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COURT	COURT OF KING'S BENCH OF ALBERTA
JUDICIAL CENTRE	CALGARY
PLAINTIFF	MGB INVESTMENTS LIMITED PARTNERSHIP, BRIAN CRAIG, JOSEPH OSINSKI AND JUDY OSINSKI, MARK MILLER, and DONNA ROSS-FERRARA
DEFENDANT	KATIPULT TECHNOLOGY CORP.
APPLICANT	KSV RESTRUCTURING INC. IN ITS CAPACITY AS THE RECEIVER OF KATIPULT TECHNOLOGY CORP.
DOCUMENT	**BENCH BRIEF OF THE RECEIVER: APPROVAL AND VESTING ORDER**

ADDRESS FOR SERVICE AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF PARTY FILING THIS DOCUMENT

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BENCH BRIEF OF THE RECEIVER

Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

Before the Honourable Justice Campbell

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This Bench Brief is submitted by KSV Restructuring Inc. in its capacity as the Court-appointed receiver and manager (in such capacity, the "**Receiver**") of Katipult Technology Corp. (the "**Company**") in support of its application for a sale approval and vesting order (the "**SAVO**"), among other things:

   (a) abridging the time for service of notice of this Application and the supporting materials, if necessary, and deeming service thereof to be good and sufficient;

   (b) approving and authorizing a sale transaction (the "**Transaction**") for substantially all of the assets, undertakings, and properties (collectively, the "**Purchased Assets**") of the Company pursuant to an asset purchase agreement between the Receiver and Markette Ventures Inc. (the "**Purchaser**") dated February 24, 2025 (the "**APA**");

   (c) vesting title to the Purchased Assets in the Purchaser free and clear of all Encumbrances; and

   (d) such further and other relief as may be sought by the Receiver and this Honourable Court may deem appropriate.

2. The purpose of this Bench Brief is to provide this Court with the authority for granting the requested relief.

3. All capitalized terms used but not otherwise defined herein shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the First Report of the Receiver, dated February 25, 2025 (the "**First Report**").

4. The facts germane to this Application are set out in the First Report.

II. ISSUES

5. The issues to be addressed on this Application are:

   (a) *Should the Court approve the Transaction?*

(b) *Should the Court grant the SAVO?*

III. LAW

A. Approval of the Transaction and APA

6. The Ontario Court of Appeal in *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair Corp* described the factors to be considered by this Court when reviewing a proposed sale of assets by a receiver:

   (a) whether the receiver has made sufficient efforts to obtain the best price and has not acted improvidently;

   (b) the interests of all parties;

   (c) the efficacy and integrity of the process undertaken to obtain the offer; and

   (d) whether the process involved unfairness.[1]

7. In *Soundair*, the Appellate Court stated that the Court must place a great deal of confidence in the opinions formed by the receiver, and that the Court should assume the receiver is acting properly, unless the contrary is clearly shown. As a result, courts should be reluctant to second-guess, with the benefit of hindsight, the considered business decisions made by its receiver.[2]

8. Where the asset is considered to be unusual, the deference afforded to a receiver in the context of a sale is of particular importance.[3] Such approach provides assurances to the proposed purchaser who acts in good faith and bargains seriously with a receiver to enter into a sale agreement.[4]

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[1] *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair Corp*, 1991 CanLII 2727 (ONCA), 1991 CarswellOnt 205 at para 16 [*Soundair*] [**TAB 1**].

[2] *Soundair*, *supra* at para 14 [**TAB 1**].

[3] *Soundair*, *supra* at paras 46-48 [**TAB 1**].

[4] *Soundair*, *supra* at paras 46 [**TAB 1**].

9. The *Soundair* factors have been adopted and applied in receivership proceedings by the Alberta courts, including the Alberta Court of Appeal.[5]

i. Use of a Pre-Pack Transaction

10. In considering the *Soundair* factors in the approval of a sale under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, RSC 1985, c C-36, Romaine J. noted that the *Soundair* factors do not suggest that a formal auction process is necessary or advisable in every case.[6]

11. Canadian courts have previously approved assets sales by receivers in the absence of a Court-supervised sale process or formal marketing process known as "quick flip" or "pre-pack" transactions. In *Tools-Plas*, Morawetz J. approved a quick flip sale where a viable transaction was elicited prior to the receiver's appointment.[7] Justice Morawetz was satisfied that the *Soundair* factors had been met and stated that, while a quick flip transaction is not the norm, it may be the best or only option available in the circumstances.[8]

12. Where approval of a quick flip transaction is sought, the Court should consider its impact on the various parties and assess whether they would realistically be treated any differently if an extended sale process was followed.[9]

13. A quick flip transaction may be appropriate where:

    (a) there are substantial risks associated with a further marketing process;

    (b) the proposed price exceeds the going concern and liquidation value of the assets;

    (c) the transaction will be a successful outcome for certain stakeholders, including secured creditors; and

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[5] *PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc v 1905393 Alberta Ltd*, 2019 ABCA 433 at paras 10-12 [**TAB 2**]; *1705221 Alberta Ltd v Three M Mortgages Inc*, 2021 ABCA 144 at paras 2, 19 [**TAB 3**].

[6] *Calpine Canada Energy Ltd, Re*, 2007 ABQB 49 at para 29 [**TAB 4**].

[7] *Tool-Plas Systems Inc, Re*, 2008 CanLII 54791 (ONSC), 2008 CarswellOnt 6258 [*Tool-Plas*] [**TAB 5**].

[8] *Tool-Plas*, *supra* at paras 15, 20 [**TAB 5**].

[9] *Tool-Plas*, *supra* at para 15 [**TAB 5**].

(d) where it is inevitable that certain parties will receive no recoveries.[10]

14. The Ontario Superior Court affirmed the approach to quick flip and pre-pack transactions outlined in *Tool-Plas* in *Montrose Mortgage Corporation v Kingsway Arms Ottawa*.[11] In the latter, Brown J. stated that the use of such transactions was becoming more common in receivership proceedings, as, in certain circumstances, a pre-pack transaction "may well represent the best, or only, commercial alternative to liquidation".[12] The *Soundair* factors will still apply but pre-pack transactions require special care to be paid to the adequacy and fairness of the proposed sale and process.[13]

15. This Court has previously approved pre-pack transactions in insolvency proceedings, both where the debtor company's secured creditors have supported the transaction[14] and in the face of opposition.[15] In approving the transaction in *Sanjel*, Romaine J. specifically noted, among other things, that:

(a) the sale process was reasonable despite not being conducted as a Court-supervised process as it was not unreasonably brief in the given economic climate and deteriorating financial position of the debtor company;

(b) the sale process was robust and competitive with sufficient efforts made to obtain the best price possible and it was unlikely that an extended sale process would result in a materially better offer;

(c) the proposed sale was more beneficial to creditors than a sale or disposition in bankruptcy and creditors had been involved in the sale process; and

(d) while only one creditor would see a return from the transaction, all other viable and reasonable options had been considered.[16]

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[10] *Tool-Plas*, *supra* at paras 10-11, 16-17, 20 [**TAB 5**].

[11] *Montrose Mortgage Corporation v Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc*, 2013 ONSC 6905 [*Montrose*] [**TAB 6**].

[12] *Montrose*, *supra* at para 10 [**TAB 6**].

[13] *Montrose*, *supra* at para 10 [**TAB 6**].

[14] *OEL Projects Ltd (Re)*, 2020 ABQB 365 at paras 4, 27 [**TAB 7**].

[15] *Sanjel Corporation (Re)*, 2016 ABQB 257 at paras 2, 112 [*Sanjel*] [**TAB 8**].

[16] *Sanjel*, *supra* at paras 77-79, 112 [**TAB 8**].

16. A sale process only needs to be reasonable, not perfect, and it is the specific details of the sale process conducted that are relevant to the Court's analysis.[17]

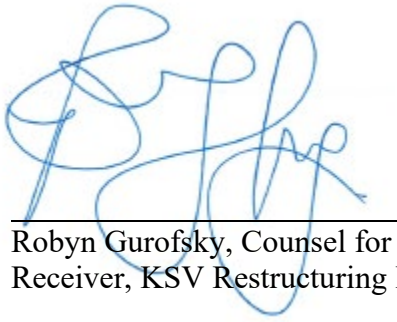
17. In summary, where approval of a pre-pack transaction is sought, the transaction should still be approved if the previous marketing process was nonetheless fair and reasonable and "no purpose would be served by a further marketing process".[18]

IV. CONCLUSION

18. The Receiver is of the view that this Court should grant the requested relief by, among other things, approving and authorizing the Transaction as contemplated by the APA, and by granting the SAVO substantially in the form appended to the Application. The proposed Transaction is reasonable and appropriate in the given circumstances and represents the best option available to maximize value to the benefit of all of the Company's stakeholders.

ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 25th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2025.

FASKEN MARTINEAU DuMOULIN LLP

Per: 

Robyn Gurofsky, Counsel for the Receiver, KSV Restructuring Inc.

[17] *Sanjel*, *supra* at paras 71, 80 [**TAB 8**].

[18] *Romspen Investment Corporation v Tung Kee Investment Canada Ltd*, 2023 ONSC 5911 at para 48 [**TAB 9**].

LIST OF AUTHORITIES

1. *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair Corp*, 1991 CanLII 2727 (ONCA), 1991 CarswellOnt 205.
2. *PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc v 1905393 Alberta Ltd*, 2019 ABCA 433.
3. *1705221 Alberta Ltd v Three M Mortgages Inc*, 2021 ABCA 144.
4. *Calpine Canada Energy Ltd, Re*, 2007 ABQB 49.
5. *Tool-Plas Systems Inc, Re*, 2008 CanLII 54791 (ONSC), 2008 CarswellOnt 6258.
6. *Montrose Mortgage Corporation v Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc*, 2013 ONSC 6905.
7. *OEL Projects Ltd (Re)*, 2020 ABQB 365.
8. *Sanjel Corporation (Re)*, 2016 ABQB 257.
9. *Romspen Investment Corporation v Tung Kee Investment Canada Ltd*, 2023 ONSC 5911.

TAB 1

1991 CarswellOnt 205
Ontario Court of Appeal

Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.

1991 CarswellOnt 205, [1991] O.J. No. 1137, 27 A.C.W.S. (3d) 1178,
46 O.A.C. 321, 4 O.R. (3d) 1, 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1, 83 D.L.R. (4th) 76

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

Counsel: *J. B. Berkow* and *S. H. Goldman* , for appellants Canadian Pension Capital Limited and Canadian Insurers' Capital Corporation.
J. T. Morin, Q.C. , for Air Canada.
L.A.J. Barnes and *L.E. Ritchie* , for plaintiff/respondent Royal Bank of Canada.
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.

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

Headnote

Receivers --- Conduct and liability of receiver — General conduct of receiver

Court considering its position when approving sale recommended by receiver.

S Corp., which engaged in the air transport business, had a division known as AT. When S Corp. experienced financial difficulties, one of the secured creditors, who had an interest in the assets of AT, brought a motion for the appointment of a receiver. The receiver was ordered to operate AT and to sell it as a going concern. The receiver had two offers. It accepted the offer made by OEL and rejected an offer by 922 which contained an unacceptable condition. Subsequently, 922 obtained an order allowing it to make a second offer removing the condition. The secured creditors supported acceptance of the 922 offer. The court approved the sale to OEL and dismissed the motion to approve the 922 offer. An appeal was brought from this order.

Held:

The appeal was dismissed.

Per Galligan J.A.: 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. The court should be reluctant to second-guess, with the benefit of hindsight, the considered business decisions made by its receiver.

The conduct of the receiver should be reviewed in the light of the specific mandate given to him by the court. The order appointing the receiver did not say how the receiver was to negotiate the sale. The order obviously intended, because of the unusual nature of the asset being sold, to leave the method of sale substantially to the discretion of the receiver.

To determine whether a receiver has acted providently, the conduct of the receiver should be examined in light of the information the receiver had when it agreed to accept an offer. On the date the receiver accepted the OEL offer, it had only two offers: that of OEL, which was acceptable, and that of 922, which contained an unacceptable condition. The decision made was a sound one in the circumstances. The receiver made a sufficient effort to obtain the best price, and did not act improvidently.

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 assets to them.
Per McKinlay J.A. (concurring in the result): 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. In all cases, the court should carefully scrutinize the procedure followed by the receiver. While the procedure carried out by the receiver in this case was appropriate, given the unfolding of events and the unique nature of the asset involved, it may not be a procedure that is likely to be appropriate in many receivership sales.
Per Goodman J.A. (dissenting): 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 the receiver. The offer accepted by the receiver was improvident and unfair insofar as two creditors were concerned.

Appeal from order approving sale of assets by receiver.

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

2019 ABCA 433
Alberta Court of Appeal

Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc v. 1905393 Alberta Ltd

2019 CarswellAlta 2418, 2019 ABCA 433, [2019] A.W.L.D. 4519,
312 A.C.W.S. (3d) 237, 74 C.B.R. (6th) 14, 98 Alta. L.R. (6th) 1

Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. in its capacity as Receiver of 1905393 Alberta Ltd. (Respondent / Cross-Appellants / Applicant) and 1905393 Alberta Ltd., David Podollan and Steller One Holdings Ltd. (Appellants / Cross-Respondents / Respondents) and Servus Credit Union Ltd., Ducor Properties Ltd., Northern Electric Ltd. and Fancy Doors & Mouldings Ltd. (Respondents / Interested Parties)

Thomas W. Wakeling, Dawn Pentelechuk, Jolaine Antonio JJ.A.

Heard: September 3, 2019
Judgment: November 14, 2019
Docket: Edmonton Appeal 1903-0134-AC

Counsel: D.M. Nowak, J.M. Lee, Q.C., for Respondent, Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. in its capacity as receiver of 1905393 Alberta Ltd.
D.R. Peskett, C.M. Young, for Appellants
C.P. Russell, Q.C., R.T. Trainer, for Respondent, Servus Credit Union Ltd.
S.A. Wanke, for Respondent, Ducor Properties Ltd.
S.T. Fitzgerald, for Respondent, Northern Electric Ltd.
H.S. Kandola, for Respondent, Fancy Doors & Mouldings Ltd.

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Insolvency

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Practice and procedure in courts — Appeals — Miscellaneous

Appellants appeal Approval and Vesting Order which approved sale proposed in Asset Purchase Agreement between Receiver, PWC, and respondent, D Ltd. — Appeal dismissed — Chambers judge was keenly alive to abbreviated marketing period and appraised values of hotels — Nevertheless, having regard to unique nature of property, incomplete construction of development hotel, difficulties with prospective purchasers in branding hotels in area outside of major centre and area which was in midst of economic downturn, she concluded that receiver acted in commercially reasonable manner and obtained best price possible in circumstances — Even with abbreviated period for submission of offers, chambers judge reasonably concluded that receiver undertook extensive marketing campaign, engaged commercial realtor and construction consultant, and consulted and dialogued with owner throughout process, which process appellants took no issue with, until offers were received.

APPEAL by appellants from Approval and Vesting Order which approved sale proposed in Asset Purchase Agreement between receiver, PWC, and respondent, D Ltd.

***Per curiam*:**

1 The appellants appeal an Approval and Vesting Order granted on May 21, 2019 which approved a sale proposed in the May 3, 2019 Asset Purchase Agreement between the Receiver, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and the respondent, Ducor Properties Ltd ("Ducor"). The assets consist primarily of lands and buildings in Grande Prairie, Alberta described as a partially constructed 169 room full service hotel not currently open for business (the "Development Hotel") and a 63 room extended stay hotel ("Extended Stay Hotel") currently operating on the same parcel of land (collectively the "Hotels"). The Hotels are owned by

the appellant, 1905393 Alberta Ltd. ("190") whose shareholder is the appellant, Stellar One Holdings Ltd, and whose president and sole director is the appellant, David Podollan.

2 The respondent, Servus Credit Union Ltd ("Servus"), is 190's largest secured creditor. Servus provided financing to 190 for construction of the Hotels. On May 16, 2018, Servus issued a demand for payment of its outstanding debt. As of June 29, 2018, 190 owed Servus approximately $23.9 million. That debt remains outstanding and, in fact, continues to increase because of interest, property taxes and ongoing carrying costs for the Hotels incurred by the Receiver.

