as the "biographical core" — if a serious risk to an important public interest is to be recognized in this context (*R. v. Plant*, [1993] 3 S.C.R. 281, at p. 293; R. v. Tessling, 2004 SCC 67, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 432, at para. 60; *R. v. Cole*, 2012 SCC 53, [2012] 3 S.C.R. 34, at para. 46). Dignity transcends personal inconvenience by reason of the highly sensitive nature of the information that might be revealed. This Court in *Cole* drew a similar line between the sensitivity of personal information and the public interest in protecting that information in reference to the biographical core. It held that "reasonable and informed Canadians" would be more willing to recognize the existence of a privacy interest where the relevant information cuts to the "biographical core" or, "[p]ut another way, the more personal and confidential the information" (para. 46). The presumption of openness means that mere discomfort associated with lesser intrusions of privacy will generally be tolerated. But there is a public interest in ensuring that openness does not unduly entail the dissemination of this core information that threatens dignity — even if it is "personal" to the affected person.

76 The test for discretionary limits on court openness imposes on the applicant the burden to show that the important public interest is at serious risk. Recognizing that privacy, understood in reference to dignity, is only at serious risk where the information in the court file is sufficiently sensitive erects a threshold consistent with the presumption of openness. This threshold is fact specific. It addresses the concern, noted above, that personal information can frequently be found in court files and yet finding this sufficient to pass the serious risk threshold in every case would undermine the structure of the test. By requiring the applicant to demonstrate the sensitivity of the information as a necessary condition to the finding of a serious risk to this interest, the scope of the interest is limited to only those cases where the rationale for not revealing core aspects of a person's private life, namely protecting individual dignity, is most actively engaged.

77 There is no need here to provide an exhaustive catalogue of the range of sensitive personal information that, if exposed, could give rise to a serious risk. It is enough to say that courts have demonstrated a willingness to recognize the sensitivity of information related to stigmatized medical conditions (see, e.g., *A.B.*, at para. 9), stigmatized work (see, e.g., Work Safe

Twerk Safe v. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario, 2021 ONSC 1100, at para. 28 (CanLII)), sexual orientation (see, e.g., *Paterson*, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88), and subjection to sexual assault or harassment (see, e.g., Fedeli v. Brown, 2020 ONSC 994, at para. 9 (CanLII)). I would also note the submission of the intervener the Income Security Advocacy Centre, that detailed information about family structure and work history could in some circumstances constitute sensitive information. The question in every case is whether the information reveals something intimate and personal about the individual, their lifestyle or their experiences.

78 I pause here to note that I refer to cases on s. 8 of the Charter above for the limited purpose of providing insight into types of information that are more or less personal and therefore deserving of public protection. If the impact on dignity as a result of disclosure is to be accurately measured, it is critical that the analysis differentiate between information in this way. Helpfully, one factor in determining whether an applicant's subjective expectation of privacy is objectively reasonable in the s. 8 jurisprudence focuses on the degree to which information is private (see, e.g., *R. v.* Marakah, 2017 SCC 59, [2017] 2 S.C.R. 608, at para. 31; *Cole*, at paras. 44-46). But while these decisions may assist for this limited purpose, this is not to say that the remainder of the s. 8 analysis has any relevance to the application of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. For example, asking what the Trustees' reasonable expectation of privacy was here could invite a circular analysis of whether they reasonably expected their court files to be open to the public or whether they reasonably expected to be successful in having them sealed. Therefore, it is only for the limited purpose described above that the s. 8 jurisprudence is useful.

79 In cases where the information is sufficiently sensitive to strike at an individual's biographical core, a court must then ask whether a serious risk to the interest is made out in the full factual context of the case. While this is obviously a fact-specific determination, some general observations may be made here to guide this assessment.

80 I note that the seriousness of the risk may be affected by the extent to which information would be disseminated without an exception to the open court principle. If the applicant raises a risk that the personal information will come to be known by a large segment of the public in the absence of an order, this is a plainly more serious risk than if the result will be that a handful of people become aware of the same information, all else being equal. In the past, the requirement that one be physically present to acquire information in open court or from a court record meant that information was, to some extent, protected because it was "practically obscure" (D. S. Ardia, “Privacy and Court Records: Online Access and the Loss of Practical Obscurity”(2017), 4 U. Ill. L. Rev. 1385, at p. 1396). However, today, courts should be sensitive to the information technology context, which has increased the ease with which information can be communicated and cross-referenced (see Bailey and Burkell, at pp. 169-70; Ardia, at pp. 1450-51). In this context, it may well be difficult for courts to be sure that information will not be broadly disseminated in the absence of an order.

81 It will be appropriate, of course, to consider the extent to which information is already in the public domain. If court openness will simply make available what is already broadly and easily accessible, it will be difficult to show that revealing the information in open court will actually result in a meaningful loss of that aspect of privacy relating to the dignity interest to which I refer here. However, just because information is already accessible to some segment of the public does not mean that making it available through the court process will not exacerbate the risk to privacy. Privacy is not a binary concept, that is, information is not simply either private or public, especially because, by reason of technology in particular, absolute confidentiality is best thought of as elusive (see generally *R. v.* Quesnelle, 2014 SCC 46, [2014] 2 S.C.R. 390, at para. 37; *UFCW*, at para. 27). The fact that certain information is already available somewhere in the public sphere does not preclude further harm to the privacy interest by additional dissemination, particularly if the feared dissemination of highly sensitive information is broader or more easily accessible (see generally Solove, at p. 1152; Ardia, at p. 1393-94; E. Paton-Simpson, "Privacy and the Reasonable Paranoid: The Protection of Privacy in Public Places” (2000), 50 U.T.L.J. 305, at p. 346).

82 Further, the seriousness of the risk is also affected by the probability that the dissemination the applicant suggests will occur actually occurs. I hasten to say that implicit in the notion of risk is that the applicant need not establish that the feared dissemination will certainly occur. However, the risk to the privacy interest related to the protection of dignity will be more serious the more likely it is that the information will be disseminated. While decided in a different context, this Court has held that the magnitude of risk is a product of both the gravity of the feared harm and its probability (R. v. Mabior, 2012 SCC 47, [2012] 2 S.C.R. 584, at para. 86).

83 That said, the likelihood that an individual's highly sensitive personal information will be disseminated in the absence of privacy protection will be difficult to quantify precisely. It is best to note as well that probability in this context need not be identified in mathematical or numerical terms. Rather, courts may merely discern probability in light of the totality of the circumstances and balance this one factor alongside other relevant factors.

84 Finally, and as discussed above, individual sensitivities alone, even if they can be notionally associated with "privacy", are generally insufficient to justify a restriction on court openness where they do not rise above those inconveniences and discomforts that are inherent to court openness (*MacIntyre*, at p. 185). An applicant will only be able to establish that the risk is sufficient to justify a limit on openness in exceptional cases, where the threatened loss of control over information about oneself is so fundamental that it strikes meaningfully at individual dignity. These circumstances engage "social values of superordinate importance" beyond the more ordinary intrusions inherent to participating in the judicial process that Dickson J. acknowledged could justify curtailing public openness (pp. 186-87).