3 On July 20, 2018, the Receiver was appointed over all of 190's current and future assets, undertakings and properties. The appellants opposed the Receiver's appointment primarily on the basis that 190 was seeking to re-finance the Hotels. That re-financing has never materialized.

4 As a result, the Receiver sought in October 2018 to liquidate the Hotels. In typical fashion, the Receiver obtained an appraisal of the Hotels, as did the respondents. After consulting with three national real estate brokers, the Receiver engaged the services of Colliers International ("Colliers"), which recommended a structured sales process with no listing price and a fixed bid submission date. While the sales process contemplated an exposure period of approximately six weeks between market launch and offer submission deadline, Colliers had contacted over 1,290 prospective purchasers and agents using a variety of mediums in the months prior to market launch, exposing the Hotels to national hotel groups and individuals in the industry, and conducted site visits and answered inquiries posed by prospective buyers. Prospective purchasers provided feedback to Colliers but that included concerns about the quality of construction on the Development Hotel.

5 The Receiver also engaged the services of an independent construction consultant, Entuitive Corporation, to provide an estimate of the cost to complete construction on the Development Hotel and to assist in decision-making on whether to complete the Development Hotel. In addition, the Receiver contacted a major international hotel franchise brand to obtain input on prospective franchisees' views of the design and fixturing of the Development Hotel. The ability to brand the Hotels is a significant factor affecting their marketability. Moreover, some of the feedback confirmed that energy exploration and development in Grande Prairie is down, resulting in downward pressure on hotel-room demand.

6 Parties that requested further information in response to the listing were asked to execute a confidentiality agreement whereupon they were granted access to a "data-room" containing information on the Hotels and offering related documents and photos. Colliers provided confidential information regarding 190's assets to 27 interested parties.

7 The deadline for offer submission yielded only four offers, each of which was far below the appraised valued of the Hotels. Three of the four offers were extremely close in respect of their stated price; the fourth offer was significantly lower than the others. As a result, the Receiver went back to the three prospective purchasers that had similar offers and asked them to re-submit better offers. None, however, varied their respective purchase prices in a meaningful manner when invited to do so. The Receiver ultimately accepted and obtained approval for Ducor's offer to purchase which, as the appellants correctly point out, is substantially less than the appraised value of the Hotels.

8 The primary thrust of the appellants' argument is that an abbreviated sale process resulted in an offer which is unreasonably low having regard to the appraisals. They argue that the Receiver was improvident in accepting such an offer and the chambers judge erred by approving it. Approving the sale, they argue, would eliminate the substantial equity in the property evidenced by the appraised value and that the "massive prejudice" caused to them as a result materially outweighs any further time and cost associated with requiring the Receiver to re-market the Hotels with a longer exposure time. Mr. Podollan joins in this argument as he is potentially liable for any shortfall under personal guarantees to Servus for all amounts owed to Servus by 190. The other respondents, Fancy Doors & Mouldings Ltd and Northern Electric Ltd, similarly echo the appellants' arguments as the shortfall may deprive them both from collecting on their builders' liens which, collectively, total approximately $340,000.

9 The appellants obtained both a stay of the Approval and Vesting Order and leave to appeal pursuant to s 193 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, RSC 1985, c B-3: *1905393 Alberta Ltd v. Servus Credit Union Ltd*, [2019] A.J. No. 895, 2019 ABCA 269 (Alta. C.A.). The issues around which leave was granted generally coalesce around two questions. First, whether

the chambers judge applied the correct test in deciding whether to approve of the Receiver recommended sale; and second, whether the chambers judge erred in her application of the legal test to the facts in deciding whether to approve the sale and, in particular, erred in her exercise of discretion by failing to consider or provide sufficient weight to a relevant factor. The standard of review is correctness on the first question and palpable and overriding error on the second: *Northstone Power Corp. v. R.J.K. Power Systems Ltd.*, 2002 ABCA 201 (Alta. C.A.) at para 4, (2002), 317 A.R. 192 (Alta. C.A.).

10 As regards the first question, the parties agree that Court approval requires the Receiver to satisfy the well-known test in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*, [1991] O.J. No. 1137 (Ont. C.A.) at para 16, (1991), 46 O.A.C. 321 (Ont. C.A.) ("*Soundair*"). That test requires the Court to consider four factors: (i) whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently; (ii) whether the interests of all parties have been considered, not just the interests of the creditors of the debtor; (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.

11 The appellants suggest that *Soundair* has been modified by our Court in *Bank of Montreal v. River Rentals Group Ltd.*, 2010 ABCA 16 (Alta. C.A.) at para 13, (2010), 469 A.R. 333 (Alta. C.A.), to require an additional four factors in assessing whether a receiver has complied with its duties: (a) whether the offer accepted is so low in relation to the appraised value as to be unrealistic; (b) whether the circumstances indicate that insufficient time was allowed for the making of bids; (c) whether inadequate notice of sale by bid was given; and (d) whether it can be said that the proposed sale is not in the best interests of either the creditor or the owner. The appellants argue that, although the chambers judge considered the *Soundair* factors, she erred by failing to consider the additional *River Rentals* factors and, in so doing, in effect applied the "wrong law".

12 We disagree. The chambers judge expressly referred to the *River Rentals* case. *River Rentals*, it must be recalled, simply identified a subset of factors that a Court might also consider when considering the first prong of the *Soundair* test as to whether a receiver failed to get the best price and has not acted providently. Moreover, the type of factors that might be considered is by no means a closed category and there may be other relevant factors that might lead a court to refuse to approve a sale: *Salima Investments Ltd. v. Bank of Montreal* (1985), 65 A.R. 372 (Alta. C.A.) at paras 12-13. At its core, *River Rentals* highlights the need for a Court to balance several factors in determining whether a receiver complied with its duties and to confirm a sale. It did not purport to modify the *Soundair* test, establish a hierarchy of factors, nor limit the types of things that a Court might consider. The chambers judge applied the correct test. This ground of appeal is dismissed.

13 At its core, then, the appellants challenge how the chambers judge applied and weighed the relevant factors in this case. The appellants suggest that the failure to obtain a price at or close to the appraised value of the Hotels is an overriding factor that trumps all the others in assessing whether the Receiver acted improvidently. That is not the test. A reviewing Court's function is not to consider whether a Receiver has failed to get the best price. Rather, a Receiver's duty is to act in a commercially reasonable manner in the circumstances with a view to obtaining the best price having regard to the competing interests of the interested parties: *Skyepharma PLC v. Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp.* (1999), 12 C.B.R. (4th) 87 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at para 4, [1999] O.J. No. 4300 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]), aff'd on appeal (2000), 15 C.B.R. (4th) 298 (Ont. C.A.).

14 Nor is it the Court's function to substitute its view of how a marketing process should proceed. The appellants suggest that if the Hotels were re-marketed with an exposure period closer to that which the appraisals were based on, then a better offer might be obtained. Again, that is not the test. The Receiver's decision to enter into an agreement for sale must be assessed under the circumstances then existing. The chambers judge was aware that the Receiver considered the risk of not accepting the approved offer to be significant. There was no assurance that a longer marketing period would generate a better offer and, in the interim, the Receiver was incurring significant carrying costs. To ignore these circumstances would improperly call into question a receiver's expertise and authority in the receivership process and thereby compromise the integrity of a sales process and would undermine the commercial certainty upon which court-supervised insolvency sales are based: *Soundair* at para 43. In such a case, chaos in the commercial world would result and "receivers and purchasers would never be sure they had a binding agreement": *Soundair* at para 22.

15 The fact that three of the four offers came in so close together in terms of amount, with the fourth one being even lower, is significant. Absent evidence of impropriety or collusion in the preparation of those confidential offers — of which there is

absolutely none — the fact that those offers were all substantially lower than the appraised value speaks loudly to the existing hotel market in Grande Prairie. Moreover, the appellants have not brought any fresh evidence application to admit cogent evidence that a better offer might materialize if the Hotels were re-marketed. Indeed, the appellants have indicated that they do not rely on what the leave judge described as a "fairly continuous flow of material", the scent of which was to suggest that there were better offers waiting in the wings but were prevented from bidding because of the Receiver's abbreviated marketing process. Clearly the impression meant to be created by that late flow of material was an important factor in the leave judge's decision to grant a stay and leave to appeal: 2019 ABCA 269 (Alta. C.A.) at para 13.

16 Nor, as stated previously, have the appellants been able to re-finance the Hotels notwithstanding their assessment that there is still substantial equity in the Hotels based on the appraisals. At a certain point, however, it is the market that sets the value of property and appraisals simply become "relegated to not much more than well-meant but inaccurate predictions": *Romspen Mortgage Corp. v. Lantzville Foothills Estates Inc.*, 2013 BCSC 2222 (B.C. S.C.) at para 20.

17 The chambers judge was keenly alive to the abbreviated marketing period and the appraised values of the Hotels. Nevertheless, having regard to the unique nature of the property, the incomplete construction of the Development Hotel, the difficulties with prospective purchasers in branding the Hotels in an area outside of a major centre and an area which is in the midst of an economic downturn, she concluded that the Receiver acted in a commercially reasonable manner and obtained the best price possible in the circumstances. Even with an abbreviated period for submission of offers, the chambers judge reasonably concluded that the Receiver undertook an extensive marketing campaign, engaged a commercial realtor and construction consultant, and consulted and dialogued with the owner throughout the process, which process the appellants took no issue with, until the offers were received.

18 We see no reviewable error. This ground of appeal is also dismissed.

19 Finally, leave to appeal was also granted on whether s 193 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, and specifically s 193(a) or (c) of the Act, creates a leave to appeal as of right in these circumstances or whether leave to appeal is required pursuant to s 193(e). As the appeal was also authorized under s 193(e), we find it unnecessary to address whether this case meets the criteria for leave as of right in s 193(a)-(d) of the Act.

Appeal dismissed.

End of Document

TAB 3

2021 ABCA 144
Alberta Court of Appeal

1705221 Alberta Ltd v. Three M Mortgages Inc

2021 CarswellAlta 968, 2021 ABCA 144, [2021] A.W.L.D. 4108, 336 A.C.W.S. (3d) 283

1705221 Alberta Ltd (Appellant / Plaintiff) and Three M Mortgages Inc and Avatex Land Corporation (Respondents / Plaintiffs) and Todd Oeming, Todd Oeming as the Personal Representative of the Estate of Albert Oeming and the Estate of Albert Oeming (Defendants) and BDO Canada Limited (Interested Party) and Shelby Fehr (Interested Party)

Three M Mortgages Inc and Avatex Land Corporation (Respondents / Plaintiffs) and Todd Oeming, Todd Oeming as the Personal Representative of the Estate of Albert Oeming and the Estate of Albert Oeming (Appellants / Defendants) and BDO Canada Limited (Interested Party) and Shelby Fehr (Interested Party)

Jack Watson J.A., Dawn Pentelechuk J.A., and Kevin Feehan J.A.

Heard: April 1, 2021
Judgment: April 21, 2021
Docket: Edmonton Appeal 2003-0076AC, 2003-0077AC

Proceedings: additional reasons at *1705221 Alberta Ltd v. Three M Mortgages Inc* (2021), 2021 ABCA 192, 2021 CarswellAlta 1232, Dawn Pentelechuk J.A., Jack Watson J.A., Kevin Feehan J.A. (Alta. C.A.)

Counsel: D.R. Bieganek, Q.C., for Appellant, 1705221 Alberta Ltd
K.A. Rowan, Q.C., for Respondents, Three M Mortgages Inc and Avatex Land Corporation
K.G. Heintz, for Respondents, Todd Oeming, Todd Oeming as the Personal Representative of the Estate of Albert Oeming, and the Estate of Albert Oeming
M.J. McCabe, Q.C., for Interested Party, BDO Canada Limited
B.G. Doherty, for Interested Party, Shelby Fehr

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

Headnote

Debtors and creditors --- Receivers — Conduct and liability of receiver — General conduct of receiver

Loan was granted by plaintiff creditors to investment corporation, OI Ltd, which was secured by mortgage on lands owned by OI Ltd and guaranteed by defendant guarantors — Creditors foreclosed on OI Ltd's land and obtained deficiency judgment and judgment on guarantors — Guarantors' assets included shares in third party corporation, which owned lands at issue, and receiver was appointed for third party corporation — Receiver was authorized to list lands for sale and received two offers from prospective purchaser at price slightly below what receiver advised it would have accepted and also received offer from SF — Receiver filed application for court approval of SF's offer and invited prospective purchaser to submit improved offer to purchase — Chambers judge approved sale to SF — Guarantors and prospective purchaser brought appeals seeking to set aside order approving sale of lands to SF — Appeals dismissed — Receiver demonstrated reasonable efforts to market lands and did not act improvidently and receiver's acceptance of SF's offer was reasonable in circumstances and unassailable — SF's offer was significantly better than prospective purchaser's second offer and clearly reasonable given that it exceeded appraised value of lands — Integrity of sale process was not compromised — Having concluded that both sale process and SF offer were fair and reasonable, there was no reason for chambers judge to compare prospective purchaser's third offer to offer accepted, nor to enter into new bid process.

APPEALS by guarantors and prospective purchaser seeking to set aside order approving sale of lands to SF.

Per curiam:

Overview

1 These appeals involve challenges to a sale approval and vesting order granted by a chambers judge in the course of receivership proceedings. The appellant guarantors, Todd Oeming, Todd Oeming as Personal Representative of the Estate of Albert Oeming and the Estate of Albert Oeming (collectively, Oeming) seek to set aside the order approving the sale of lands to Shelby Fehr, as does an unsuccessful prospective purchaser, the appellant 1705221 Alberta Ltd (170).

2 These appeals engage consideration of whether the Receiver, BDO Canada Limited, satisfied the well-known test for court approval outlined in *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair Corp*(1991), 83 DLR (4th) 76, 4 OR (3d) 1 (CA) [*Soundair*]. The arguments of both appellants coalesce around the suggestion that the sale process lacked the necessary hallmarks of fairness, integrity and reasonableness.

3 The chambers judge applied the correct test in deciding whether to approve the sale recommended by the Receiver; therefore, for either appeal to succeed, one or both appellants must demonstrate that the chambers judge erred in the exercise of his discretion in approving the sale. This attracts a high degree of deference. Since the chambers judge did not misdirect himself on the law, this Court will only interfere if his decision was so clearly wrong that it amounts to an injustice or where the chambers judge gave no or insufficient weight to relevant considerations: *Jaycap Financial Ltd v Snowdon Block Inc* 2019 ABCA 47 at para 20.

4 We have concluded that neither Oeming nor 170 has demonstrated any error that would warrant setting aside the order. For the reasons that follow, the appeals are dismissed.

Background

5 The genesis of this long-standing indebtedness is a loan granted by the Respondents, Three M Mortgages Inc and Avatex Land Corporation (the creditors) to Al Oeming Investments Ltd (Oeming Investments), which was secured by a mortgage on lands owned by Oeming Investments. The loan was guaranteed by Oeming.

6 In March 2015, the creditors foreclosed on the Oeming Investments lands, obtaining a deficiency judgment in the sum of $ 941,826.09. In February 2016, the creditors sued Oeming on the guarantees and in December 2018, obtained judgment in this amount.

7 Oeming's assets included shares in Wild Splendor Development Inc, which company owned lands formerly known as the Alberta Game Farm, later Polar Park, in Strathcona County (the lands). These lands are the subject of the present appeals.

8 The creditors enforced their judgment against Oeming by applying under the *Business Corporations Act*, RSA 2000, c B-9, the *Judicature Act*, RSA 2000, c J-2 and the *Civil Enforcement Act*, RSA 2000, c C-15, for the appointment of BDO Canada Limited as Receiver of Wild Splendor. The Receivership/Liquidation Order was granted in June 2019. The Receiver moved to sell the lands, obtaining an order on October 10, 2019, authorizing it to list the lands for sale with Avison Young Canada Inc at a price of $1,950,000.

9 Two parties were interested in purchasing the lands: 170 and Shelby Fehr, both adjacent landowners. 170 made an offer to purchase on January 11, 2020, but it was not in a form acceptable to the Receiver. 170 submitted a second offer on February 3, 2020 at a price slightly below what the Receiver advised it would accept. While 170 believed its offer would be accepted by the Receiver, it never was and 170 withdrew its offer on February 7, 2020 out of concern its offer was being "shopped".