85 To summarize, the important public interest in privacy, as understood in the context of the limits on court openness, is aimed at allowing individuals to preserve control over their core identity in the public sphere to the extent necessary to preserve their dignity. The public has a stake in openness, to be sure, but it also has an interest in the preservation of dignity: the administration of justice requires that where dignity is threatened in this way, measures be taken to accommodate this privacy concern. Although measured by reference to the facts of each case, the risk to this interest will be serious only where the information that would be disseminated as a result of court openness is sufficiently sensitive such that openness can be shown to meaningfully strike at the individual's biographical core in a manner that threatens their integrity. Recognizing this interest is consistent with this Court's emphasis on the importance of privacy and the underlying value of individual dignity, but is also tailored to preserve the strong presumption of openness.

D. The Trustees Have Failed to Establish a Serious Risk to an Important Public Interest

86 As *Sierra Club* made plain, a discretionary order limiting court openness can only be made where there is a serious risk to an important public interest. The arguments on this appeal concerned whether privacy is an important public interest and whether the facts here disclose the existence of serious risks to privacy and safety. While the broad privacy interest invoked by the Trustees cannot be relied on to justify a limit on openness, the narrower concept of privacy understood in relation to dignity is an important public interest for the purposes of the test. I also recognize that a risk to physical safety is an important public interest, a point on which there is no dispute here. Accordingly, the relevant question at the first step is whether there is a serious risk to one or both of these interests. For reasons that follow, the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to either. This alone is sufficient to conclude that the sealing orders should not have been issued.

(1) The Risk to Privacy Alleged in this Case Is Not Serious

87 As I have said, the important public interest in privacy must be understood as one tailored to the protection of individual dignity and not the broadly defined interest the Trustees have asked this Court to recognize. In order to establish a serious risk to this interest, the information in the court files about which the Trustees are concerned must be sufficiently sensitive in that it strikes at the biographical core of the affected individuals. If it is not, there is no serious risk that would justify an exception to openness. If it is, the question becomes whether a serious risk is made out in light of the facts of this case.

88 The application judge never explicitly identified a serious risk to the privacy interest he identified but, to the extent he implicitly reached this conclusion, I respectfully do not share his view. His finding was limited to the observation that "[t]he degree of intrusion on that privacy and dignity [i.e., that of the victims and their loved ones] has already been extreme and, I am sure, excruciating" (para. 23). But the intense scrutiny faced by the Shermans up to the time of the application is only part of the equation. As the sealing orders can only protect against the disclosure of the information in these court files relating to probate, the application judge was required to consider the sensitivity of the specific information they contained. He made no such measure. His conclusion about the seriousness of the risk then focused entirely on the risk of physical harm, with no indication that he found that the Trustees met their burden as to the serious risk to the privacy interest. Said very respectfully and with the

knowledge that the application judge did not have the benefit of the above framework, the failure to assess the sensitivity of the information constituted a failure to consider a required element of the legal test. This warranted intervention on appeal.

89 Applying the appropriate framework to the facts of this case, I conclude that the risk to the important public interest in the affected individuals' privacy, as I have defined it above in reference to dignity, is not serious. The information the Trustees seek to protect is not highly sensitive and this alone is sufficient to conclude that there is no serious risk to the important public interest in privacy so defined.

90 There is little controversy in this case about the likelihood and extent of dissemination of the information contained in the estate files. There is near certainty that the Toronto Star will publish at least some aspects of the estate files if it is provided access. Given the breadth of the audience of its media organization, and the high-profile nature of the events surrounding the death of the Shermans, I have no difficulty in concluding that the affected individuals would lose control over this information to a significant extent should the files be open.

91 With regard to the sensitivity of the information, however, the information contained in these files does not reveal anything particularly private about the affected individuals. What would be revealed might well cause inconvenience and perhaps embarrassment, but it has not been shown that it would strike at their biographical core in a way that would undermine their control over the expression of their identities. Their privacy would be troubled, to be sure, but the relevant privacy interest bearing on the dignity of the affected persons has not been shown to be at serious risk. At its highest, the information in these files will reveal something about the relationship between the deceased and the affected individuals, in that it may reveal to whom the deceased entrusted the administration of their estates and those who they wished or were deemed to wish to be beneficiaries of their property at death. It may also reveal some basic personal information, such as addresses. Some of the beneficiaries might well, it may fairly be presumed, bear family names other than Sherman. I am mindful that the deaths are being investigated as homicides by the Toronto Police Service. However, even in this context, none of this information provides significant insight into who they are as individuals, nor would it provoke a fundamental change in their ability to control how they are perceived by others. The fact of being linked through estate documents to victims of an unsolved murder is not in itself highly sensitive. It may be the source of discomfort but has not been shown to constitute an affront to dignity in that it does not probe deeply into the biographical core of these individuals. As a result, the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest as required by *Sierra Club* .

92 The fact that some of the affected individuals may be minors is also insufficient to cross the seriousness threshold. While the law recognizes that minors are especially vulnerable to intrusions of privacy (see Bragg, at para. 17), the mere fact that information concerns minors does not displace the generally applicable analysis (see, e.g., Bragg, at para. 11). Even taking into account the increased vulnerability of minors who may be affected individuals in the probate files, there is no evidence that they would lose control of information about themselves that reveals something close to the core of their identities. Merely associating the beneficiaries or trustees with the Shermans' unexplained deaths is not enough to constitute a serious risk to the identified important public interest in privacy, defined in reference to dignity.

93 Further, while the intense media scrutiny on the family following the deaths suggests that the information would likely be widely disseminated, it is not in itself indicative of the sensitivity of the information contained in the probate files.

94 Showing that the information that would be revealed by court openness is sufficiently sensitive and private such that it goes to the biographical core of the affected individual is a necessary prerequisite to showing a serious risk to the relevant public interest aspect of privacy. The Trustees did not advance any specific reason why the contents of these files are more sensitive than they may seem at first glance. When asserting a privacy risk, it is essential to show not only that information about individuals will escape the control of the person concerned — which will be true in every case — but that this particular information concerns who the individuals are as people in a manner that undermines their dignity. This the Trustees have not done.

95 Therefore, while some of the material in the court files may well be broadly disseminated, the nature of the information has not been shown to give rise to a serious risk to the important public interest in privacy, as appropriately defined in this context in reference to dignity. For that reason alone, I conclude that the Trustees have failed to show a serious risk to this interest.

(2) The Risk to Physical Safety Alleged in this Case is Not Serious

96 Unlike the privacy interest raised in this case, there was no controversy that there is an important public interest in protecting individuals from physical harm. It is worth underscoring that the application judge correctly treated the protection from physical harm as a distinct important interest from that of the protection of privacy and found that this risk of harm was "foreseeable" and "grave" (paras. 22-24). The issue is whether the Trustees have established a serious risk to this interest for the purpose of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. The application judge observed that it would have been preferable to include objective evidence of the seriousness of the risk from the police service conducting the homicide investigation. He nevertheless concluded there was sufficient proof of risk to the physical safety of the affected individuals to meet the test. The Court of Appeal says that was a misreading of the evidence, and the Toronto Star agrees that the application judge's conclusion as to the existence of a serious risk to safety was mere speculation.

97 At the outset, I note that direct evidence is not necessarily required to establish a serious risk to an important interest. This Court has held that it is possible to identify objectively discernable harm on the basis of logical inferences (*Bragg*, at paras. 15-16). But this process of inferential reasoning is not a licence to engage in impermissible speculation. An inference must still be grounded in objective circumstantial facts that reasonably allow the finding to be made inferentially. Where the inference cannot reasonably be drawn from the circumstances, it amounts to speculation (*R. v.* Chanmany, 2016 ONCA 576, 352 O.A.C. 121, at para. 45).