10 Fehr made an offer to purchase the lands on February 7, 2020. On Avison Young's recommendation of this "extremely strong offer", the Receiver promptly accepted it, subject to court approval.

11 The Receiver filed an application for court approval of Fehr's offer, returnable February 27, 2020. On February 10, 2020, the Receiver invited 170 to submit an improved offer to purchase and to attend the upcoming application.

12 At the application, spanning February 27-28, 2020, 170 raised concerns regarding the sale process. It urged the chambers judge to consider its third offer, dated February 18, 2020, or to establish a bid process to allow both Fehr and 170 to submit further offers.

13 Oeming also opposed the application, seeking an adjournment on the basis that the County of Strathcona was scheduled in April 2020 to vote on a land use bylaw changing the zoning of the lands to seasonal recreational resort use, which Oeming said would dramatically increase the value of the lands. This re-zoning would in turn facilitate their ability to refinance. They also argued that the anticipated bylaw would result in Fehr experiencing a financial windfall. Oeming took issue with the appraisal relied on by the Receiver, suggesting the lands had been undervalued and the sale process rushed, all of which served to prejudice their interests.

Decision of the Chambers Judge

14 The chambers judge declined to adjourn the application, noting that the anticipated land use bylaw question had been raised previously, including before the chambers judge who granted the order approving the sale process. He also observed that there was no certainty the bylaw would be passed or when the lands would ever be permissibly developed.

15 The chambers judge next considered whether the process should be re-opened to allow bids from 170 and Fehr. He found the Receiver's sale process to be adequate and found nothing in the evidence to warrant permitting further bids. The chambers judge concluded that "If receivership and the exercise of receivership powers by officers of the court are to have meaning, the court itself must abide by the process it has set out". However, the chambers judge permitted 170 to present its third offer to the court and adjourned the proceedings to the following day to allow 170, Oeming and the Receiver to put forward affidavit evidence on whether the sale process was unfair.

16 On February 28, 2020, after reviewing the affidavit evidence and hearing full submissions, the chambers judge made the following findings:

- 170's February 3, 2020 offer was never accepted;
- There was no consensus between 170 and the Receiver regarding the structure of the purchase price; this was being negotiated;
- There was no evidence 170's offer was shopped around beyond the normal course;
- 170, through its realtor, was aware of other potential purchasers;
- 170's suspicion something untoward had happened was not grounded in the evidence.

17 The chambers judge concluded that allowing 170's offer to be considered "would be manifestly unfair and lend uncertainty to the process of sales under receiverships, which would be untenable in the commercial community and would erode trust in that community and its confidence in the court-supervised receivership process". The sale to Fehr was approved.

18 The chambers judge later granted a stay of the order pending appeal.

The Soundair Test

19 Court approval of the sale requires the Receiver to satisfy the well-known test in *Soundair*. As this Court summarized in *Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc v 1905393 Alberta Ltd* 2019 ABCA 433 at para 10 [*Pricewaterhousecoopers*], the test requires satisfaction of four factors:

i. Whether the Receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently;

ii. Whether the interests of all parties have been considered, not just the interests of the creditors of the debtor;

iii. The efficacy and integrity of the sale process by which offers are obtained; and

iv. Whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

20 Although the grounds of appeal of 170 and Oeming differ, they all lead to the central question of whether the Receiver satisfied the *Soundair* requirements. 170 seeks to set aside the order and asks that a bid process involving 170 and Fehr be allowed, on the condition that neither party be allowed to submit an offer for less than their last and highest offer. Oeming asks that the order be set aside and that they be provided additional time to refinance or alternatively, that the lands be re-marketed for a minimum of six to nine months.

21 We will address each of the four *Soundair* factors in turn, from the perspective of both 170 and Oeming.

i. Sufficient Efforts to Sell

22 A court approving a sale recommended by a receiver is not engaged in a perfunctory, rubberstamp exercise. But neither should a court reject a receiver's recommendation on sale absent exceptional circumstances: *Soundair* at paras 21, 58. A receiver plays the lead role in receivership proceedings. They are officers of the court; their advice should therefore be given significant weight. To otherwise approach the proceedings would weaken the receiver's central purpose and function and erode confidence in those who deal with them: *Crown Trust Co v Rosenberg*(1986), 39 DLR (4th) 526, 60 OR (2d) 87 (ONSC) at p 551.

23 Oeming argues that the chambers judge erred in relying on the Receiver's appraisal of the lands which was not appended to an affidavit and therefore constituted inadmissible hearsay. Oeming further alleges that the Receiver acted improvidently in listing the lands for sale at $1,950,000, an amount they insist is significantly below property value. They point to their appraisal from Altus Group, appended to the appraiser's affidavit, in support of their claim that the lands are worth far more than the amount suggested by the Receiver.

24 These arguments cannot succeed. Neither the Receivership/Liquidation Order nor the Order Approving Receiver's Activities and Sale Process required the Receiver to submit its reports by way of affidavit. To the contrary, the Receivership/Liquidation Order was an Alberta template order containing the following provision expressly exempting the Receiver from reporting to the court by way of affidavit:

> 28. Notwithstanding Rule 6.11 of the *Alberta Rules of Court*, unless otherwise ordered by this Court, the Receiver/Liquidator will report to the Court from time to time, which reporting is not required to be in affidavit form and shall be considered by this Court as evidence . . .

25 The draft Altus Group appraisal (identical in form to the signed appraisal appended to the affidavit) and the Glen Cowan appraisal obtained by the Receiver were included in the Receiver's First Report that was before the chambers judge who issued the Order Approving Receiver's Activities and Sale Process. No one, least of all Oeming, took exception to the appraisals being considered in this form at that time.

26 Further, the Receiver addressed the disparity in valuations in its First Report. Briefly, the Altus Group appraisal included two parcels of land that were not part of the sale process. Of the three lots to be sold, Altus had a higher value per acre on Lots 1 and 2 which the Receiver advised was intrinsically related to the purchase of Lot 3 for the purposes of commercial/recreational development, which was not the zoning then existing.

27 The Receiver also advised it had requested proposals from eight realtors, receiving four. It set out why it was recommending that Avison Young's proposal (suggesting a list price of $1,950,000) be accepted.

28 The respondents argue this amounts to a collateral attack on this earlier-in-time order, which, notably, was never appealed. We agree. All of this information was before the chambers judge who granted the order approving the sale process. If his decision was unreasonable or amounted to a miscarriage of justice, Oeming should have appealed that order. It cannot now do so indirectly vis-à-vis the subsequent Sale Approval and Vesting Order.

29 Before the chambers judge, 170 emphasized its perception that its second offer had been shopped, rendering the sale process unfair. This suggestion was roundly rejected by the chambers judge, who found no evidence that the amount of 170's offer had been disclosed, and any disclosure to Fehr that there was another interested party was in the normal course.

30 For the first time on appeal, 170 focuses on Avison Young's listing proposal, found in the Confidential Supplement to the Receiver's First Report. It is unclear whether the Confidential Supplement was available to 170 when the chambers judge heard the application to approve the sale to Fehr, but it was requested by 170's appellate counsel and provided to him prior to these appeals. 170 argues the court-approved marketing proposal was not transparent and not followed by Avison Young and the Receiver, making the sale process unfair. 170 relies specifically on the following references found within the five-phase marketing strategy:

- Phase 2- Solicit Offers from Buyers (option to use template prior to bid date);
- Phase 3- Selection of preferred Buyer(s):
    - Potential to short list and request improved resubmission.

31 170 suggests the proposal *directed* a bid process and the opportunity to resubmit highest and best offers, similar to a formal tender process. As offers were not elicited through a bid process and no opportunity was given to the preferred buyers to resubmit a further, improved offer, 170 alleges the sale process was neither transparent, fair, nor commercially reasonable.

32 Aside from concerns that this issue is raised for the first time on appeal, the argument fails on its merits. On a plain reading of the impugned portions of the marketing proposal, neither a bid process, nor the option to resubmit offers, is mandated; rather, they are framed as possible options Avison Young *could* employ. A receiver relies on the advice and guidance of the court-approved listing agent in how best to market and sell the asset in question and its own commercial expertise in accepting an offer subject to court approval. Avison Young's realtor deposed that in some circumstances, he will recommend a receiver seek "best and final offers" from interested purchasers. However, in this instance, given the nature of the lands, the present economy, the level of interest and the potential that the Fehr offer could be withdrawn at any moment, his advice to the Receiver was that the unconditional and irrevocable Fehr offer be accepted without delay.

33 Second, prospective purchasers like 170 are not parties to the listing agreement. While 170 suggests it is entitled to the benefit of the marketing process, there are sound policy reasons militating against this proposition. The insolvency regime depends on expediency and certainty. It is untenable to suggest that a "bitter bidder" like 170 can, after another offer has been accepted, look to particulars of the agreement between the listing agent and the Receiver to mount an argument that the sale process was unfair. We agree with the chambers judge's conclusion that the court-approved sale process was followed and that there was nothing unfair about it.

34 It must be remembered that the position of 170 as a bidder in this context is not analogous to the Contract A/Contract B reasoning in the law of tenders. Even if 170's disappointment stemming from its wishful optimism of being able to purchase the lands is understandable, this is not the same as 170 having an enforceable legal right arising from sales guidance of the listing agent. In any event, it would appear that 170 was not even aware of the guidance from the listing agent, which is now suggested to be a condition precedent to the Receiver accepting the Fehr offer.

35 In this instance, it appears the chambers judge declined to consider 170's third offer in his determination of whether the sale to Fehr should be approved. On the present facts, we see no error in this approach. The Fehr offer was significantly better than 170's second offer and clearly reasonable given that it exceeded the appraised value of the lands. We are satisfied

the Receiver demonstrated reasonable efforts to market the lands and did not act improvidently. Its acceptance of the Fehr offer was reasonable in the circumstances and unassailable.

ii. Whether the Interests of All Parties Have Been Considered

36 This segues to the question of whether 170 has any standing to appeal. The Receiver raised this issue in its factum, but did not strenuously pursue it at the appeal hearing. We understand the Receiver's position is grounded by the fact the Receiver had invited 170 to participate in the application to approve the sale and that 170's standing was not raised in the proceedings before the chambers judge, at least until the stay application pending appeal on March 12, 2020. 170 suggests its standing to appeal was given tacit approval.

37 Given the position taken by the Receiver and the particular circumstances before us, we decline to comment on this issue at this time. However, we note that the issue of standing for an interested entity like 170 has not yet been decided by this Court and remains a live issue.

38 We equally do not purport to define or delineate the scope of "party" for the purposes of determining whether a receiver has met the *Soundair* test. Under the current state of the law, what is and is not a "party" has yet to be resolved with absolute precision and clarity. Its definition is a matter of importance in the functionality of the four factors, and the conduct of receivership proceedings generally, and deserves proper debate best reserved for another day. As noted, the specific facts of this case have obviated the need to definitively and directly address this question.

39 Nonetheless, it is helpful to examine the policy reasons why a prospective purchaser's ability to challenge a sale approval application should be closely circumscribed. As noted by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Skyepharma PLC*v *Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp* (2000), 47 OR (3d) 234, 130 OAC 273 at paras 25-28, the prospective purchaser has no legal or proprietary right in the lands being sold. Normally, an examination of the sale process and whether the Receiver has complied with the *Soundair* principles, is focussed on those with a direct interest in the sale process, primarily the creditors.

40 In that regard, the creditors acknowledge they will be paid in full through acceptance of either offer. It is the interests of Oeming that are front and center. Unfortunately, Oeming repeats the same themes they have raised throughout these proceedings. It may come to pass that the new land use bylaw will result in a dramatic increase in the land value but that is a speculative concept beyond this Court's proper consideration. The Receiver's decision to accept the Fehr offer must be assessed under the circumstances then existing: *Pricewaterhousecoopers* at para 14; *Soundair* at para 21. Challenges to a sale process based on after-the-fact information should generally be resisted.

41 On the record before us, we agree with the chambers judge that the opportunity for Oeming to obtain refinancing has passed. While Oeming argues their efforts at refinancing have been hamstrung by the receivership proceedings, there is evidence the debt could have been paid through the Oeming estate, but decisions were made to distribute those funds elsewhere.

42 Consideration must also be given to Fehr who negotiated an offer to purchase in good faith over a year ago, yet continues to live with uncertainty. Beyond affecting Fehr's interests, this also undermines the integrity of receivership proceedings generally. As neatly summarized in *Soundair*at para 69:

> 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.

iii. The Efficacy and Integrity of the Sale Process

43 In obtaining an order approving the sale process, the Receiver satisfied the court of its efforts to engage an appraiser to value the lands for sale. The Receiver also satisfied the court of its efforts to determine the best sale process and why it was

recommending Avison Young from the list of four realtors submitting proposals. As we have indicated, the marketing proposal outlined by Avison Young was followed.

44 Oeming also argues the marketing period was unduly rushed. Avison Young's marketing efforts included contacting 407 individual prospective buyers and brokers. It fielded inquiries from 15 interested parties and toured the lands with three interested parties. Signage visible from Highway 14 was placed on the lands and the listing was placed on Avison Young's website. The only offers received were from the two adjacent landowners. Marketing an asset is an unpredictable exercise. It is pure speculation that a longer marketing period would have generated additional, let alone better, offers.

45 We are not persuaded that the integrity of the sale process was compromised. It bears repeating that 170's second offer was *below* the amount the Receiver advised it would accept. 170 had full autonomy over that decision. Its offer was never accepted. While 170 may have believed its offer was going to be accepted, it chose to withdraw its offer, suspecting that same was being shopped around. As the chambers judge found, there is no evidence to support that suspicion.

46 The Fehr offer was significantly higher than 170's. Since it exceeded the appraised value of the land, was irrevocable and unconditional, it is hardly surprising that Avison Young recommended its immediate acceptance.

iv. Whether there was Unfairness in the Working Out of the Process

47 While courts should avoid delving "into the minutia of the process or of the selling strategy adopted by the receiver", courts must still ensure the process was fair: *Soundair* at para 49. The chambers judge afforded both Oeming and 170 the opportunity to make full submissions and tender further evidence before deciding to approve the sale to Fehr. Having concluded that both the sale process and the Fehr offer were fair and reasonable, there was no reason for the chambers judge to compare 170's third offer to the offer accepted, nor to enter into a new bid process.

Conclusion

48 These proceedings have become long and unwieldy. Courts cannot lose sight of two of the overarching policy considerations that articulate bankruptcy and insolvency proceedings: urgency and commercial certainty. Delay fuels increased costs and breeds chaos and confusion, all of which risk adversely affecting the interests of parties with a direct and immediate stake in the sale process.

49 The appeals are dismissed and the stay granted by order dated March 12, 2020 is lifted.

Appeals dismissed.

TAB 4

2007 ABQB 49
Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

Calpine Canada Energy Ltd., Re

2007 CarswellAlta 156, 2007 ABQB 49, [2007] A.W.L.D. 1172, 155 A.C.W.S. (3d) 77, 28 C.B.R. (5th) 185

In the Matter of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as Amended

And in the Matter of Calpine Canada Energy Limited, Calpine Canada Power Ltd., Calpine Canada Energy Finance ULC, Calpine Energy Services Canada Ltd., Calpine Canada Resources Company, Calpine Canada Power Services Ltd., Calpine Canada Energy Finance II ULC, Calpine Natural Gas Services Limited, and 3094479 Nova Scotia Company (Applicants)

B.E. Romaine J.

Heard: January 22, 2007
Judgment: February 8, 2007
Docket: Calgary 0501-17864

Counsel: Larry B. Robinson, Q.C., Sean I. Collins, Fred Myers, Jay A. Carfagnini, Brian Empey for CCAA Debtors
Patrick McCarthy, Q.C., Josef A. Krueger for Monitor
A. Robert Anderson, Q.C., Kevin P. McElcheran (present by telephone) for Independent Trustees of Calpine Commercial Trust
John Finnigan, Robert Thornton for ULC2 Ad Hoc Committee of Bondholders
Sean Dunphy, Elizabeth Pillon for ULC2 Trustee
Frank Dearlove for HSBC Bank
Howard Gorman, Randal Van de Mosselaer for ULC1 Noteholders
Peter H. Griffin for Calpine Corporation and other U.S. Debtors
Peter T. Linder, Q.C., Emi R. Bossio for HCP Acquisition Inc.
Richard Billington for Catalyst Capital Group Inc.
Glenn Solomon for certain creditors

Subject: Insolvency; Corporate and Commercial

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Proposal — Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act — Arrangements — Approval by court — Miscellaneous issues

Corporation went into receivership — Corporation had closely intertwined relationship with commercial trust and income fund — Group representing corporation sought to sell various assets relating to such relationship between entities, including certain trust units — Group reached settlement agreement with fund and applied for order approving of such agreement — Receiver received offer from third party for trust units — Court directed monitor to prepare report comparing third party offer and settlement agreement — Monitor initially advised that settlement agreement be accepted — Following complaints by certain stakeholders and creditors, court directed monitor to create new report considering new offer put forth by third party — Monitor advised that third party's new offer be accepted — Group brought application for approval of third party's offer — Application granted — Best interests of all parties would not be served by continuation of process in search of better offers — Potential for increased consideration was outweighed by risks and potential delay that would follow — Final recommendation of monitor was sound and reasonable — Rejection of recommendations in any but most exceptional circumstances materially diminished and weakened role and functions of receiver — Such casual rejection would lead to conclusion that decision of receiver was of little weight and that real decision was always made by court upon application for approval — Third party's final offer was only route which assured avoidance of prolonged litigation.

APPLICATION by group for approval of third party's offer to purchase trust units.

***B.E. Romaine J.*:**

Introduction

1 These reasons describe the complicated and controversial course of an application to sell certain assets. The application was made by the above-noted applicants (collectively, the "Calpine Applicants"), who, pursuant to an initial order dated December 20, 2005, are under the protection of the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended (the "CCAA").

Facts

2 This saga began when the Calpine Applicants decided to attempt to sell certain assets that form part of the complex, intertwined relationship of Calpine Canada Power Ltd. ("CCPL") with the Calpine Commercial Trust (the "Trust") and the Calpine Power Income Fund (the "Fund").

3 On December 21, 2006, the Calpine Applicants filed a Notice of Motion, returnable on December 28, 2006, seeking authorization to market and sell the following assets (the "Fund-related Assets"):

> a) certain contracts, being a management agreement, an administration agreement and some operating agreements (collectively, the "MA&O Agreements") relating to the Fund, the Trust and Calpine Power L.P. ("CLP") and to the operation of two power plants owned by CLP; and
>
> b) the Class B Units in CLP.

4 An affidavit sworn on December 21, 2006 by Toby Austin, President and CEO of CCPL, includes at para. 10 a simplified diagram of the structure of CCPL's relationship with the Fund, the Trust and CLP.

5 Briefly, CLP is a limited partnership with Calpine Power L.P. Ltd. ("CLPGP") as its general partner and the Trust and CCPL as limited partners. CLPGP has assigned its rights and obligations as a general partner to CCPL. The Trust is an open-ended trust, the sole beneficiary of which is the trustee of the Fund. The Fund is a publicly held income fund listed on the TSX. Since CCPL and the other Canadian Calpine entities sought the protection of the CCAA, the Trust and the Fund have been governed by the independent trustees of the Trust and the independent directors of CLPGP (who are also trustees).

6 The Trust's principal asset is its interest in CLP. CLP indirectly owns two power plants, the Island Cogen Facility in British Columbia and the Calgary Energy Centre. CLP granted a participating unsecured loan to Calpine Canada Whitby Holdings Company, an entity that owns 50% of a joint venture that is developing a cogeneration facility in Ontario.

7 The Trust owns A Units in the CLP limited partnership. CCPL owns B Units. The B Units, which represent 30% of the equity of CLP, are subordinate to the A Units. Further complicating this already intertwined relationship, the Trust purchased from CCPL in May 2004 a promissory note with a face value of approximately $53.5 million pursuant to a loan known as the Manager's Loan. As security for the Manager's Loan, CCPL granted to the Trust a pledge of the B Units.

8 CCPL administers the Fund and the related entities pursuant to the MA&O Agreements. The MA&O Agreements all provide that they may be assigned by CCPL only with the consent of either the Trust or CLP, which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld. In support of their motion for authorization to sell the Fund-related Assets, the Calpine Applicants advised that on December 19, 2006, Harbinger Capital Partners ("Harbinger") had announced its intention to launch a take-over bid for the publicly-traded trust units of the Fund and that the Calpine Applicants believed that this presented them with an opportunity to negotiate the sale of the Fund-related Assets with bidders who might be interested in acquiring the Fund.

9 In response to the Calpine Applicants' motion, the Fund advised that it intended to bring a cross-application to terminate the MA&O Agreements. The Christmas break intervened and the application and proposed cross-application were adjourned to a date in January 2007. The Fund was to circulate materials with respect to its cross-application by Friday, January 12, 2007.

10 During the days leading up to and including Saturday, January 13, 2007, the Fund and the Calpine Applicants negotiated and entered into a settlement agreement (the "Settlement Agreement"). A notice of motion and supporting affidavit with respect to this Settlement Agreement was circulated to the service list on January 13 and 14, 2007. The Calpine Applicants applied for an order:

> a) authorizing CCPL to enter into the Settlement Agreement;
>
> b) approving the Settlement Agreement and the various transaction agreements that accompanied it;
>
> c) terminating the MA&O Agreements upon the closing of the Settlement Agreement and lifting the stay of proceedings under the CCAA proceedings for that limited purpose;
>
> d) directing that a confidential supplemental report on the Settlement Agreement that was to be prepared by Ernst & Young Inc. (the "Monitor") be sealed until closing of the Settlement Agreement; and
>
> e) miscellaneous other relief.

11 The Fund prepared a Notice of Motion bearing the same date in which the independent trustees of the Trust and the directors of CLPGP applied to lift the stay imposed under the CCAA for the purpose of terminating the MA&O Agreements if the Settlement Agreement was not approved by the Court. The motion to approve the Settlement Agreement was to be heard on Wednesday, January 17, 2007.

12 On Monday, January 15, 2007, I heard from various stakeholders in this CCAA proceeding who were aggrieved about both the timing of the application and the stringent requirements of confidentiality that had been imposed by the Fund on information relating to the Settlement Agreement. That day was a holiday in the United States where a number of stakeholders are resident and several counsel had been unable to receive instructions from their clients on these issues. I directed that the application to approve the Settlement Agreement be set over to Monday, January 22, 2007 and that the issue of the terms of confidentiality be adjourned to Wednesday, January 17, 2007 so that counsel could obtain adequate instructions from their clients.

13 Late on January 16, 2007, the Monitor received an offer (the "Harbinger Offer") for the Fund-related Assets from HCP Acquisition Inc. ("HCP"), the subsidiary of Harbinger that is the vehicle for Harbinger's take-over bid for the public Trust units. The Monitor provided the Court with a copy of the offer, together with an application for advice and directions, shortly before Court opened to hear submissions on the confidentiality issue. The Harbinger Offer for the Fund-related Assets was publicly disclosed by press release, but most parties had only recently become aware of its terms. The Monitor, of course, was not in a position at that time to provide advice on the offer and how it compared to the terms of the Settlement Agreement. It became apparent during the course of the hearing that the stakeholders wanted the Monitor to prepare a comparison of the Settlement Agreement and the Harbinger Offer. Submissions from that point focussed on how much, if any, of the Monitor's report with respect to that comparison should be subject to confidentiality, and whether the confidentiality provisions imposed by the Fund on the Settlement Agreement and on the Monitor's Supplemental Report (as defined below) should be lifted. Some stakeholders argued vigorously for a different process more akin to an open auction or tender for the assets.

14 At this point, the Monitor had prepared two reports, a Sixteenth Report that discussed the Settlement Agreement in general terms, without disclosing its specific financial terms, which was disclosed without restriction to the service list, and a Supplemental Report to the Sixteenth Report (the "Supplemental Report") that disclosed those financial terms, together with the Monitor's comments on the value of the MA&O Agreements and the B Units. These latter comments included a review of CCPL's discounted cash flow financial model of the B Units. The Supplemental Report was made available only to stakeholders who entered into confidentiality agreements as required by the Settlement Agreement.

15 The Calpine Applicants and the Fund submitted that the Settlement Agreement and the Supplemental Report were confidential and commercially sensitive to both parties. The Calpine Applicants were concerned that pricing and valuation information contained in the Supplemental Report would have a negative impact on any subsequent marketing process if the

Settlement Agreement was not approved. The Fund had concerns relating to its response to the Harbinger take-over bid of the publicly-traded trust units and submitted that disclosure of the pricing and financial terms could be used by Harbinger to the disadvantage of the Fund. The Fund also asserted strenuously that it did not want to be placed in the position of a stalking horse for the Fund-related Assets and that, if it was put in that position, it would withdraw its offer.

16 The parties who sought access to the terms of the Settlement Agreement and the Supplemental Report were offered certain choices of confidentiality agreements, but it is clear that the Fund sought to ensure that such parties would be precluded from using the information for any purpose other than evaluating the Settlement Agreement, and particularly from making any kind of competing bid for the Fund's public trust units. One version of confidentiality agreement proffered by the Fund allowed stakeholders to establish an internal confidential screen that would remain in effect for two years in order to evaluate the information without requiring confidentiality to be imposed on the stakeholder's entire organization. Another allowed legal advisors to review the material without allowing them to disclose confidential terms to their clients. Although an attempt to impose this degree of restriction on access to information is exceptional in litigation generally, it is not without precedent in cases involving CCAA proceedings and receivers where assets of a business are sought to be sold: See In the matter of a Plan of Compromise and Arrangement of Air Canada, *et al.*, under the CCAA, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended; see also In the matter of the CCAA, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended, and In the Matter of the Courts of Justice Act, R.S.O. 1990 c. C-43, as amended and In the Matter of a Plan of Compromise or Arrangement of Royal Oak Mines, *et al.* (all unreported).

17 I concluded that, although the Settlement Agreement was negotiated under stringent terms of confidentiality and the Supplemental Report was prepared pursuant to an assumption of confidentiality and on the assumption that the likelihood of CCPL receiving any offers whose benefits to CCPL exceeded those of the Settlement Agreement was remote, the situation had changed with the introduction of the Harbinger Offer. I was concerned, however, that it could be prejudicial to the primary goal of maximizing value to stakeholders if I ordered unrestricted disclosure of the Settlement Agreement or of the Supplemental Report during the short period of time between January 17 and January 22, 2007, when the Monitor's new report comparing the offers became available, particularly if I determined after hearing full submissions on January 22, 2007 that a different process should be followed.

18 I therefore declined either to endorse the confidentiality provisions imposed by the Fund to that date or to order greater disclosure, on the basis that the fairness of the process that led to the Settlement Agreement and the confidentiality requirements that had been imposed by it were live issues for submissions on January 22, 2007 and would be factors in any decision on whether or not to approve the Settlement Agreement. I directed the Monitor to prepare its comparison report with the analysis of the Settlement Agreement remaining subject to restricted disclosure, but with the Monitor's conclusions and recommendations being available on an unrestricted basis to stakeholders. I asked the Monitor to address the issue of whether a broader auction or marketing process should be undertaken.

19 The Monitor's Seventeenth Report was prepared and circulated on Friday, January 19, 2007. The Monitor concluded that, taking into account the material variables affecting the comparison between the Harbinger Offer and the Settlement Agreement, the completion of the Settlement Agreement proposal was the prudent approach. The Monitor stipulated, however, that the Calpine stakeholders should have the benefit of the Seventeenth Report and that the Monitor and the Court "should consider the stakeholders' tolerance for increased risk and potentially incremental realizations for the Fund-related Assets when considering the motion to approve the [Settlement Agreement] on January 22, 2007."

20 The Monitor considered two broad options, the completion of the Settlement Agreement and an auction marketing process. The Monitor noted that the Fund had advised the Court that it would not participate in an auction process and had indicated that, if the Settlement Agreement was not approved on January 22, 2007, it would proceed on January 26, 2007 with its motion to terminate the MA&O Agreements. If the Fund removed itself from the auction process, there would be no competitive tension with the Harbinger Offer unless other parties came forward. The Monitor believed that a limited number of new parties would be available to participate in an auction process because parties who might otherwise be interested might have become restricted in submitting an offer because of participation in the Fund's efforts to find a "white knight" with respect to the Harbinger take-over bid for the Fund public trust units. The Monitor pointed out that the B Units are an illiquid, subordinated minority position in a private entity, attractive primarily to parties who may be interested acquiring the Fund. He also noted that the Harbinger

Offer could be terminated at any point prior to acceptance. Given all of these factors, the Monitor believed there was substantial risk in pursuing an auction process.

21 On the morning of January 22, 2007, shortly before the motion to approve the Settlement Agreement was heard, Harbinger submitted a revised offer for the Fund-related Assets (the "Harbinger Revised Offer") that increased the price offered from the greater of $100 million or the value of the Settlement Agreement transaction price plus $2 million, as set out in the Harbinger Offer, to the greater of $110 million and 110% of the value of the Settlement Agreement transaction price. The Harbinger Revised Offer also removed Harbinger's ability to withdraw the offer without the Monitor's permission before the earlier of:

a) February 16, 2007;

b) Court approval of an alternate proposal; and

c) Harbinger making a replacement offer that the Monitor concludes is superior to the Harbinger Revised Offer.

22 At the hearing, the Ad Hoc Committee of ULC II Bondholders, which includes Harbinger as a member, and the ULC II Indenture Trustee were in vehement opposition to the motion to approve the Settlement Agreement, suggesting that the process that led to the Settlement Agreement and the restrictions on access to financial information imposed by the Fund had resulted in a "fatally flawed secret marketing process" that placed the stakeholders and the Court in an untenable position. In answer to the Monitor's suggestion that the Court hear from the stakeholders regarding their tolerance for increased risk and potentially incremental realizations for the Fund-related Assets, the Ad Hoc Committee advised that its members, absent Harbinger, had conferred and that "they are prepared to forego the secret benefits of the Settlement Agreement and either take their chances with a properly supervised process, or if need be, revert to the status quo where the marketing of this asset had not yet been commenced." Counsel for the ULC II Bondholders and Trustee submitted that an expedited sales process should be conducted, and that there was still time, given the status of the Harbinger take-over bid, for there to be an auction between the two existing bidders.

23 The Ad Hoc Committee of the ULC II Bondholders and the ULC II Indenture Trustee were the only major creditor group who had not entered into a form of confidentiality agreement with CCPL and the Trust so as to obtain access to the financial terms of the Settlement Agreement and the restricted portions of the Monitor's reports. As noted by counsel, the ULC II Bondholders are in the business of trading in distressed bonds, and the possession of non-public information relating to the B Units would preclude them from trading in any Calpine securities until the information became public. While the alternatives offered by CCPL and the Trust would allow counsel to the Bondholders to evaluate the Settlement Agreement with a view to the interests of their clients, it would not allow them direct access to information without the unpalatable result to their business of restricting their freedom to trade in Calpine securities. Thus, for this group of stakeholders, anything less than full public disclosure of information about the B Units would be problematic. This placed these creditors in direct conflict with the Trust and the Fund in their efforts to maintain confidentiality of commercially-sensitive information and to avoid becoming a "stalking-horse" for higher offers. While neither of these private commercial interests is of primary significance to this Court in the context of CCAA proceedings, which have as a primary goal the maximization of value of the debtors' assets for the benefit of stakeholders as a whole, they are factors to be weighed in a determination of the fairness and integrity of the sale process.

24 Counsel for the Ad Hoc ULC I Noteholders Committee, who had access to all information relating to the Settlement Agreement through a "counsel's eyes only" confidentiality agreement, noted that his clients were in favour of a short auction between the Fund and Harbinger, with the Fund publicly releasing the details of the Settlement Agreement.

25 Harbinger submitted that the Harbinger Revised Offer addressed a number of the Monitor's concerns, including the elimination of the right to withdraw the offer at any time prior to acceptance, and called for an open auction/marketing process for the assets.