98 As the Trustees correctly argue, it is not just the probability of the feared harm, but also the gravity of the harm itself that is relevant to the assessment of serious risk. Where the feared harm is particularly serious, the probability that this harm materialize need not be shown to be likely, but must still be more than negligible, fanciful or speculative. The question is ultimately whether this record allowed the application judge to objectively discern a serious risk of physical harm.

99 This conclusion was not open to the application judge on this record. There is no dispute that the feared physical harm is grave. I agree with the Toronto Star, however, that the probability of this harm occurring was speculative. The application judge's conclusion as to the seriousness of the risk of physical harm was grounded on what he called "the degree of mystery that persists regarding both the perpetrator and the motives" associated with the deaths of the Shermans and his supposition that this motive might be "transported" to the trustees and beneficiaries (para. 5; see also paras. 19 and 23). The further step in reasoning that the unsealed estate files would lead to the perpetrator's next crime, to be visited upon someone mentioned in the files, is based on speculation, not the available affidavit evidence, and cannot be said to be a proper inference or some kind of objectively discerned harm or risk thereof. If that were the case, the estate files of every victim of an unsolved murder would pass the initial threshold of the test for a sealing order.

100 Further, I recall that what is at issue here is not whether the affected individuals face a safety risk in general, but rather whether they face such a risk as a result of the openness of these court files. In light of the contents of these files, the Trustees had to point to some further reason why the risk posed by this information becoming publicly available was more than negligible.

101 The speculative character of the chain of reasoning leading to the conclusion that a serious risk of physical harm exists in this case is underlined by differences between these facts and those cases relied on by the Trustees. In *X. v. Y.*, 2011 BCSC 943, 21 B.C.L.R. (5th) 410, the risk of physical harm was inferred on the basis that the plaintiff was a police officer who had investigated "cases involving gang violence and dangerous firearms" and wrote sentencing reports for such offenders which identified him by full name (para. 6). In *R. v. Esseghaier*, 2017 ONCA 970, 356 C.C.C. (3d) 455, Watt J.A. considered it "self-evident" that the disclosure of identifiers of an undercover operative working in counter-terrorism would compromise the safety of the operative (para. 41). In both cases, the danger flowed from facts establishing that the applicants were in antagonistic relationships with alleged criminal or terrorist organizations. But in this case, the Trustees asked the application judge to infer not only the fact that harm would befall the affected individuals, but also that a person or persons exist who wish to harm them. To infer all this on the basis of the Shermans' deaths and the association of the affected individuals with the deceased is not reasonably possible on this record. It is not a reasonable inference but, as the Court of Appeal noted, a conclusion resting on speculation.

102 Were the mere assertion of grave physical harm sufficient to show a serious risk to an important interest, there would be no meaningful threshold in the analysis. Instead, the test requires the serious risk asserted to be well grounded in the record or the circumstances of the particular case (*Sierra Club*, at para. 54; *Bragg*, at para. 15). This contributes to maintaining the strong presumption of openness.

103 Again, in other cases, circumstantial facts may allow a court to infer the existence of a serious risk of physical harm. Applicants do not necessarily need to retain experts who will attest to the physical or psychological risk related to the disclosure. But on this record, the bare assertion that such a risk exists fails to meet the threshold necessary to establish a serious risk of physical harm. The application judge's conclusion to the contrary was an error warranting the intervention of the Court of Appeal.

E. There Would Be Additional Barriers to a Sealing Order on the Basis of the Alleged Risk to Privacy

104 While not necessary to dispose of the appeal, it bears mention that the Trustees would have faced additional barriers in seeking the sealing orders on the basis of the privacy interest they advanced. I recall that to meet the test for discretionary limits on court openness, a person must show, in addition to a serious risk to an important interest, that the particular order sought is necessary to address the risk and that the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects as a matter of proportionality (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53).

105 Even if the Trustees had succeeded in showing a serious risk to the privacy interest they assert, a publication ban — less constraining on openness than the sealing orders — would have likely been sufficient as a reasonable alternative to prevent this risk. The condition that the order be necessary requires the court to consider whether there are alternatives to the order sought and to restrict the order as much as reasonably possible to prevent the serious risk (*Sierra Club*, at para. 57). An order imposing a publication ban could restrict the dissemination of personal information to only those persons consulting the court record for themselves and prohibit those individuals from spreading the information any further. As I have noted, the likelihood and extent of dissemination may be relevant factors in determining the seriousness of a risk to privacy in this context. While the Toronto Star would be able to consult the files subject to a publication ban, for example, which may assist it in its investigations, it would not be able to publish and thereby broadly disseminate the contents of the files. A publication ban would seem to protect against this latter harm, which has been the focus of the Trustees' argument, while allowing some access to the file, which is not possible under the sealing orders. Therefore, even if a serious risk to the privacy interest had been made out, it would likely not have justified a sealing order, because a less onerous order would have likely been sufficient to mitigate this risk effectively. I hasten to add, however, that a publication ban is not available here since, as noted, the seriousness of the risk to the privacy interest at play has not been made out.

106 Further, the Trustees would have had to show that the benefits of any order necessary to protect from a serious risk to the important public interest outweighed the harmful effects of the order, including the negative impact on the open court principle (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53). In balancing the privacy interests against the open court principle, it is important to consider whether the information the order seeks to protect is peripheral or central to the judicial process (paras. 78 and 86; *Bragg*, at paras. 28-29). There will doubtless be cases where the information that poses a serious risk to privacy, bearing as it does on individual dignity, will be central to the case. But the interest in important and legally relevant information being aired in open court may well overcome any concern for the privacy interests in that same information. This contextual balancing, informed by the importance of the open court principle, presents a final barrier to those seeking a discretionary limit on court openness for the purposes of privacy protection.

VI. Conclusion

107 The conclusion that the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest ends the analysis. In such circumstances, the Trustees are not entitled to any discretionary order limiting the open court principle, including the sealing orders they initially obtained. The Court of Appeal rightly concluded that there was no basis for asking for redactions because the Trustees had failed at this stage of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. This is dispositive of the

appeal. The decision to set aside the sealing orders rendered by the application judge should be affirmed. Given that I propose to dismiss the appeal on the existing record, I would dismiss the Toronto Star's motion for new evidence as being moot.

108 For the foregoing reasons, I would dismiss the appeal. The Toronto Star requests no costs given the important public issues in dispute. As such, there will be no order as to costs.

Appeal dismissed.

Pourvoi rejeté.

Footnotes

1 As noted in the title of proceedings, the appellants in this matter have been referred to consistently as the "Estate of Bernard Sherman and Trustees of the Estate and Estate of Honey Sherman and Trustees of the Estate." In these reasons the appellants are referred to throughout as the "Trustees" for convenience.

2 The use of "Toronto Star" as a collective term referring to both respondents should not be taken to suggest that only Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. is participating in this appeal. Mr. Donovan is the only respondent to have been a party throughout. Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was a party in first instance, but was removed as a party on consent at the Court of Appeal. By order of Karakatsanis J. dated March 25, 2020, Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was added as a respondent in this Court.

3 At the time of writing the House of Commons is considering a bill that would replace part one of *PIPEDA*: Bill C-11, *An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts*, 2nd Sess., 43rd Parl., 2020.

TAB 13

2012 ABQB 412
Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

Romspen Investment Corp. v. Hargate Properties Inc.