26 The Fund pointed out that eighteen creditors or creditor groups had signed a form of confidentiality agreement, leaving only the ULC II Bondholders and the ULC II Indenture Trustee among the major creditors who had not had access to the financial terms of the Settlement Agreement and the restricted portions of the Monitor's Reports. It "strongly objected" to the marketing

of the MA&O Agreements and set out the requirements it indicated it would insist that an assignee of those agreements and a purchaser of the B Units must fulfill if the Settlement Agreement was not approved.

27 When it became apparent that the Settlement Agreement likely would not be approved on the day of hearing, counsel for the Fund noted that the Settlement Agreement expired at midnight on January 23, 2007 and he could not indicate if the independent trustees and directors would extend the deadline or would let the Settlement Agreement lapse. He stated that the Fund would not participate if the process became an auction. Counsel for the Fund suggested that the terms of the Settlement Agreement be disclosed to all parties other than Harbinger for a very brief period of two hours that day, after which the Monitor would prepare a supplemental report on any additional offers that this disclosure would generate overnight, with the hearing continuing the next day. The Calpine Applicants pointed out that they were bound to support the Settlement Agreement and that they, too, were reluctant to prolong the process beyond the time the Settlement Agreement would expire, as they feared losing the benefits of that agreement.

28 This one-day proposal, which excluded Harbinger, was characterized by the ULC II Bondholders group and the ULC I Noteholders group as being unworkable and wholly ineffective in maximizing value. Harbinger, through its counsel, suggested that the process required at least 10 days, the creation of a data room and a general invitation to bidders.

29 The duties a court must perform when deciding whether a receiver has acted appropriately in selling an asset are summarized succinctly in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1, 4 O.R. (3d) 1, 83 D.L.R. (4th) 76, 46 O.A.C. 321 (Ont. C.A.) at para. 16 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.

While the *Soundair* case involved a receivership and this is a situation of a debtor-in-possession under the CCAA overseen by a Monitor, these duties remain relevant to the issues before me, with some adaptation for the differences in the form of proceedings. It is noteworthy that *Soundair* did not suggest that a formal auction process was necessary or advisable in every case, and the Court in fact referred to *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 (Alta. C.A.), where the Alberta Court of Appeal suggests that a court on an application to approve a sale is not necessarily bound to conduct a judicial auction.

30 I have no doubt that in negotiating the Settlement Agreement with the Fund, the Calpine Applicants made efforts to get the best price possible, and that they did not act improvidently. While there were submissions to the contrary, it is telling that the Monitor was prepared to recommend the Settlement Agreement despite the lack of negotiation with parties other than the Fund, due primarily to the unique and difficult character of the Fund-related Assets and the backdrop of the Harbinger take-over bid for the Fund's public trust units, which created a time-limited window of opportunity. I also am not persuaded that the Settlement Agreement was not responsive to the interests of all parties, particularly to the primary interest of the creditors in maximizing value, given the circumstances facing the Calpine Applicants at the time the Settlement Agreement was negotiated.

31 There was, however, a lack of sufficient transparency and open disclosure, which resulted in a process lacking the degree of integrity and fairness necessary when the court is involved in a public sale of assets under the CCAA. The CCAA insulates a debtor from its creditors for a period of time to allow it to attempt to resolve its financial problems through an acceptable plan of arrangement. It allows the debtor to carry on business during that period of time and to exercise a degree of normal business judgment under the supervision of the court and a Monitor. What may be commercially reasonable and even advantageous when undertaken by parties outside the litigation process, however, may be restricted by the requirement that fairness be done, and be seen to be done, when the process is supervised by the court. While a more open process may not lead to greater value, and

may, as in this case, give rise to the possibility that an existing bidder may exit the process, the nature of a court-supervised process demands a process that meets at least minimal requirements of fairness and openness. The process undertaken to the point of the hearing on January 22, 2007, particularly with its emphasis on control of information and confidentiality for the primary benefit of the Fund, did not pass the test.

32 In addition, the fact of the Harbinger Offer necessitated closer consideration of the Monitor's assumption, reasonable as it may have been at the time it was made, that the likelihood that the Calpine Applicants would receive any offers that would exceed the benefits to CCPL of the Settlement Agreement was remote.

33 I concluded that circumstances had conspired to produce a situation that was neither fish nor fowl, a kind of lop-sided auction where different bidders were privy to different information and bound by different constraints. What had already occurred could not be changed, but a different process was required from that point forward. While there were differences of opinion as to how much time was available to conduct a sales process with an acceptable degree of integrity, it was necessary that such process be conducted quickly, given the circumstances affecting the two interested bidders. It appeared clear that it would be to the benefit of all stakeholders if the process were accelerated. I decided that an abbreviated sales process was necessary in order to balance the competing requirements of fairness, speed imposed by external circumstances and protection of *bona fide* proprietary or commercially-sensitive information.

34 While not dismissing the application to approve the Settlement Agreement, I directed that:

> a) the Monitor issue its Eighteenth Report which would disclose the financial terms of the Settlement Agreement to all stakeholders, including HCP, by noon on January 23, 2007;
>
> b) offers for the Fund-related Assets were to be submitted to the Monitor by noon on Thursday, January 25, 2007;
>
> c) the Monitor would issue its Nineteenth Report comparing offers received by 2:00 p.m. on Friday, January 26, 2007; and
>
> d) the hearing would resume on Tuesday, January 30, 2007.

35 These time limits were later changed by agreement of affected parties so that final offers were to be received by noon on Friday, January 26, 2007 and the Monitor would issue its Nineteenth Report by noon on Saturday, January 27, 2007.

36 I directed that HCP would be able to meet and discuss issues relating to its offer with the Monitor and/or, if the Fund decided not to extend the Settlement Agreement, the Calpine Applicants.

37 I did not release the Supplemental Report generally, on the basis that it had been prepared in the scenario of a single offer and on the assumption of confidentiality. Nor did I release the confidential portion of the Monitor's Seventeenth Report, which had been superceded by events.

38 The Monitor issued its Nineteenth Report providing a summary and analysis of offers received for the Fund-related Assets by noon on January 26, 2007. However, immediately prior to releasing the report, the Monitor was contacted by HCP and the Fund, acting jointly, requesting a delay of two hours to allow time for the submission of a revised offer. The Monitor advised me of the receipt of such revised offer when it delivered the Nineteenth Report to me on January 26, 2007 and provided a copy of the newly-revised offer (the "Harbinger Final Offer"). The Monitor indicated that it would be canvassing major stakeholders to receive their input on the offers and would issue a supplemental report to the Nineteenth Report prior to the court hearing on January 30, 2007. On Monday, January 29, 2007, I asked the Monitor to include in such report an analysis of the Harbinger Final Offer and any other offers it might receive prior to the release of this supplemental report.

39 The Monitor issued its Twentieth Report late in the day on January 29, 2007. In addition to the Harbinger Final Offer, the Monitor had received a letter from Catalyst Capital Group Inc. ("Catalyst") varying certain of the terms of an offer it had submitted by Friday's deadline in view of the press release issued by HCP relating to the Harbinger Final Offer. These revised terms were incorporated into the Monitor's analysis of the Catalyst offer.

40 Four offers were presented to the Court on Tuesday, January 30, 2007. One was a revised offer from the Fund. One was a revised offer from HCP received by the Monitor on January 26, 2007 (the "Second Revised HCP Offer"). One was an offer from Catalyst as revised on January 29, 2007 (the "Revised Catalyst Offer"). One was the Harbinger Final Offer. The Monitor recommended the Harbinger Final Offer.

41 The Harbinger Final Offer provides certainty of price and certainty of closing. It eliminates risks associated with the splitting and realization of certain claims CLP has made against the Calpine Applicants, and it facilitates the capture of value for creditors with respect to the Whitby cogeneration project by allowing the prepayment of a loan related to the project and the sale by CCPL of its interest in the project. It has no material conditions, and eliminates the uncertainty of future litigation with the Fund as the Fund has undertaken to support the offer and to provide the necessary consents.

42 This certainty, of course, comes with a price, which is that between approximately $10 million and $34 million of additional potential consideration would be forgone compared to the Second Revised HCP Offer, the Revised Catalyst Offer or a new Catalyst offer briefly described by counsel during the hearing (the "New Catalyst Offer").

43 As the Monitor points out, there is substantial closing risk associated with the Second Revised HCP Offer and the Revised Catalyst Offer, risks that likely would erode the potential financial upside of those offers. The Second Revised HCP Offer, which carries the least risk, could not guarantee the consent of the Fund to either the transfer of the MA&O Agreements and the B Units or the outcome of an application to hold in abeyance the Fund's application to terminate the MA&O Agreements for a reasonable time following closing. Nor could it guarantee the outcome of an application for a permanent stay of any claim by the Trust or the Fund to terminate the MA&O Agreements for default due to the CCAA proceedings. These are risks not only of outcome but of time, as litigation would be required not only in this Court, but also might be prolonged by appeal.

44 The Revised Catalyst Offer and the New Catalyst Offer carry the same risks and more. Although the Fund may be constrained in rationalizing a refusal of consent with respect to the Second Revised HCP Offer by reason of its support of the Harbinger Final Offer, it would not be so constrained in refusing consent with respect to Catalyst. The Revised Catalyst Offer (and presumably the New Catalyst Offer, although this was not made clear) were subject to due diligence, regulatory approval, and, with respect to its higher range of value, the ability of Catalyst to come to an agreement with CCPL and perhaps the Fund to achieve value from the Whitby project. Originally, the Revised Catalyst Offer could be terminated at any time before acceptance. While Catalyst, in its submissions during the hearing, stated that it was prepared to abandon this condition, it was not clear how long it was prepared to leave its offers open.

45 The Ad Hoc ULC I Noteholders Committee expressed the wish to continue the process to see if greater value could be achieved. While the temptation to continue the process is understandable, given the carrot of higher offers and the suggestion of late-breaking developments in the take-over bid for the Fund's public trust units, prolonging the process would not allow Catalyst or any other new bidder the opportunity to overcome the serious contract transfer and contract termination risks that shadow their offers, given that the Fund is now bound to support the Harbinger Final Offer. Only the Harbinger Final Offer can provide the assurance that prolonged litigation with the Fund will be avoided, at least in the time frame imposed on this process by the take-over bid.

46 In addition, given my decision on January 22, 2007 to allow an abbreviated process, and not the more leisurely time-frame requested by some of the bidders, it would be unfair to extend the process on the basis of Catalyst's last-minute, in-Court efforts to improve its bid.

47 I also considered the objection raised by the Ad Hoc ULC I Noteholders Committee to the transfer of value to the public unitholders arising from the Harbinger Final Offer. It is true that value that potentially existed under the Second Revised HCP Offer has been transferred from the Calpine creditors to the public unitholders of the Fund under the Harbinger Final Offer through the sweetening of the HCP take-over bid, but this did not occur without the significant advantage of greater certainty. It is noteworthy that the Monitor in his Seventeenth Report was prepared to recommend the Settlement Agreement with its lower consideration over the Harbinger Offer on the basis of that uncertainty.

48 The process was certainly not pretty. It started with a privately-negotiated Settlement Agreement that could not be disclosed in a way that would create a level playing field for all interested parties. There were good-faith reasons for the negotiation of such an agreement, set out in the affidavits and cross-examinations of the Calpine Applicants and the Fund, reasons rooted in attempting to achieve a balance between the Calpine Applicants' goal of value maximization and the Fund's need for confidentiality arising from both commercial proprietary interest and the threat of the take-over bid. Nevertheless, as I indicated earlier, the restrictions on disclosure arising from these circumstances could not be sanctioned in the context of a public CCAA proceeding with many stakeholders.

49 The Fund-related Assets are, as many parties noted, unique and unusual assets. They are part of a web of intertwined relationships in a complex corporate structure. As the Calpine Applicants recognized, the value of these assets could be optimized because of the take-over bid and the strategic challenges facing Harbinger and the Fund relating to that take-over bid. While advantageous to the Calpine creditors in that respect, the situation foreclosed a more traditional court-supervised auction that may have been appropriate for a different kind of asset and created a brief window of time for maximizing value. Perfection of process was highly unrealistic in these circumstances.

50 Has value been maximized under the abbreviated sales process? As some of the case law on process notes, a good test of whether a process has produced improvident bids is whether a substantially higher bid surfaces at the approval stage. In this case, while the last-minute bid by Catalyst was higher, it was not substantially so, and the improvements offered at the last minute by Catalyst to eliminate conditions in its bid were not so attractive as to lead to the concern that unrealized value lurked in the market if only the process had been extended.

51 There was criticism of the Harbinger Final Offer on the basis that it came in after the deadline for final offers had expired. However, Catalyst was afforded the same opportunity to revise its previous offer. In fact, it did so, and its revised offer was considered by the Monitor. This was not a formal tender process with an elaborate set of terms and conditions. Given the short time line forced by external circumstances, a certain amount of flexibility was necessary and was afforded to both HCP and Catalyst, but the integrity of the process required that that flexibility end at the time of hearing on January 30, 2007. The ability afforded to both HCP and Catalyst to revise their bids prior to the completion of the Monitor's Twentieth Report was not unfair, nor did it materially compromise the process.

52 It must be emphasized that the Monitor recommended that the HCP Final Offer be accepted and set out thorough and thoughtful reasons for that recommendation in its Twentieth Report. That recommendation was unshaken by Catalyst's last-minute attempts to improve its bid. While this application involves a Monitor under the CCAA, rather than a court-appointed receiver, I endorse the view of the Anderson, J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87, 67 C.B.R. (N.S.) 320 (note), 22 C.P.C. (2d) 131, 39 D.L.R. (4th) 526 (Ont. H.C.) set out at page 112:

> If the court were to reject the recommendations 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.

53 The Monitor in this case has been intimately involved in the proposed sale of the Fund-related Assets from the beginning and for more than a year has accumulated valuable knowledge and insight into the complications and intricacies of the very complex corporate structure of the Calpine Applicants. The opinion of the Monitor deserves respect and deference. If, as the Court in *Soundair* commented at para. 14, "(t)he best method of selling an airline at the best price is something far removed from the expertise of a court", so is navigating the difficult shoals of selling unique, illiquid assets forming part of a complex corporate network with bidders preoccupied with broader external challenges. The recommendation of the Monitor, who was faced with a number of difficult variables and a rapidly-changing set of circumstances, was sound and reasonable.

54 I therefore found that the Harbinger Final Offer should be approved, as it provided for a reasonable balance of price and closing certainty, was endorsed by many of the stakeholders and was recommended by the Monitor.

55 Given the unique nature of the assets being sold, the nature of the closing risks, and in particular the nature of the material conditions affecting the value of the Revised Catalyst Offer, I agree with the Monitor, the Calpine Applicants, the independent trustees, the ULC II Bondholder groups and the U.S. Calpine entities that the potential for increased consideration through a continuation of the process or acceptance of the more conditional offers is outweighed by the risks and potential delay that would follow.

Application granted.

End of Document

TAB 5

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

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency; Civil Practice and Procedure

Headnote

Debtors and creditors --- Receivers — Conduct and liability of receiver — General conduct of receiver

Debtor manufactured auto parts — Debtor wished to appoint receiver and execute "quick flip", including terms that purchaser would acquire assets of debtor and hire same employees, and assume debt to secured lenders — Receiver brought motion for approval of transaction — Motion granted — Transaction was best available option, and was reasonable — Plan was in best interests of shareholders — Certain parties would benefit, including secured lenders, certain lessors, and certain employees — Certain employees and suppliers would have no possibility of recovery, but were unlikely to recover under any scenario — Price proposed was higher than liquidation value or value of going concern — Secured lenders supported transaction and subordinated secured lenders did not object — Harm could be caused by delay in that relationship with customers could be harmed by disruption.

MOTION by receiver for approval of purchase of debtor corporation.

***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.

End of Document

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

Subject: Insolvency; Estates and Trusts; Corporate and Commercial; Property

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Receivers — Appointment

Manager and receiver — Debtor owned retirement residences — Creditor made demands for payment for debt — Notice given under under s. 244 of Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act — Debtor had difficulty in selling properties through agent — Creditor brought application for order appointing receiver manager, and approval of sale — Application granted — Appointment of receiver was necessary to preserve opportunity to continue to operate retirement residences as going concerns, in order to ensure place for residents to live and to maintain current levels of employment — Offers to buy property had been low and did not cover indebtedness — Order sought was just and convenient .