2012 CarswellAlta 1101, 2012 ABQB 412, [2012] A.W.L.D. 3821, [2012] A.W.L.D. 3824, [2012] A.J. No. 667, 218 A.C.W.S. (3d) 838, 99 C.B.R. (5th) 319

Romspen Investment Corporation Plaintiff and Hargate Properties Inc., 1410973 Alberta Ltd., Voipus Canada Ltd., 1333183 Alberta Ltd., Bellavera Green Condominium Corp. and Kevyn Ronald Frederick Also Known As Kevyn Frederick, Kevin Frederic, Kevyn Sheldon Frederick or Kevin Frederick and Chateau Lacombe Capital Partners Ltd. Defendants

Donald Lee J.

Heard: June 14, 2012
Judgment: June 22, 2012
Docket: Edmonton 1103-17749

Counsel: Schuyler V. Wensel, Q.C. for Plaintiff
Lindsay Miller for Second Mortgagee, Allied Hospitalities Services Inc.
Scott Stevens for Receiver, D. Manning & Associates Inc.
Russel A. Rimer for BDO Canada Ltd.
Atul Omkar for Dr. Singh
Lyle Brookes for Victory Christian Centre Inc.

***Donald Lee J.*:**

I. Background

1 This is an application by the Receiver, D. Manning & Associates Inc. for a sealing order with respect to the Receiver's report dated June 4, 2012; as well as for directions with respect to the disbursement of certain funds recovered by the Receiver from the accounts of Chateau Lacombe Capital Partners Ltd. ["CLCPL"]. There is also an application by the primary creditor for a one day redemption order in a related foreclosure application.

2 The Receiver's report dated June 4, 2012 provides details with respect to the ongoing sale process of the Chateau Lacombe Hotel in downtown Edmonton, including the realtors marketing reports and appraisal of the hotel. The Receiver submits that the protection of the commercial interest herein forms a proper basis for the issuance of a sealing order as there is an ongoing sales process. In the absence of the sealing order with respect to the appraisal and marketing reports, it is submitted that there is a serious risk that the integrity of the sales process will be adversely affected and that all parties involved in this matter will suffer financially.

3 The primary creditor in this matter, Romspen Investment Corporation ("Romspen"), supports the Receiver's application for a sealing order. Romspen is owed approximately 35 million dollars presently, and submits that the sealing order is required to protect the confidentiality of the sales process. The second mortgagee, Allied Hospitality Services Inc., ["Allied"] also supports the sealing order application.

4 Opposing the sealing order, however, are counsel for Dr. Singh who has claimed a first mortgage on properties known as the "Church lands." The priority of Dr. Singh's claim as first mortgagee on the Church lands is in dispute as Romspen received an apparent postponement in it's favor from Dr. Singh when it financed the hotel purchase in 2010. These lands consist of 20

acres on Ellerslie Road located in a rapidly developing residential suburban area of Edmonton which the principal of CLCPL, Kevin Frederick, had purchased from the Victory Christian Church in August 2008, for 18 million dollars.

5 Counsel for the Victory Christian Church also opposes the sealing order request, arguing that concept of "Marshalling" could be applicable with respect to the Church lands given that the Church has now received an assignment of the 12 million dollar vendor take-back mortgage given by Kevin Frederick in it's favor at the time of the 2008 purchase by his numbered company. The Victory Christian Church advises that at the present time as a result of the current developments in the case, the 20 acres of prime Edmonton real estate sold for 18 million dollars has resulted in no realisable funds to the Church. The Church is now also the subject of a potential removal proceeding from the lands that it uses for its worship services because of Romspen's present foreclosure application.

6 Counsel for Dr. Singh, a retired dentist, and the Church submit that they must have access to the marketing and appraisal reports that the Receiver, Romspen, and Allied Properties already have with respect to the Chateau Lacombe Hotel site. Counsel for Dr. Singh and the Church submit that it is only through their receipt of these marketing reports and appraisal that they will be able to determine that the best price is being obtained for the Chateau Lacombe Hotel site.

7 The present appraisal comes in at a price well below that which is owed to the creditors, so all counsel supporting the granting of the sealing order argue that no useful purpose would be served in disclosing this information any further. They further submit that it is inevitable, and in fact, they wish the Court to direct as part of another application presently before me that a redemption order for the Church property be issued setting the redemption period at one day.

8 Counsel for Dr. Singh, the first mortgagee on the Church lands, points out that the City of Edmonton's current valuation of the Chateau Lacombe Hotel for municipal tax purposes is approximately 32 million dollars, and at the time the hotel was purchased in 2010 it was 38 million dollars. Based on three appraisals done in 2010, the Chateau Lacombe Hotel property was worth between 57 to 70 million dollars. The property was purchased in October 2010 for 47.8 million dollars by Mr. Frederick's company, Hargate Properties Inc. ["Hargate"], with Romspen advancing 32 million dollars, a take-back second mortgage by Allied of 11+ million dollars, and Kevin Frederick's 6 million dollar contribution. The 6 million dollars appears to have come from Dr. Singh's first mortgage loan secured on the Church lands. The Church's 12 million dollar vendor take-back mortgage on its lands from Mr. Frederick has been defaulted on and it has been assigned back to the Church, although curiously, the purchase price for the Church lands was listed at Land Titles as 10 million dollars. The Marshalling concept as I understand it involves certain other Leduc properties owned by Kevin Frederick that are also under foreclosure currently.

9 The argument then of counsel for Dr. Singh and for the Church is that the Chateau Lacombe Hotel property could or should have a value far greater than intimated by the Receiver presently, and if there are proper marketing efforts, all creditors and primarily Romspen would benefit. However, in order to ascertain the validity of the present appraisal and marketing efforts, counsel for Dr. Singh and for the Church need access to the most current reports, which to date has been refused by the Receiver

II. Conclusion

10 All parties agree that the relevant case law is found in the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, [2002] S.C.J. No. 42, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.) at paragraph 53 which reads as follows:

> A confidentiality order under Rule 151 should only be grated when:
>
> > (a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and
> >
> > (b) the salutary effect of the confidentiality order, including the effect on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

11 The commercial interest as stated in *Sierra Club* in presumed in the present case, but as the Supreme Court of Canada also stated at paragraph 57 "reasonably alternative measures" requires the judge to consider whether reasonable alternatives to the confidentiality order are available as well as to restrict the order as much as reasonably possible while preserving the commercial interest in question. Counsel for the Receiver is not prepared to release the marketing and appraisals even to counsel for Dr. Singh and for the church on any basis.

12 I conclude that the Receiver has already released the marketing reports and the appraisal to counsel for Rompsen, the primary creditor, and to counsel for the second mortgagee, Allied, with no adverse consequences, to the sales process as they are entitled to receive that information on a confidential basis. I conclude that counsel for Dr. Singh and for the Church should also be allowed to see those reports on the same confidential basis, and I am satisfied that there will be no adverse consequences as a result notwithstanding the objections of counsel for the Receiver, Romspen and Allied Properties. It is in everyone's financial interest amongst this group including Dr. Singh and the Church to see that the Chateau Lacombe Hotel property is sold for the most monies. The release of the requested sales process and appraisal reports is no reflection that there is anything deficient in the present sales efforts which appear to have been conducted quite efficiently. It is only a recognition of the legitimate financial interest in this process of Dr. Singh and the Church.