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Administration of estate — Sale of assets — Jurisdiction of court to approve sale

Manager and receiver — Debtor owned retirement residences — Creditor made demands for payment for debt — Notice given under under s. 244 of Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act — Debtor had difficulty in selling properties through agent — Creditor brought application for order appointing receiver manager, and approval of sale — Application granted — Appointment of receiver was necessary to preserve opportunity to continue to operate retirement residences as going concerns, in order to ensure place for residents to live and to maintain current levels of employment — Offers to buy property had been low and did not cover indebtedness — Order sought was just and convenient .

APPLICATION by creditor for appointment of receiver and manager, and order approving sale of assets.

***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.

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TAB 7

2020 ABQB 365
Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

OEL Projects Ltd (Re)

2020 CarswellAlta 1155, 2020 ABQB 365, [2020] A.W.L.D. 2299,
[2020] A.W.L.D. 2300, 319 A.C.W.S. (3d) 537, 79 C.B.R. (6th) 219

In the Matter of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, R.S.C. 1985, C. B-3, as amended

And In the Matter of the Notice of Intention to Make a Proposal of OEL Projects Ltd.

April D. Grosse J.

Heard: May 27, 2020
Judgment: June 19, 2020
Docket: Calgary 25-2646438

Counsel: R.S. Van de Mosselaer, K. Armstrong, for OEL Projects Ltd.
J.L. Oliver, for Trustee
J.H. Wilson, for Three Former Employees
R. Jaipargas, for CIBC

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Estates and Trusts; Insolvency

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Administration of estate — Sale of assets — Jurisdiction of court to approve sale

Debtor filed notice of intention to make proposal (NOI) under Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act — Next day, prior to expiry of 30-day period for making proposal, debtor entered into asset and share purchase agreement with purchaser — Proposed purchaser was newly created subsidiary of debtor's parent company — Proposed sale was supported by proposal trustee and by debtor's two secured creditors, one of which was debtor's parent company — Two largest unsecured creditors were notified of proposed sale and were represented by counsel but other unsecured creditors did not get notice of proposed sale and many might not have even received NOI — Debtor brought application for approval of proposed asset sale as well as vesting and distribution orders — Application granted — Gap between valuation of debtor or its assets and secured debt was so large that there was no scenario in which unsecured creditors would be paid — Many unsecured trade creditors would be better off since their accounts would be assumed by purchaser if proposed sale went ahead — Proposed sale had potential to save 34 jobs at least in short term — Debtor's landlords had notice of application and did not oppose it — Secured creditors supported proposed sale and they were not being paid in full — Proposed purchase price was more than would be achieved in liquidation — Good faith efforts were made to consider whether sales process to try to solicit non-related party purchasers was feasible.

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Proposal — General principles

Debtor filed notice of intention to make proposal (NOI) under Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act — Next day, prior to expiry of 30-day period for making proposal, debtor entered into asset and share purchase agreement with purchaser — Proposed purchaser was newly created subsidiary of debtor's parent company — Proposed sale was supported by proposal trustee and by debtor's two secured creditors, one of which was debtor's parent company — Two largest unsecured creditors were notified of proposed sale and were represented by counsel but other unsecured creditors did not get notice of proposed sale and many might not have even received NOI — Debtor brought application for approval of proposed asset sale as well as vesting and distribution orders — Application granted — Gap between valuation of debtor or its assets and secured debt was so large that there was no scenario in which unsecured creditors would be paid — Many unsecured trade creditors would be better off since their accounts would be assumed by purchaser if proposed sale went ahead — Proposed sale had potential to save 34 jobs at least in short term — Debtor's landlords had notice of application and did not oppose it — Secured creditors supported proposed

sale and they were not being paid in full — Proposed purchase price was more than would be achieved in liquidation — Good faith efforts were made to consider whether sales process to try to solicit non-related party purchasers was feasible.

APPLICATION by debtor for approval of proposed asset sale, and vesting and distribution orders.

April D. Grosse J. **(orally):**

Context

1 OEL Projects Ltd. filed a Notice of Intention to Make a Proposal under section 50.4 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, RSC 1985, c B-3 on May 20, 2020. BDO Canada Limited is acting as the Proposal Trustee.

2 The 30-day period for making a proposal has not yet expired; however, on May 21, 2020, OEL entered an Asset and Share Purchase Agreement with McIntosh Perry Energy Limited, which I will refer to as the Purchaser.

3 OEL now seeks approval and a vesting order in respect of that transaction, pursuant to section 65.13 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*. OEL also seeks a distribution order with respect to the sale proceeds.

4 The Proposal Trustee supports OEL's application and recommends the transaction. OEL has two secured creditors: CIBC and its parent, McIntosh Perry Engineering Consulting Engineering Limited, which I will refer to as McIntosh Perry. Both approve of the transaction.

5 OEL's application came on for hearing before me yesterday. We adjourned to allow for some further information to be provided to the Court, and for me to have an opportunity to reflect on the submissions made by counsel. We reconvened this morning, and counsel have provided further submissions, and I have told them that I am now prepared to give an oral decision.

OEL and its Stakeholders

6 I am going to start by giving some more information about OEL and its stakeholders. OEL is an engineering services firm operating in Alberta and surrounding provinces in the energy sector. It is a private company, wholly owned by McIntosh Perry since 2017.

7 OEL has been experiencing declining revenues and operations given the downturn in the Canadian energy sector. The recent collapse in oil and gas prices, COVID-19 restrictions, and associated impacts on usual OEL clients in the energy sector have only made the situation more difficult for OEL. The record shows that OEL is projected to have negative cash flow this fiscal year without this transaction. Four years ago, OEL had approximately 115 employees. By March 15, 2020, OEL was down to about 54 employees. In preparation for filing its NOI, OEL gave notice of termination to another approximate 20 employees earlier this month. The remaining 34 employees have been offered employment by the Purchaser, if the transaction goes ahead.

8 OEL is a party to an Amended and Re-stated Credit Agreement with CIBC, along with McIntosh Perry and related companies. To my understanding, the credit facilities under the Credit Agreement are not maxed out, and are also secured by the other entities in the McIntosh Perry family. CIBC has not taken steps to enforce its security. OEL also owes net approximately $7.9 million to its parent, McIntosh Perry, pursuant to an Amended and Re-stated Promissory Note dated April 1, 2017. The debt is secured pursuant to a General Security Agreement, also dated April 1, 2017. On May 8, 2020, McIntosh Perry issued a formal demand to OEL, calling the amount owing under the Promissory Note. The Proposal Trustee has obtained a legal opinion confirming the validity of the McIntosh Perry security. I am advised that other than CIBC and McIntosh Perry, OEL has no other secured creditors.

9 In its materials, OEL identified two liabilities, or potential liabilities, in particular that pose a great difficulty to OEL moving forward in its current structure.

10 First, OEL rents two office spaces for which it pays a total of almost $1.6 million per month. The leases were entered into in 2013 and 2014, when the energy industry -- and Calgary in general -- were enjoying more prosperity. OEL's lease rates

are high compared to the current market, and with its reduced staff, OEL does not need near so much space. Counsel for OEL confirmed that OEL has been in discussions with both landlords, and both were served with the notice for this application. The notice time was short, service having been affected by email on May 21, for a May 26 hearing. However, they were served to email addresses of specific representatives, not general email boxes, and the landlords did not seek to participate or contact OEL or its counsel to oppose the application. Apparently, negotiations have already commenced with one of the landlords for a new lease for continued operations if the transaction proceeds. I am satisfied that the landlords had notice and do not oppose the transaction before the Court. I understand that rent was paid up to May 1.

11 The second particular difficulty identified by OEL is that three senior employees have filed claims against OEL, based on their recent termination or lay offs. I understand that these employees have been paid their wages, but that they claim contractual severance and perhaps other relief. Their claims total approximately $491,000 at present, and are, both individually and collectively, by far the largest unsecured claims on the list of creditors attached by the Proposal Trustee to the NOI. These parties are represented by Mr. Wilson, who was notified of the application and participated in the hearing. These three gentlemen are obviously not happy with the situation, but they neither consented nor opposed OEL's application, recognizing the reality in the numbers.

12 With respect to employees more generally, I am advised that all employees have been paid their wages up to date, and employees who have been terminated were also paid up on vacation pay. The Purchaser has agreed to pay any outstanding vacation pay for employees to whom the Purchaser has made offers of employment. The Proposal Trustee is satisfied that there are no claims that would otherwise be afforded a security interest in current assets pursuant to section 81.4 of the *Act*.

13 Because the Notice of Intention was only filed on May 20, 2020, the other unsecured creditors do not yet have effective notice of the NOI, let alone the application. The NOI was mailed to them on May 25, so they could not have received it prior to the application. In any event, the NOI itself does not mention the application. So, this is not a case where creditors have had an opportunity to file proofs of claim, and accordingly, the unsecured debt of OEL is not fully fleshed out. However, according to the list of creditors used by the Proposal Trustee, once the claims of McIntosh Perry and another related entity are removed, and then the claims of Mr. Wilson's clients are removed -- which I have already discussed -- there is approximately $91,500 in unsecured debt. Out of those amounts, all individual amounts are under $5,000, except for $27,000, and some to Beck Engineering Limited, and approximately $12,500 to M5 Engineering Inc.

14 Based on the further information provided after our adjournment yesterday, I understand that all but approximately $3,000 of those amounts are considered trade debt that will be assumed by the Purchaser, if the transaction goes ahead. That includes the larger amounts owing to the two engineering firms I have just mentioned.

15 The parties have provided me with various financial statements and the cash-flow statement for OEL. On the record, OEL is insolvent.

Section 65.13 of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act

16 Section 65.13 of the *BIA* precludes a person who is the subject of an NOI from selling or disposing of assets outside the ordinary course of business, without authorization of the Court. Section 65.13(4) sets out the factors the Court must consider. It is a non-exclusive list. I will not read all of the factors into the record.

17 Important in this case is section 65.13(5), which applies where a proposed sale or disposition is to a person who is related to the insolvent person. That is the case here. The Purchaser is a newly created subsidiary of McIntosh Perry.

18 Pursuant to section 65.13(5), after considering the factors that apply to all transactions under subsection (4), the Court may only grant authorization for the sale 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.

19 In applying section 65.13 to the facts of this case, as I outlined to counsel during the hearing yesterday, the concern I wanted to make sure was addressed in this case was the potential combined effect of three factors.

20 First, not all of the unsecured creditors were given notice of the application. In fact, they likely do not even have notice of the NOI yet. OEL and the Proposal Trustee argue that in this particular case, the unsecured creditors really have no material interest because with or without this transaction, and regardless of whether the company is sold as a going concern to the Purchaser or any other entity, or liquidated, all the figures show that the unsecured creditors stand to be paid zero. The delta between the secured debt and available funds is so high that there is no realistic scenario where the remaining unsecured creditors get paid. That is the argument.

21 The second factor that goes into this combination is that the proposed sale is to a related party. Again, this on its own is not a disqualifying factor, and is specifically contemplated by section 61.13(5). However, it brings additional scrutiny to bear.

22 The third factor is that there was no sale process, per se. The Board of OEL hired FTI in March to do an analysis of the return that might be expected in both a going concern sale scenario and a liquidation of assets scenario. The going concern sale was expected to yield a higher return, and the Purchaser is paying at the high end of the range estimated by FTI. However, there was no bid or other sale process. There is no evidence of even approaches to potential buyers.

23 OEL's evidence is that its Board considered a sale process, and determined that it was not feasible. The company's circumstances, combined with a highly mobile clientele and workforce -- both of whom could simply go elsewhere in the face of a sales process -- meant that the Board did not consider a third-party sale process to be realistic. The Board considered that the likely departure of employees and clients would probably mean that the sale process would erode the value that OEL still had. The company also lacks the liquidity to fund a sale process, and would lose an estimated $600,000 during the process. In other words, from the Board's perspective, as I understand it, it was not just a case of having nothing to lose by giving a third-party sale process a try, even if the prospects of finding a buyer were slim. The Board considered that the sale process itself would erode the value that was left in OEL, and there would be nothing left to sell at the end.

24 In its report, the Proposal Trustee does not specifically endorse nor disagree with the Board's reasoning, per se. However, the Proposal Trustee is of the view that it is unlikely that incurring the costs of a public marketing process would yield sufficient funds to otherwise render funds available for unsecured creditors, and the Proposal Trustee also notes that OEL no longer has the ability to fund its operations, or the time available to administer a protracted public sales process, in light of the calling of the Promissory Note by McIntosh Perry.

25 I appreciate that section 65.13(3) only references notice to secured creditors. There is no specific requirement, per se, that all unsecured creditors be served. However, the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* is, to a great extent, focused on addressing creditor claims and rights, when a party has become insolvent. Here, there is no realistic chance of there being a proposal if the transaction proceeds. Creditors would still have their rights in bankruptcy, but any value in OEL will be gone. It is at least fair to consider whether creditors should have an opportunity to know about the transaction, scrutinize it, and take any position that might be available to them. The extent to which creditors were consulted is an express factor for consideration under section 65.13(4)(d). In reviewing some of the reported decisions under section 65.13, it seems that in most cases, at least representatives of the unsecured creditors were notified or will be notified somewhere before a final vesting order is granted.

26 The role of the creditor takes on more potential importance in a circumstance where there is a proposed sale to a related party, with no actual third-party sale process. Their involvement would provide one more potential source of scrutiny in terms of whether the assessment by the company and the Proposal Trustee of the merits of a third-party sale process, and the merits of the proposed transaction are fair and reasonable. It is fine to say that under any scenario, the unsecured creditors will not get paid. However, perhaps they should be able to at least test that proposition.

27 On the particular facts of this case, my concern as I just outlined has been answered, and am satisfied that I can and should approve the transaction and grant the relief sought by OEL. My reasons, including my analysis of the factors and requirements of section 65.13(4) and (5) follow in bullet form:

• While not all unsecured creditors had notice of the application, the largest unsecured creditors were notified and were represented by counsel. These are not just any unsecured creditors. They are unsecured creditors whose claims are not trade debt being assumed by the Purchaser under the proposed transaction, and they are senior employees, presumably familiar with the engineering business. If anyone were in a position to critique the analysis of OEL, FTI, or the Proposal Trustee, it would be them. While they do not consent, they have raised no particular opposition. I think it would be safe to say that after analyzing the materials, they are resigned to the situation in terms of this transaction. I appreciate that they may well be pursuing whatever rights are available to them going forward. The unsecured creditors, and those not being taken on as assumed debt by the Purchaser, may never recover or may never recover their full amounts. But if that is the case, I am satisfied on the record that it will not be as a result of this transaction, but rather, would be a result of the more general circumstances facing the company.

• OEL's landlords, who will be materially impacted by the proposed transaction, have been consulted, and had notice of the application. They did not come to Court to oppose.

• The number and value of non-served unsecured claims is relatively small. All but one such unsecured claim for just under $3,000 is being taken on as assumed trade debt by the Purchaser. So for the most part, with that one exception, the unserved unsecured creditors are not prejudiced by the transaction.

• In any event, the delta between the valuation of OEL or its assets, and the secured debt is so large that unless there have been serious errors by OEL, FTI, and the Proposal Trustee, there is no scenario where the unsecured creditors would be paid, unless their debt was assumed by a purchaser. In other words, the proposed transaction does not prejudice them. In fact, arguably, most of them are better off, given the assumption of their accounts by the Purchaser.

• The process leading to the transaction was not as robust as we would often expect to see, particularly for a related-party transaction. There was no public or even private third-party marketing process. However, I find that this was reasonable in the circumstances. The Board did have the independent advice of FTI, both on going concern and liquidation value. The Board's reasoning as to why a sales process is not feasible in this particular set of circumstances makes sense, particularly given the financial circumstances of the company, the lack of liquidity to fund the sale process, the portable nature of the employees and clients, and the circumstances in which a process would have to take place, including the very depressed price of oil, which has a direct impact on work available to engineering consultants who only work in the energy sector, like OEL, and COVID-19 restrictions.