13 The application to Seal is granted with the exception that the documents sealed, and future related documents, will be released to counsel for Dr. Singh and for the Church confidentially, in addition to them being released to Romspen and Allied. Pending the receipt of these reports and appraisal, including the results of the current final June 22 bidding round, the application for a one day redemption period on the Church lands pursuant to the foreclosure application presently before me, will be adjourned to July 5, 2012, at which point it will be considered.

III. The CLCPL Application

14 With respect to counsel for BDO Canada's issues regarding the Receiver's request to distribute all of the remaining funds in that company, I understand BDO's objection to be that the Canada Revenue Agency ["CRA"] has a secured priority claims under the Wage Earning Protection Program ("WEPP"), and with respect to certain unremitted employee source deductions.

15 Hargate Properties Inc. purchased the hotel from the previous owner, Chateau Lacombe Limited Partnership in October 2010, financing the purchase in part by a 32 million dollar loan from Romspen. The assets purchased by Hargate formed a substantial part of the security taken by Romspen for the loan. Additional security came from the allegedly improper/fraudulent postponement of the first mortgage on the Church lands that Dr. Singh had advanced to a numbered company controlled by Kevin Frederick. Concurrent with Hargate's acquisition of the assets of the Chateau Lacombe Hotel, unbeknownst to Romspen even at the time I granted the original receivership order to Romspen, in apparent contradiction in the terms of Romspen's security documentation, CLCPL began operating the Chateau Lacombe Hotel.

16 There were no formal agreements between Hargate and CLCPL with respect to the buyers use of Hargate's assets. CLCPL did not render any payments to Hargate for the use of the assets. CLCPL did not appear to have had any assets of its own, yet it received and retained all the revenues generated through the operation of the hotel (with the exception of some of the revenues generated under a lease between Hargate and ImPark in relationship to the hotel's parkade.) Kevin Frederick was the principal and operating mind of both Hargate and CLCPL at all material times, and it is alleged that Mr. Frederick converted at least some of the revenues generated by the hotel to his own use.

17 I have considered the concerns of the bankruptcy trustee of CLCPL BDO Canada Ltd. and I am satisfied that the CRA has properly been notified with respect to any priorities it may have in this matter. From the funds held by the Receiver of $632,110.26, there will be a $120,000 hold-back with respect to any protential WEPP claim made by the employees of CLCPL, although non-union employees were terminated by the Receiver upon his appointment. The Receiver has paid all outstanding wages since the date of their appointment, and has continued to pay vacation pay as it becomes due, payable to non-union and union employees. The hold back will also cover any costs of the Receiver-Manager prior to discharge. The Receiver shall pay $5,985.57 to the CRA in satisfaction of it's secured claim for unremitted source deductions.

18 Additionally, the CRA shall provide the Receiver with notice of any opposition to the payout described above within 14 days of service of these directions.

19 If the CRA does not provide notice to the Receiver within 14 days of service of these directions, then it shall be deemed forever barred from making or enforcing any claim, interest or right of any nature or kind whatsoever, whether arising by statute, at law or in equity (a "Claim") to the Funds, as well as any Claim(s) arising out of or relating to the Funds or the source of the Funds, and all such Claim(s) shall be forever extinguished, barred and released.

Application granted in part.

TAB 14

2021 ONSC 7630
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Just Energy Group Inc. et al.

2021 CarswellOnt 17465, 2021 ONSC 7630, 339 A.C.W.S. (3d) 303, 95 C.B.R. (6th) 264

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, AS AMENDED

IN THE MATTER OF A PLAN OF COMPROMISE OR ARRANGEMENT OF JUST ENERGY GROUP INC., JUST ENERGY CORP., ONTARIO ENERGY COMMODITIES INC., UNIVERSAL ENERGY CORPORATION, JUST ENERGY FINANCE CANADA ULC, HUDSON ENERGY CANADA CORP., JUST MANAGEMENT CORP., JUST ENERGY FINANCE HOLDING INC., 11929747 CANADA INC., 12175592 CANADA INC., JE SERVICES HOLDCO I INC., JE SERVICES HOLDCO II INC., 8704104 CANADA INC., JUST ENERGY ADVANCED SOLUTIONS CORP., JUST ENERGY (U.S.) CORP., JUST ENERGY ILLINOIS CORP., JUST ENERGY INDIANA CORP., JUST ENERGY MASSACHUSETTS CORP., JUST ENERGY NEW YORK CORP., JUST ENERGY TEXAS I CORP., JUST ENERGY, LLC, JUST ENERGY PENNSYLVANIA CORP., JUST ENERGY MICHIGAN CORP., JUST ENERGY SOLUTIONS INC., HUDSON ENERGY SERVICES LLC, HUDSON ENERGY CORP., INTERACTIVE ENERGY GROUP LLC, HUDSON PARENT HOLDINGS LLC, DRAG MARKETING LLC, JUST ENERGY ADVANCED SOLUTIONS LLC, FULCRUM RETAIL ENERGY LLC, FULCRUM RETAIL HOLDINGS LLC, TARA ENERGY, LLC, JUST ENERGY MARKETING CORP., JUST ENERGY CONNECTICUT CORP., JUST ENERGY LIMITED, JUST SOLAR HOLDINGS CORP. AND JUST ENERGY (FINANCE) HUNGARY ZRT.

Koehnen J.

Heard: November 10, 2021
Judgment: November 18, 2021
Docket: CV-21-00658423-00CL

Counsel: Jeremy Dacks, Marc Wasserman, Michael De Lellis, Shawn Irving, Emily Paplawski, Jonah Davids, Michael Carter, for Just Energy Group
Neil Herman, Allyson Smith — U.S. Counsel to the Just Energy Group
Ryan Jacobs, Jane Dietrich, Alan Merskey — Canadian Counsel to LVS III SPE XV LP, TOCU XVII LLC, HVS XVI LLC, and OC II LVS XIV LP in their capacity as the DIP Lenders
David Botter, Sarah Schultz, Anthony Loring — U.S. Counsel to LVS III SPE XV LP, TOCU XVII LLC, HVS XVI LLC, and OC II LVS XIV LP in their capacity as the DIP Lenders
Heather Meredith, James D. Gage — Canadian Counsel to the Agent and the Credit Facility Lenders
Howard Gorman, Ryan Manns, Travis Torrence, for Shell Energy North America (Canada) Inc. and Shell Energy North America (US)
Robert Kennedy, David Mann — Canadian Counsel to BP Canada Energy Marketing Corp., for BP Energy Company, BP Corporation North America Inc., and BP Canada Energy Group ULC
Tyler Planeta, for Plaintiff, Stephen Gilchrist (in proposed securities class proceeding in SCJ at Toronto, File No. CV-19-627174-00CP)
Steven Wittels, Susan Russell — U.S. Counsel for Fira Donin and Inna Golovan, in their capacity as proposed class representatives in Donin et al. v. Just Energy Group Inc. et al.
Bevan Brooksbank, for Chubb Insurance Company of Canada and Zurich Insurance Company of Canada
Robert Thornton, Rebecca Kennedy, Rachel Bengino, Puya Fesharaki, Paul Bishop, Jim Robinson, for FTI Consulting Canada Inc., as Monitor
John F. Higgins — U.S. Counsel to FTI Consulting Canada Inc., as Monitor

***Koehnen J.*:**

1 The applicants Just Energy Group Inc. and its affiliates bring two motions. The first is for an order extending the stay under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, [1] amending its Debtor in Possession Financing Term Sheet, approving a transaction for the wind up of Just Energy Finance into Just Energy and approving a second key employee retention plan (the "Second KERP"). On the second motion, Just Energy and its relevant affiliates seek leave to sell shares in a private company. As part of that transaction one of the Just Energy affiliates would be wound up and dissolved. Doing so would allow Just Energy to capture over $6 million in tax benefits. Strictly speaking, however, the affiliate does not meet the solvency requirements that corporate law imposes before a corporation can be wound up. At the end of the hearing I approved orders granting the relief requested in respect of both motions with reasons to follow. These are those reasons.