• The Proposal Trustee's opinion is not determinative; however, the Proposal Trustee is aware of his duties to all stakeholders and sees no scenario in which a third-party sale, or a third-party sales process, leads to a better result for OEL or any of its creditors, whether secured or unsecured. The Proposal Trustee approves the process leading up to the transaction and has filed the report required by section 65.13(4)(c) of the *Act*.

• The secured creditors are supportive, and they are not being paid in full.

• As already outlined, the unsecured creditors are not being prejudiced in fact. On the other hand, the transaction is designed to at least potentially preserve 34 jobs in at least the short term. Jobs are not easy to come by for engineers working in the oil and gas sector right now, so that is a relevant consideration.

• Based on both the FTI analysis and the Proposal Trustee's analysis, the Purchaser is paying consideration at the very highest end of the possible range of value that could be recovered for either the company as a going concern, or on a liquidation basis. And in fact, the purchase price is significantly more than would be achieved in a liquidation. Even though

> there was no bid process, the analysis of FTI and the Proposal Trustee do provide us with some independent benchmarks of value. I am satisfied that the consideration is reasonable and fair.
>
> • The transaction is going to proceed quickly, so as to avoid further erosion of value. It does not contemplate any interim or debt financing, which would be required for any longer sale process. Such financing may or may not be available, and if it were, it would further add to the costs to OEL.

28 The wording of section 65.13(5) has given me some pause. On its face, subparagraph (a) contemplates that there must be some actual effort made to sell or dispose of the assets to unrelated parties. Subparagraph (b) follows up on this by referring to the consideration in the proposed transaction being superior to the consideration that would be received under any other offer made in accordance with the process. Again, the contemplation seems to be that there would be some process that could at least generate other offers.

29 The question is whether the Court can approve a sale under section 65.13(5), where there has been no actual sale process. While I am of the view that the Court should be cautious in so doing, I am persuaded that the Court may do so where the particular circumstances warrant. While section 65.13(5) refers to good faith efforts being made to sell, it does not actually mandate a particular sales process, or for that matter, any sales process at all. For instance, it does not say that the Court must be satisfied that there was a good faith sales process. Rather, the wording of the provision focuses on the efforts that were made. In most cases, I expect that the efforts would have to involve some actual approaches to other purchasers. However, I am not convinced that these are strictly required in every case in a proper interpretation of the provision.

30 Time has not permitted a thorough investigation into the legislative history of section 65.13(5); however, I note that in *Komtech Inc., Re*, 2011 ONSC 3230 (Ont. S.C.J.), Justice Kane reviewed the history of section 65.13. At paragraph 31, Justice Kane cited from some Senate committee meetings that were part of the process leading up to the introduction of the bill that included section 65.13. One of the comments in those meetings was that the bill in question is designed to promote restructuring , which had been found to provide greater protection than liquidations in bankruptcy. This does not mean that anything goes. In fact, the comments at the committee also confirmed that the bill sought to increase transparency, provide better opportunities for participation, and approve checks and balances. But I must keep in mind that the provision is designed to be facilitative of restructuring. In *Komtech*, Justice Kane found that a transaction could be approved under section 65.13, even when the insolvent party would not be in a position to actually make a proposal.

31 Counsel provided me with the decision of Justice Morawetz in *Target Canada Co., Re*, 2015 ONSC 2066 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]). Justice Morawetz was considering the analogous provision to section 65.13(5) under the CCAA. While the facts in *Target* are distinguishable in many ways, Justice Morawetz's decision did approve an asset sale where there had been no marketing process for the assets in question. In so doing, he held that the Court should not take a formulaic approach to the provision, and must be satisfied overall that: (as read)

> Sufficient safeguards were adopted to ensure that the related-party transaction is in the best interests of the stakeholders of the applicants, and that the risk to the estate associated with a related-party transaction have been mitigated.

And that's from paragraph 15.

32 In that case, he was satisfied that the risk theoretically associated with a related-party transaction had been addressed through the efforts to evaluate the saleability of the assets to an unrelated party. He also considered the particular circumstances of the assets in question.

33 It would be somewhat absurd from an interpretive perspective to suggest that, for example, a party could make one call to a potential purchaser, and that would bring the party's efforts at least into consideration under section 65.13(5), but that coming to a reasoned conclusion that such a call would actually harm the value that could be achieved for stakeholders, would disqualify the insolvent person from even having the transaction considered under section 65.13(5).

34 It is also noteworthy as well that in appropriate circumstances, courts approve pre-packaged and quick-flip transactions in the receivership context, where there is no sales process. This can occur even when a related party is involved. For example, see *Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re*, [2008] O.J. No. 4218 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]), which is a decision of the Superior Court of Justice Commercial List by Justice Morawetz. I appreciate that these cases in the receivership context do not involve the specific legislative requirements of section 65.13(5), but they provide some analogous circumstances that assist in the interpretation of section 65.13(5).

35 In this particular case, the efforts that were made that I need to consider under section 65.13(5) include retaining FTI, considering categories of potential purchasers, and then with all of the financial information and the FTI estimated values in mind, considering whether a sales process to try to solicit purchasers was feasible. The nature of the business, including the portable nature of the both employees and clients is relevant. Whether it would be enough on its own need not be decided, because other factors are at play here. This review by OEL, in consultation with its secured creditors, took place in March and April 2020, after huge drops in oil prices and unprecedented public health lock downs due to COVID-19. A sale process would have had to unfold in those difficult circumstances. The mix of secured and unsecured creditors and the evidence that the unsecured claims are relatively small in number of relatively small values, and were not going to be paid in any scenario, unless accepted as assumed debt by the Purchaser, is also relevant to whether the company's decision not to pursue a sales process amounts, in effect, to a good faith effort to sell or otherwise dispose, as required by section 65.13(5). Of course, the lack of liquidity in the company, and the cost and risk involved in the sales process are also relevant and were accounted for. In the particular circumstances of this case, I conclude that section 65.13(5) is satisfied.

36 I have had reference to the decision in *Hypnotic Clubs Inc., Re*, 2010 ONSC 2987 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]). The circumstances are analogous to the ones at bar in many respects; however, ultimately Justice Cumming found that the related-party purchaser had, in effect, created a situation where there was no other market for the asset through its control of the sublease. There is no such lack of good faith effort in the case before me. Further, the *Hypnotic* situation was one where the value of the unsecured claims was somewhat higher, and also where there was a history of significant litigation between some of the parties involved that Justice Cumming seemed to take into account. He did note, though, that even in that case, there was unlikely to be recovery by the unsecured creditors.

37 I am satisfied that the circumstances before me are sufficiently distinguishable so as to lead to a different result in this case. Also, I note that Justice Cumming did not find that section 65.13(5)(a) could never be met without a formal third-party sale process of some sort. Rather, he simply found that in the circumstances before him, the required good faith efforts had not been made.

38 So I am granting your application, Mr. Van de Mosselaer.

Application granted.

End of Document

TAB 8

2016 ABQB 257
Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

Sanjel Corp., Re

2016 CarswellAlta 900, 2016 ABQB 257, [2016] A.W.L.D. 2474, 266 A.C.W.S. (3d) 542, 36 C.B.R. (6th) 239

In the Matter of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended

In the Matter of the Compromise or Arrangement of Sanjel Corporation, Sanjel Canada Ltd., Terracor Group Ltd., Suretech Group Ltd., Suretech Completions Canada Ltd., Sanjel Energy Services (USA) Inc., Sanjel (USA) Inc., Suretech Completions (USA) Inc., Sanjel Capital (USA) Inc., Terracor (USA) Inc., Terracor Resources (USA) Inc., Terracor Logistics (USA) Inc., Sanjel Middle East Ltd., Sanjel Latin America Limited and Sanjel Energy Services DMCC

B.E. Romaine J.

Heard: April 28, 2016
Judgment: May 16, 2016
Docket: Calgary 1601-03143

Counsel: Chris Simard, Alexis Teasdale, for Sanjel Group

Subject: Insolvency

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act — Miscellaneous

Sale of assets — Debtor companies were severely impacted by economic downturn, and breached covenants under credit agreement with secured creditors — Debtors agreed with secured creditors to implement Sales and Investment Solicitation Process (SISP), which resulted in proposed asset sales that would provide no recovery for unsecured creditors — Debtors were granted Initial Order under Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act — Debtors brought application for order approving sales transactions generated through SISP — Trustee of bonds brought application for order dismissing debtors' application, and allowing bondholders to propose plan of arrangement, among other relief — Debtors' application granted; trustee's application dismissed — As result of enactment of s. 36 of Act, there was no jurisdictional impediment to sale of assets where such sales met requisite tests, even in absence of plan of arrangement — Fact that SISP occurred before seeking protection under Act did not amount to abuse of Act — Despite speed and economic environment, SISP was reasonable, competitive and robust, and generated range of bids significantly above liquidation value — Allegations of bad faith were not supported by evidence — Bondholders were aware of SISP and intention to obtain protection under Act, and were not improperly denied access to information — Factors in s. 36(3) of Act favoured approval of proposed sales — Further allegations raised after hearing were duly investigated by monitor and shown to be groundless Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, s 36.

APPLICATION by debtor companies for orders approving sales of assets generated through Sales and Investment Solicitation Process; APPLICATION by trustee of the bonds for order dismissing debtors' application, allowing bondholders to propose plan of arrangement, and other relief.

***B.E. Romaine J.*:**

I. Introduction

1 The Sanjel debtors seek orders approving certain sales of assets generated through a SISP that was conducted prior to the debtors filing under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*. The proceeds of the sales will be insufficient to fully payout the secured creditor, and will generate no return to unsecured creditors, including the holders of unsecured Bonds.

2 The Trustee of the Bonds challenged the process under which the SISP was conducted, and the use of what he characterized as a liquidating CCAA in this situation. He alleged that the use of the CCAA to effect a pre-packaged sale of the debtors' assets for the benefit of the secured creditor was an abuse of the letter and spirit of the CCAA. He also alleged that bad faith and collusion tainted the integrity of the SISP.

3 After reviewing extensive evidence and hearing submissions from interested parties, I decided to allow the application to approve the sales, and dismiss the application of the Trustee. These are my reasons.

II. Facts

4 On April 4, 2016, the Sanjel Corporation and its affiliates were granted an Initial Order under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c.C-36, as amended. PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc., ("PWC") was appointed as Monitor of the applicants.

5 Sanjel and its affiliates (the "Sanjel Group" or "Sanjel") provide fracturing, cementing, coiled tubing and reservoir services to the oil and gas industry in Canada, the United States and Saudi Arabia. Sanjel Corporation, the parent company, is a private corporation, the shares of which are owned by the MacDonald Group Ltd. It was incorporated under the *Alberta Business Corporations Act* in 1980, and its principal executive and registered office is located in Calgary. Four of the other members of the group were incorporated in Alberta, seven in various American states and three in offshore jurisdictions.

6 The sole director of all Canadian and US Sanjel companies resides in Calgary, as do all of the officers of these companies. The affidavit in support of the Initial Order sets out a number of factors relevant to the Sanjel Group's ability to file under the CCAA and that would be relevant to a determination of a Centre of Main Interest ("COMI") of the Sanjel Group. In subsequent Chapter 15 proceedings in the United States, the US Court declared COMI to be located in Canada and the CCAA proceedings to be a "foreign main proceeding." It is clear that the Sanjel Group is a fully integrated business centralized in Calgary.

7 Sanjel Corporation and Sanjel (USA) Inc. are borrowers under a credit agreement (the "Bank Credit Facility") dated April 21, 2015 with a banking syndicate (the "Syndicate") led by Alberta Treasury Branches as agent. The total amount outstanding under the Bank Credit Facility at the time of the CCAA filing was approximately $415.5 million. The Syndicate has perfected security interests over substantially all of the assets of the Sanjel Group, and is the principal secured creditor of the Sanjel Group in these CCAA proceedings.

8 On June 18, 2014, Sanjel Corporation issued US $300 million 7.5% Callable Bonds due June 19, 2019. Interest is payable on the Bonds semi-annually on June 19 and December 19. The Bonds are unsecured. Nordic Trust ASA (the "Trustee") is the trustee under the Bond Agreement.

9 The Sanjel Group has been severely impacted by the catastrophic drop in global oil and gas prices since mid-2014. Over the last 18 months, the Sanjel Group has taken aggressive steps to cut costs, including by reducing staffing levels by more than half. However, by late October, 2015, Sanjel Corporation was in breach of certain covenants under the Bank Credit Facility. By late December, 2016, the Syndicate was in a position to exercise enforcement rights. In addition, an interest payment of USD $11,250,000 was due on the Bonds on December 19, 2015. Since late 2015, the Sanjel Group has been in negotiations with both the Syndicate and two bondholders, Ascribe Capital LLC and Clearlake Capital Group L.P., (the "Ad Hoc Bondholders"). The Ad Hoc Bondholders hold over 45% of the Bonds.

10 In the fall of 2015, Sanjel Corporation engaged Bank of America Merrill Lynch ("BAML") to identify strategic partners and attempt to raise additional capital for the Sanjel Group. BAML contacted 28 private equity firms; 19 non-disclosure agreements were executed and 9 management presentations were made. However, the BAML process did not result in a successful transaction.

11 In December, 2015, the Ad Hoc Bondholders retained a New York law firm, Fried Frank, as their legal advisor and Moelis & Company as their financial advisor.

12 On December 10, 2015, Fried Frank conveyed a proposal from the Ad Hoc Bondholders to Sanjel. Under this proposal, Sanjel would be required to pay the USD $11,250,000 interest payment. Provided that the interest payment was made, the bondholders would agree to a standstill agreement for the same period as may be agreed with the Syndicate. In return, the Ad Hoc Bondholders would lend back their pro rata share of that interest payment to Sanjel in return for secured notes ranking *pari passu* with the Bank Credit Facility, bearing interest at the same rate as the Bank Credit Facility plus 2%. The new notes would not be repaid until the Bank Credit Facility was repaid.

13 The Ad Hoc Bondholders indicated that they would consider acting as standby lenders to Sanjel for the remainder of the interest payment and would offer the other bondholders the option of lending back their pro-rata share to Sanjel on the same basis. If they agreed to be standby lenders, the Ad Hoc Bondholders would receive a commitment fee equal to 10% of their standby commitment, payable in new notes.

14 The proposal letter indicated that the Ad Hoc Bondholders were aware that Sanjel had been engaged in a process to address liquidity and leverage issues over the past few months, including attempting to raise equity to sell assets. In their view, Sanjel had exhausted those efforts, and the only remaining option was a deal negotiated with the bondholders. However, the Ad Hoc Bondholders would only embark on such a process if the December 19, 2015 interest payment was made.

15 Sanjel rejected the proposal on December 14, 2015. It is noteworthy that the Bank Credit Facility includes a negative covenant prohibiting Sanjel from granting a security interest over its assets. The Syndicate advised Sanjel that the Ad Hoc Bondholders' proposal to have their existing unsecured position elevated to rank *pari passu* with the Bank Credit Facility was unacceptable, and that it would not provide its consent.

16 On December 15, 2015, the Ad Hoc Bondholders advised counsel to the Syndicate that they wished to work towards a restructuring, which they envisaged would involve paying down a portion of the Syndicate's debt "in an amount to be mutually agreed on". They also suggested that Sanjel would implement a rights offering to holders of Bonds and then to existing equity, with a conversion of the Bonds into new debt and equity.

17 On or about December 15, 2015, the Ad Hoc Bondholders sent Sanjel a draft waiver and standstill agreement, which required the payment of part of the December 19 interest payment by December 23, 2015 and the payment of the fees and disbursements of Fried Frank and Moelis in return for arranging for a bondholder meeting to be called to consider a period of forbearance to March 31, 2016.

18 Fried Frank and Moelis executed Non-Disclosure Agreements ("NDAs") on December 24, 2015, but the Ad Hoc Bondholders did not, thus not restricting their right to trade the Bonds. Fried Frank and Moelis were granted access to a Sanjel virtual database ("VDR") on January 9, 2016.