The First Motion

I. The Second KERP

2 The only contentious element of the first motion is Just Energy's proposal for a second KERP in the amount of $4,381,934.

(a) The Request for an Adjournment

3 Ian Wittels appeared as US counsel for a group of class action plaintiffs who have commenced a complaint in the United States. The complaint alleges that one or more of the applicants has fraudulently overcharged American consumers for their energy needs. He sought an adjournment to consider his position on the KERP and indicated that he may be objecting to it because it removes assets from the CCAA estate which could otherwise be used for the benefit of his clients. I declined the adjournment.

4 The class action claim was filed in the US courts approximately 2 $^{1}/_{2}$ years ago. This was long before the CCAA proceeding began in early March 2021. The class-action plaintiffs have therefore had the possibility to investigate matters and seek Canadian legal advice for some time. They did not object to the first KERP that was approved in March 2021 and which provided for total payments of $6,679,625.

5 The motion materials for the second KERP were served seven days before the hearing. The class action plaintiffs raised no objections until the hearing before me on November 10. This is a large CCAA proceeding with a significant number of stakeholders who have appeared throughout, including at the hearing on November 10.

6 I was not given any satisfactory reason for which the class action plaintiffs were unable to raise concerns with the applicants or the Monitor before the hearing on November 10. After declining the adjournment, I invited Mr. Wittels to make submissions opposing the Second KERP.

(b) Objections to the Second KERP

7 The factors to consider in determining whether to approve a KERP include (i) the approval of the Monitor; (ii) whether the beneficiaries of the KERP are likely to consider other employment opportunities if the KERP is not approved; (iii) whether the beneficiaries of the KERP are crucial to the successful restructuring of the debtor company; (iv) whether a replacement could be found in a timely manner should the beneficiary elect to terminate his or her employment with the debtor company; and (v) the business judgment of the board of directors of the debtor. These factors were found to support the first KERP. They are equally relevant in determining whether to approve the second KERP.

(i) Approval of the Monitor:

8 The Monitor supports the Second KERP. Indeed, it was developed with input and feedback from the Monitor.

(ii) Likelihood of Employee Departures

9 The class action plaintiffs submit that the applicants have introduced no evidence that employees would actually leave without a Second KERP, and that any evidence in that regard is speculative.

10 The applicants have described the increased hardship that key employees have suffered since the commencement of the CCAA proceeding. In addition to carrying on their regular duties as Just Energy employees, key employees have assumed the considerable burden of administering the CCAA proceedings and advancing the prospects of a plan. This has been no easy task. Just Energy is a highly regulated business. The company is subject to separate regulatory regimes in each state or province in which it operates. It has complex commercial arrangements with suppliers and a number of secured and unsecured lenders. The integrity of those arrangements in turn depends on Just Energy's compliance with regulatory requirements. Developing a plan in these circumstances involves complex, detailed discussions with regulators, suppliers, and creditors. These discussions have become even more cumbersome and time-consuming than they would ordinarily be because of the Covid 19 pandemic. This has led Just Energy management to have serious concerns about employee burnout.

11 As a practical matter, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to introduce hard evidence that employees will leave without a KERP. As an equally practical matter, however, CCAA proceedings put employees into a highly vulnerable position. They have no idea what will become of their employment at the end of the CCAA proceeding. They do not know whether they will retain their positions or whether the enterprise will be merged with another entity which will rationalize its human resources requirements resulting in the termination of a significant number of key employees. They do not know whether the Just Energy entity that emerges from the plan will have the same manpower needs as it currently has or whether it will also materially reassess its human resources requirements. In those circumstances, it is very tempting for an employee to accept a position with another employer that seems to offer more job stability than an entity in CCAA proceedings can. That creates a material risk of employee departures.

(iii) Are Beneficiaries of KERP Critical to a Successful Restructuring

12 Both the applicants and the Monitor believe the beneficiaries of the KERP are critical to the success of the restructuring.

13 The first KERP was approved in March. Since then no one has taken issue with the identity of the beneficiaries or their importance to a successful restructuring.

(iv) Ease of Replacing Departing Employees

14 While employees can always be replaced, finding a replacement with equal skill and knowledge of Just Energy's business and operations is very difficult in the time pressured atmosphere of a CCAA proceeding.

15 This is particularly so with Just Energy. As noted in paragraph 10 above, it is a complex, highly regulated business. That makes bringing new employees up to speed a more time-consuming process. Time in a CCAA proceeding translates into cost and potential prejudice to a plan.

(v) Business Judgment of the Board

16 The Board of Just Energy has concluded that the Second KERP is required to promote a plan. The KERP extends well beyond senior management. This is not a situation of the Board keeping its friends in management happy. Rather, the KERP appears to be a considered plan to identify employees throughout the enterprise whose retention is important for the plan.

17 In addition to the business judgment of the Board, I would add the business judgment of the creditors. The principal lenders and suppliers to Just Energy are highly sophisticated entities. They have no interest in having Just Energy dissipate its assets on wasteful employee bonus schemes. They do have an interest in recovering on their debt. They have concluded that the best way to do that at the moment is to proceed with the Second KERP. This includes unsecured lenders with loans of

approximately (US) $300 million. Those are creditors with hard claims for monies already advanced. The class action plaintiffs, on the other hand have an unliquidated claim for damages in a class action that has not yet been certified, let alone tried.

18 Mr. Wittels submits that there are millions of American consumers who have been disadvantaged by the allegedly fraudulent conduct of the applicants. In those circumstances, he submits that the court "should be putting the brakes" on payments to employees. He further submits that the plaintiffs' ability to recover on their $2 billion claim will be reduced if corporate funds are siphoned off by payments to employees under the Second KERP.

19 The principle behind the KERP is not to deprive creditors of recovery but to improve creditor recovery by maintaining the applicant's ongoing business by retaining key employees.

20 A KERP can be seen as an investment in the ongoing enterprise. If the investment is successful, there will be much more to distribute to creditors as a result of a plan than there would be without the KERP. Whether a plan might have been possible without a KERP can only be assessed after the fact. Entities in CCAA protection do not, however, have that luxury. They may equally find out after the fact that employees have fled leaving them incapable of advancing a plan. At that point it is too late to implement a KERP.

21 Like any other investment, KERPs have risk. There is a risk that the KERP will not result in larger creditor recovery at the end of the day. The applicants served their motion on 400 parties including secured and unsecured creditors. All but the class action plaintiffs appear to agree that the best way forward is to continue the CCAA proceeding with a Second KERP.

22 The First KERP was developed based on the expectation that the restructuring would be largely concluded but for regulatory approvals by the end of 2021. It was therefore structured to provide employees with payments in September and December 2021. The size and complexity of the proceeding have not allowed the plan to advance as much as Just Energy would have liked to. Approximately 80% of the payments on the first KERP have already been paid out. The balance will be paid out in December 2021 and March 2022.

23 Just Energy estimates that it requires employees to remain until at least June 2022. There is significant concern that the balance of the First KERP does not provide sufficient incentive for key employees to remain until June 2022.

24 The Second KERP is designed to incentivize employees to remain. It envisages paying retention bonuses to nonexecutive employees in March and September 2022. If a successful restructuring occurs before September, the final KERP would be paid at that time. Executive KERP recipients will receive one instalment in March 2022 and a second success-based payment on completion of a successful restructuring.

25 In light of the foregoing considerations, I am satisfied that the Second KERP should be approved.

(c) The Sealing Order

26 As part of the approval of the Second KERP, the applicants also seek an order sealing details of the amounts paid to individual employees.

27 In *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*,[2] the Supreme Court of Canada held at para. 38 that an applicant for a sealing order must establish that:

> (i) court openness poses a serious risk to an important public interest;
>
> (ii) the order sought is necessary to prevent this serious risk to the identified interest because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and,
>
> (iii) as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects.

28 All 3 factors are satisfied here. The documents the applicants seek to seal contain the names of the KERP recipients and the amounts each will receive. Publicly disclosing employee compensation violates the privacy interest of those employees. The employees themselves have not initiated any court proceeding that would require production of that information. Broad publication of confidential income data could create risks for employee retention in this and other CCAA proceedings.

29 In *Ontario Securities Commission v. Bridging Finance Inc.*[3] Chief Justice Morawetz recently granted a sealing order over the details of a KERP in similar circumstances. I am satisfied that it is equally appropriate to make that order here. The limitation on the open courts principle is minimal. The order is proportional. It benefits in protecting privacy interests of non-party employees outweigh the very limited impact on the open courts principle.

II. The Stay Extension

30 There is no opposition to the request to extend the CCAA stay from December 17, 2021 to February 17, 2022. The court has discretion to extend the stay if circumstances exist that make doing so appropriate and if the applicant continues to act in good faith and with due diligence towards a plan.[4] I am satisfied from my review of the Fourth Report of the Monitor that the applicant is doing so. In addition, the Just Energy cash flows produced on the motion demonstrate that the applicants have sufficient funds to continue operations until February 17, 2022. As a result, I extend the stay until February 17, 2022.

III. The Amended DIP Term Sheet

31 The applicants seek to extend the term of their DIP loan from December 31, 2021 to September 30, 2022. They do not seek to increase the amount of the loan. The extension involves payment of a 1% financing fee which amounts to a payment of approximately (US) $1,250,000.

32 No one opposed the DIP extension. That said, the payment of the extension fee raises the same issues about potentially reducing the size of the estate available to the class action plaintiffs as does the Second KERP. I will therefore proceed on the basis that the class action plaintiffs oppose the DIP extension even though Mr. Wittels did not expressly raise that argument. I take this approach because it struck me that the class action plaintiffs may have become alive to the issues that the CCAA poses for them fairly late in the day.

33 To the extent that a CCAA proceeding ultimately fails, there is always the risk that the cost of the financing fee associated with the extension will further diminish the pool of assets available for creditors. As with the KERP, however, the ultimate goal is to have more money available for creditors in a CCAA proceeding than would be available in a bankruptcy.

34 Section 11.2 (4) provides that the court should consider, among other things, the following factors when considering interim financing:

> (a) the period during which the company is expected to be subject to proceedings under the CCAA;
>
> (b) how the company's business and financial affairs are to be managed during the proceedings;
>
> (c) whether the company's management has the confidence of its major creditors;
>
> (d) whether the loan would enhance the prospects of a viable compromise or arrangement being made in respect of the company;
>
> (e) the nature and value of the company's property;
>
> (f) whether any creditor would be materially prejudiced as a result of the security or charge; and
>
> (g) the view of the monitor.

35 Those factors are also appropriate to consider when considering amendments to DIP financing. [5]

36 Applying those factors here, I am satisfied that the DIP extension should be approved.

37 The applicants expect to finalize a plan some time between June and September of 2022. The applicants have the support of their creditors. To date, no creditor has spoken against the DIP extension or any other issue involving management of the Just Energy group. The expiry of the DIP facility on December 31, 2021 would put an end to Just Energy's ability to arrive at a plan. The extension of the DIP facility would considerably enhance the prospects of a viable plan. The monitor supports the extension of the DIP facility. The monitor specifically references the extension fee in its report and believes it to be reasonable. Just Energy continues to be a significant enterprise with hundreds of employees. The company has been moving in good faith towards a plan, but the business is of such a complexity that it has taken longer than initially anticipated. This is not surprising. The company is subject to a myriad of regulatory regimes across the United States and Canada. It has complex commercial arrangements with suppliers and a number of secured and unsecured lenders, the integrity of which in turn depends on Just Energy's compliance with regulatory requirements.

38 In the foregoing circumstances, I am satisfied that the DIP loan should be extended.

IV. The Just Energy Finance Transaction

39 The applicants seek court approval to undertake a transaction that would wind up JE Finance into Just Energy and subsequently file articles of dissolution in respect of JE Finance. The applicants seek approval of the transaction because JE Finance and Just Energy are applicants in this proceeding and because paragraph 13 (c) of the Second Amended and Restated Initial Order dated May 26, 2021 prevents the applicants from reorganizing a material portion of their business without court approval.

40 The ultimate objective of the Finance dissolution is to realize tax losses in Just Energy Hungary (a wholly owned subsidiary of JE Finance). As part of the proposed transaction certain intercompany loans will be set off against each other and all remaining assets and liabilities of JE Finance will be rolled into Just Energy. No creditors will be prejudiced by that transaction and no creditors oppose it. The Monitor supports the transaction.

41 The transaction is consistent with the objectives of the CCAA, principally because it maximizes the value of the debtor's assets for the benefit of all stakeholders. In those circumstances, I am satisfied that the JE Finance transaction and its subsequent dissolution should be approved.

The Second Motion: The ecobee Transaction

42 Just Management Corp. ("JMC") is a wholly owned subsidiary of Just Energy. JMC owns shares in ecobee Limited ("ecobee"). ecobee has entered into a proposed transaction with Generac Power Systems Inc. which it proposes to conclude by way of a plan of arrangement. JMC would like to support that transaction and seeks an order authorizing it to enter into a Support Agreement pursuant to which it would agree to be bound by the arrangement and would dispose of its ecobee shares pursuant to the arrangement.

43 The notice of motion seeking approval of the ecobee transaction was delivered only the day before the hearing. The relief it seeks was, however, set out in an affidavit that was served a week earlier. Given the nature of the transaction which is described below and the description of it in the earlier affidavit, I was prepared to consider it on November 10 despite the short notice.

44 Court approval is required because the Initial and subsequent Orders require court approval for any refinancing, restructuring, sale, or reorganization of the Just Energy entities' businesses. A further issue arises because the *Canada Business Corporations Act* [6] (the "CBCA"), pursuant to which JMC is incorporated, makes dissolution available only to solvent corporations. Given that JMC is an applicant in this proceeding and given that it will have transferred its only valuable asset, the ecobee shares, to Just Energy before dissolution, it fails to meet the solvency requirement for a dissolution.

45 In deciding whether to grant authorization under subsection 36(1) of the CCAA for a sale of assets outside the ordinary course of business, the CCAA court will consider the following non-exhaustive factors:

> (a) whether the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition was reasonable in the circumstances;
>
> (b) whether the monitor approved the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition;
>
> (c) whether the monitor filed with the court a report stating that in its opinion, the sale or disposition would be more beneficial to the creditors than a sale or disposition under a bankruptcy;
>
> (d) the extent to which the creditors were consulted;
>
> (e) the effects of the proposed sale or disposition on the creditors and other interested parties; and
>
> (f) whether the consideration to be received for the assets is reasonable and fair, taking into account their market value. [45]

46 I am satisfied that those factors have been met.

47 Just Energy acquired the ecobee shares in 2012 for approximately $6.4 million. Just Energy has been trying to sell its ecobee shares for several years without success. As a result of the arrangement, Just Energy anticipates receiving approximately $61,000,000. Of that, approximately $18,000,000 will be received in cash on completion of the Arrangement. The remaining $43,000,000 will be received in publicly traded shares of Generac. Just Energy will be free to dispose of those shares immediately. They are not subject to any hold provision. In addition, if certain performance targets are met, Just Energy has the potential to receive an additional $10,000,000 of Generac shares in 2022 and 2023.

48 Ecobee has also been looking for a strategic transaction for quite some time. The Generac transaction is the best opportunity that has presented itself.

49 The Monitor approves the sale of the shares and has filed a report stating that, in its view, the sale of the shares would be more beneficial to creditors than any other transaction. No creditors oppose the transaction. The effect of the proposed sale is highly beneficial to creditors because it will inject significant amounts of cash into the CCAA estate.

50 Moreover, to some extent the question of approval of the sale of the shares is academic because they are subject to a drag along right which would compel Just Energy to sell the ecobee shares pursuant to any transaction that is approved by the ecobee board and a majority of the votes cast by each class of ecobee shareholders. The majority of each class has already committed to support the proposed Arrangement.

51 This brings me to the proposed wind up and dissolution transaction that is proposed as part of the sale of the ecobee shares.

52 The court has jurisdiction to approve the wind up and dissolution transactions pursuant to its general power to make appropriate orders under section 11 of the CCAA. As noted, however, certain aspects of the wind up and dissolution transaction raise further complications. Those include the following:

> (i) The stated capital of JMC will be reduced to zero. Although permitted by corporate law, it is potentially subject to a solvency test under section 38 (3) of the CBCA.
>
> (ii) JMC will purchase for cancellation preferred shares that Just Energy Ontario LP holds in JMC. Share repurchases are also subject to corporate solvency tests in subsection 34 (2) of the CBCA. In light of the fact that JMC is a co-guarantor of certain Just Energy indebtedness and is an applicant in this proceeding, the solvency test is most likely not satisfied.
>
> (iii) JMC will be voluntarily dissolved. Section 208 (1) of the CBCA prohibits a corporation that is insolvent from dissolving.

53 Counsel have not been able to direct me to any caselaw or commentary about the policy rationale behind the CBCA's restrictions on insolvent corporations engaging in certain transactions. It would appear that the purpose of those restrictions is to protect creditors or other stakeholders from transactions that would deprive them of assets or other rights that would ordinarily be available to them under insolvency legislation.

54 Those concerns do not arise here. The purpose of the winding up and dissolution transaction is to achieve approximately $6.6 million of tax savings that would otherwise not be available. The only assets of JMC are the ecobee shares and an interest in a dormant partnership that has no value. Those assets will be wound up into Just Energy. At the same time, Just Energy will assume any liabilities owed by JMC.

55 In this case, blind application of the CBCA's solvency requirements would in fact undermine the purpose of those requirements. Oversight by the Monitor and the Court provides additional assurance that the interests of creditors in the dissolution will be protected.

56 In that context, any solvency requirements contained in the CBCA are breached only if they are viewed in isolation and are divorced from the transactions as a whole. The end result generates a net benefit to the Just Energy estate by making more assets available than would otherwise be the case.

57 Gascon J. (as he then was) came to a similar conclusion in *AbitibiBowater*[7] albeit without discussing the point. In that case, the Monitor's 22nd report dated November 19, 2009, noted that certain aspects of the proposed transaction violated the solvency provisions of the CBCA and the Quebec Company's Act. Gascon J. nevertheless issued an order which allowed the transaction to proceed "notwithstanding the provisions of any federal or provincial statute."[8]

58 Section 11 of the CCAA provides the court with broad remedial jurisdiction. It provides:

> **Despite anything in the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act or the Winding-up and Restructuring Act**, if an application is made under this Act in respect of a debtor company, **the court**, on the application of any person interested in the matter, **may**, subject to the restrictions set out in this Act, on notice to any other person or without notice as it may see fit, **make any order that it considers appropriate in the circumstances.**

59 The section gives the court express power to override the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*[9] and the *Winding up and Restructuring Act*.[10] That power was also used to override the priority schemes in provincial statutes by according super priority to DIP lenders before super priority was enshrined in the CCAA.[11]

60 In *Century Services Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)*[12] the Supreme Court of Canada observed that that judicial discretion has allowed the CCAA to adapt and evolve to meet contemporary business and social needs and that it has called on courts to innovate as restructurings become increasingly complex.

61 In *Rescue! The Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*[13] Professor Janis Sarra noted that in determining whether and how to exercise its discretion the court should ask itself whether the order will

> "usefully further efforts to avoid the social and economic losses resulting from liquidation of an insolvent company, which extends to both the purpose of the order and the means it employs."[14]

62 That exercise requires the court to balance the interests of and prejudice to various stakeholders. Here, the only stakeholder who is potentially prejudiced is the CRA. It did not appear on the motion. It also has other means of protecting its interests by way of tax reassessments.

63 In circumstances where the proposed transaction would add value to the estate, would not prejudice any stakeholder of the CCAA and does not offend the interests that the CBCA seeks to protect by imposing insolvency requirements, I am satisfied

that the winding up and dissolution transaction furthers the effort to avoid social and economic losses that would result from liquidation and should be allowed to proceed.

Disposition

64 For the reasons set out above I signed orders on November 10, 2021 extending the stay under the CCAA, extending the DIP facility, approving the wind up of Just Energy Finance, approving the Second KERP, approving the sale of ecobee shares in proposed plan of arrangement and permitting the ancillary transactions set out in paragraph 52 above to occur, notwithstanding the insolvency of the corporations involved.

Motions granted.

Footnotes

1 Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, RSC 1985, c. C-36

2 2021 SCC 25

3 2021 ONSC 4347 at paras. 25-27.

4 CCAA, ss. 11.02(2) -11.02(3)

5 *Re* Laurentian University of Sudbury, 2021 ONSC 3545, at para. 39

6 Canada Business Corporations Act, RSC 1985, c C-44

7 Order in (Re) AbitibiBowater Inc. (23 November 2009), Montreal, 500-11-036133-094 (Que. S.C.).

8 *Ibid*. at para 12.

9 Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, RSC 1985, c B-3

10 Winding-up and Restructuring Act, RSC 1985, c W-11

11 Skydome Corp., Re, 1998 CarswellOnt 5922; 16 C.B.R. (4th) 118 at paras. 8-9, 13-14.

12 2010 SCC 60, [2010] 3 S.C.R. 379 at para 58, 61.

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BANK OF MONTREAL
Applicant

- and -

BRANT INSTORE CORPORATION
Respondent

Court File No. CV-22-00691546-00CL

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