19 By January, 2016, given the prolonged downturn in oil and gas prices, Sanjel's liquidity was limited. Events of default under the Bank Credit Facility that had occurred as of October 31, 2015 were exacerbated by a cross-default based on the non-payment of interest under the Bond Agreement. As of January 31, 2016, the Sanjel Group had total consolidated liabilities of approximately $1.064 billion.

20 Sanjel was facing very significant negative cash flow projections over the next few months. As of early January, 2016, Sanjel's projected cash flows showed that its cash position would deteriorate by more than half as of the first week of April, 2016, and would be further reduced by anticipated forbearance payments.

21 In the circumstances, Sanjel agreed with the Syndicate to implement a Sales and Investment Solicitation Process ("SISP"). Sanjel states that it hoped that if a SISP was implemented, it might find a transaction that preserved the business as a going concern, which would maximize stakeholder value and preserve goodwill and jobs.

22 In mid-January, 2016, Sanjel engaged PWC as a proposed Monitor in the event it would become necessary to file under the CCAA.

23 The SISP was commenced on behalf of Sanjel by its financial advisors, PJT Partners Inc. ("PJT") and Credit Suisse Securities (CANADA), Inc. ("CS") on January 17, 2016. The advisors contacted prospective bidders, many of whom had already been identified through the BAML process of late 2015.

24 The process of soliciting non-bidding indications of interest ran from January 17, 2016 to February 22, 2016. On January 26, 2016, the advisers updated and opened a VDR available to anyone who had signed a NDA. A teaser letter was distributed and meetings and conference calls were held with bidders. A process letter was distributed on January 28, 2016. Nine indications of interest were submitted on or about February 22, 2016.

25 Before and during the SISP process, Sanjel was negotiating with both the Syndicate and the Ad Hoc Bondholders with respect to separate forbearance agreements, and with the Ad Hoc Bondholders with respect to NDAs to be signed by the Ad Hoc Bondholders. The Ad Hoc Bondholders complain that there was a delay of almost a month before Sanjel's counsel responded to a mark-up of a NDA provided by Fried Frank, but negotiations were stymied by the Ad Hoc Bondholders' insistence that the December interest payment be paid. Until this issue was settled, there was no reason to finalize the NDAs. In addition, it was not until January 29, 2016 that representatives of the Ad Hoc Bondholders advised Sanjel that they were prepared to be restricted from trading and therefore able to receive confidential information. During this period of time, the Ad Hoc Bondholders refused to meet with Sanjel management when they travelled to New York on January 20, 2016.

26 On February 1, 2016, counsel to Sanjel sent counsel to the Ad Hoc Bondholders a copy of the draft forbearance agreement between the Syndicate and Sanjel, which set out the key dates of the SISP, including the completion of definitive purchase and sales agreements by March 24, 2016. It would have been clear to the Ad Hoc Bondholders from this draft that Sanjel was proceeding on a dual track basis, considering both a potential stand-alone restructuring of the company and a sales process.

27 The Ad Hoc Bondholders made a second proposal to Sanjel on February 2, 2016, very shortly after the NDAs were signed. This proposal involved the Syndicate recovering a portion of its loan from Sanjel's existing cash reserves and a rights offering backstopped by the Ad Hoc Bondholders. A portion of the Bonds would be converted into equity. The December interest payment would have to be paid. Sanjel's management team met with the Ad Hoc Bondholders and their advisors in New York on February 3, 2016 and Sanjel's team, the Syndicate and its advisors and the Ad Hoc Bondholders met on February 8, 2016.

28 Sanjel delivered an indicative restructuring term sheet to the Ad Hoc Bondholders on February 12, 2016, as required by the forbearance agreement that the parties were negotiating. The restructuring term sheet emphasized that a bondholder-led restructuring would require significant new money, a significant capital commitment and ongoing capital, with a significant pay-down of the Syndicate's debt.

29 Commencing on February 15, 2016, Sanjel allowed representatives of Alverez and Marsal ("A&M"), advisors to the Ad Hoc Bondholders, to attend in Calgary and conduct due diligence.

30 On February 18, 2016, Sanjel uploaded to its VDR the final, unsigned versions of the Syndicate Amending and Forbearance Agreement and the Bondholders Forbearance Agreement.

31 Under the SISP, preliminary, non-binding indications of interest were delivered to the advisors and the company by February 22, 2016. Six such indications of interest were received, all of which were materially superior to the Ad Hoc Bondholders proposal of February 2, 2016. The Ad Hoc Bondholders have admitted that they were aware of the milestones under the SISP and the Bank Forbearance Agreement by mid-February, 2016, although it is clear that their advisors would have been aware of these milestones from February 1, 2016.

32 As part of finalizing the form of Bond Forbearance Agreement, counsel for Sanjel and for the Ad Hoc Bondholders had negotiated a form of summons that would be used to call a bondholder meeting to consider the agreement. The only item for consideration to be considered at the meeting was to be the Bond Forbearance Agreement. The plan was to have 2/3 of the bondholders approve and execute the Bond Forbearance Agreement, and then to hold a bondholders meeting.

33 Instead, on February 25, 2016, the Ad Hoc Bondholders caused the Trustee to issue a summons for a meeting on March 10, 2016 to consider and vote on a) whether to declare the Bonds in default, accelerate them and exercise remedies, including commencing involuntary bankruptcy proceedings against Sanjel under Chapter 11 of the *United States Bankruptcy Code*, including claims against the MacDonald family and MacBain Properties Ltd., which owns the business premises that are leased by the Sanjel Group or b) approve the Bond Forbearance Agreement.

34 On March 2, 2016, the Ad Hoc Bondholders submitted a restructuring proposal to Sanjel. This proposal provided no cash recovery to the Syndicate. Instead, a portion of the debt owed to the Syndicate would be converted to a new loan and the remainder extinguished, with the Syndicate receiving warrants in a reorganized company. There would be a Chapter 11 filing and the bondholders would provide a debtor-in-possession ("DIP") facility to rank *pari passu* with the Syndicate debt. Bondholders who contributed to the DIP would receive new 2nd lien notes for part of their previous notes, the remainder being extinguished. The DIP facility would be converted into 100% of the equity of the reorganized company. Sanjel would be required to appoint a Chief Restructuring Officer ("CRO") designated by the Ad Hoc Bondholders.

35 On March 4, 2016, in a follow-up letter to a telephone meeting on March 3, 2016, US counsel to the Syndicate wrote to Fried Frank requesting that the March 10 bondholders meeting be adjourned to March 31, 2016. Canadian counsel to Sanjel made the same request of the Trustee.

36 Also on March 4, 2016, a template Asset Purchase Agreement ("APA") for SISP bidders was posted on the VDRs, which disclosed a CCAA/Chapter 15 filing with PWC as designated Monitor. This template agreement was available to the Ad Hoc Bondholders and their advisors.

37 Counsel for the Ad Hoc Bondholders replied on March 5, 2016 that they would advise the Trustee to postpone the March 10 meeting subject to:

a) a response to their March 2 proposal by March 10, 2016;

b) full disclosure of company records for A&M's representative, "so that [that representative] is ready and best positioned to commence his duties as Chief Restructuring Officer for the Company".

c) payment by March 7, 2016 of roughly USD $2.2 million in fees and disbursements for the Ad Hoc Bondholders' legal and financial advisors.

38 After some negotiation, Sanjel agreed to these terms for an adjournment, other than with respect to a small deduction in fees and disbursements. Sanjel made it clear that it reserved all rights with respect to the appointment of a CRO and a filing under Chapter 11, which it would not agree to at that time. On March 8, 2016 the Trustee confirmed that the meeting would be postponed to March 31.

39 On March 9, 2016, second round bids under the SISP were received. Five bids were received, all of which were materially superior to the Ad Hoc Bondholders' March 2, 2016 proposal in terms of cash recovery for the Syndicate.

40 An information update conference for bondholders was scheduled to be held on March 11, 2016, at which Sanjel, the Trustee and the Ad Hoc Bondholders would provide an update to any bondholder that wished to call in. This was rescheduled by the Trustee to March 31, 2016.

41 On March 11, 2016, the Syndicate sent the counter-offer required by the postponement of meeting agreement to the Ad Hoc Bondholders. This counter-proposal made it clear that there would be a CCAA/Chapter 15 process, rather than a Chapter 11 process. While this counter-proposal is confidential, it is fair to say that the parties were far apart in their negotiations, particularly with respect to treatment of the Syndicate indebtedness.

42 Also on March 11, 2016, a representative of Sanjel met with A&M's representative and discussed Sanjel's intention to disclaim certain leases in the anticipated CCAA proceedings.

43 Following receipt of the second round bids, Sanjel and its advisors identified the top three bidders and began negotiations with them with the goal of finalizing due diligence and being in a position to execute final APAs on March 24, 2016, as indicated in the Bank Forbearance Agreement.

44 In the meantime, Sanjel continued meetings with the A&M representative, who asked for, and was provided with:

a) access to the newly created VDR for second stage bidders/investors in the SISP on March 12, 2016.

b) draft materials relating to the CCAA filing, including current drafts of cash flow projections and drafts of stakeholder communication regarding the CCAA, on March 21, 2016.

45 On March 20, 2016, the Ad Hoc Bondholders provided Sanjel and the Syndicate with a third restructuring proposal. This one provided for some paydown of the Syndicate's debt, but involved less than half of that recovery in new money, about the same amount in debt secured by accounts receivable and a substantial amount of bank debt rolled over into a new loan. It also provided for a DIP facility to rank *pari passu* with a new bank credit facility in the event of a liquidation and the conversion of some bondholder debt into secured notes.

46 On March 23, 2016, counsel for Sanjel requested that the Trustee postpone the bondholder meeting scheduled for March 31, 2016 to April 14, 2016. He also proposed to set up the requested informational update on March 31, 2016. On March 25, 2016, counsel for the Trustee consented to this request.

47 In the SISP, final bids were received from the three top bidders on March 24, 2016, with negotiations to continue on final APAs. On the same day, Sanjel and its advisors hosted a call with A&M and Moelis, during which they walked through a 13 week cash forecast.

48 On March 31, 2016 the Syndicate and the Ad Hoc Bondholders had discussions with respect to the Ad Hoc Bondholders' March 20 proposal. In previous correspondence, the Syndicate's counsel had questioned the adequacy of the proposed DIP financing in the proposal and noted Sanjel's significant cash needs following exit from an insolvency proceeding, as opposed to the proposal's assumption that there would be better cash flow. At the conclusion of the call, the Ad Hoc Bondholders indicated that they would provide further modelling with respect to their proposal.

49 On April 3, 2016, Sanjel entered into final APAs with the proposed purchasers, STEP and Liberty. On April 4, 2016, the Sanjel Group filed for CCAA protection. Counsel for Sanjel Group disclosed that the application was made without notice to the Ad Hoc Bondholders He submitted that notice would imperil the CCAA proceedings as the bondholders may, with notice, have pre-empted the CCAA filing by an involuntary filing under Chapter 11. There is no requirement to give notice to unsecured creditors of a CCAA filing. There are circumstances, and this was one of them, where it is appropriate to seek an initial order on an ex parte basis:

> This may be an appropriate — even necessary — step in order to prevent "creditors from moving to realize on their claims, essentially a 'stampede to the assets' once creditors learn of the debtor's financial distress": J.P. Sarra, *Rescue! The Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (2007), at p. 55 ("Rescue!"); see also *Algoma Steel Inc., Re* (2001), 25 C.B.R. (4th) 194 (Ont. C.A.), at para. 7

50 On April 11, 2016, the Ad Hoc Bondholders presented their fourth proposal for restructuring, not to Sanjel but to the Syndicate. This proposal increases the amount the bondholders would contribute to Sanjel for new equity, which would be used to repay a portion of the Syndicate's loan.

51 According to Fried Frank, the Syndicate's counsel responded on April 13, 2016 advising that while they appreciated the work done by the Ad Hoc Bondholders, the Syndicate preferred the sale route. The Syndicate proposed alternatives that it might consider involving a higher pay-out of the Syndicate's debt than offered by the April 11, 2016 proposal. The Ad Hoc Bondholders have not responded.

52 The Sanjel Group apply for an order approving the sales transactions generated through the SISP, being a sales agreement between Sanjel and STEP Energy Services Ltd., including an assignment of the sale of the debtor's cementing assets in favour of 1961531 Alberta Ltd., and a sales agreement between Sanjel and Liberty.

53 The Trustee applied for an order dismissing the application for approval of these transactions, allowing the Ad Hoc Bondholders to propose a plan of arrangement, lifting the stay to allow the Trustee to commence a Chapter 11 filing and directing a new Court-monitored SISP, among other applications

III. Applicable Law

54 Section 36(3) of the CCAA sets out six non-exhaustive factors that must be considered in approving a sale by a CCAA debtor of assets outside the ordinary course of business. They are:

(a) whether the process leading to the proposed sale was reasonable in the circumstances;

(b) whether the Monitor approved the process leading to the proposed sale;

(c) whether the Monitor filed with the court a report stating that in its opinion the sale would be more beneficial to 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 on 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.

55 In this case, the Monitor was not in place at the time of the process leading to the proposed sales, nor at the time the SISP was commenced. However, the Monitor has given an opinion on the process, which I will consider as part of my review.

56 Prior to the enactment of section 36, CCAA courts considered what are known as the Soundair principles in considering approval application, and they are still useful guidelines:

a) Was there a sufficient effort made to get the price at issue? Did the debtor company act improvidently?

b) Were the interests of all parties considered?

c) Are there any questions about the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers were obtained?

d) Was there unfairness in the working out of the process?

Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp., 1991 CarswellOnt 205 (Ont. C.A.) at para 20.

57 Gascon, J. (as he then was) suggested in *AbitibiBowater inc., Re*, 2010 QCCS 1742 (C.S. Que.) at paras 70-72 that a court should give due consideration to two further factors:

a) the business judgment rule, in that a court will not lightly interfere with the exercise of the commercial and business judgment of the debtor company and the monitor in the context of an asset sale where the marketing and sale process was fair, reasonable, transparent and efficient; and

b) the weight to be given to the recommendation of the monitor.

58 As noted by Gascon, J., it is not desirable for a bidder to wait to the last minute, even up to a court approval stage, to submit its best offer. However, a court can consider such an offer, if it is evidence that the debtor company did not properly carry out its duty to obtain the best price for creditors.

IV. Analysis

59 The Trustee has raised a number of objections to the proposed sales, many of which relate to the factors and principles set out in section 36 of the CCAA, the Soundair principles and the AbitibiBowater factors:

> A. The Trustee submits that the CCAA can only be used to liquidate the assets of a debtor company and distribute the proceeds where such use is uncontested or where there is clear evidence that the CCAA provides scope for greater recoveries than would be available on a bankruptcy.

60 Most of the cases relied upon by the Trustee with respect to this submission predate the 2009 enactment of section 36 of the CCAA. While prior to this change to the CCAA, there was some authority that questioned whether the CCAA should be used to carry out a liquidation of a debtors' assets, there was also authority that accepted this as a proper use of the statute.

61 An analysis of the pre-section 36 state of the law on this issue, and support for the latter view, is well summarized in *Nortel Networks Corp., Re*, [2009] O.J. No. 3169 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]). As noted by Morawetz, J. at para 28 of that decision, the CCAA is a flexible statute, particularly useful in complex insolvency cases in which the court is required to balance numerous constituents and myriad interests. This is such a case.

62 Section 36 now provides that a CCAA court may authorize the sale or disposition of assets outside the ordinary course of business if authorized to do so by court order. There is thus no jurisdictional impediment to the sale of assets where such sales meet the requisite tests, even in the absence of a plan of arrangement.

63 Morawetz, J in *Target Canada Co., Re*, 2015 ONSC 303 (Ont. S.C.J.) at paras 32 and 33, describes the change brought about by section 36:

> Prior to the 2009 amendments to the CCAA, Canadian courts accepted that, in appropriate circumstances, debtor companies were entitled to seek the protection of the CCAA where the outcome was not going to be a going concern restructuring, but instead, a "liquidation" or wind-down of the debtor companies' assets or business.
>
> The 2009 amendments did not expressly address whether the CCAA could be used generally to wind-down the business of a debtor company. However, I am satisfied that the enactment of section 36 of the CCAA, which establishes a process for a debtor company to sell assets outside the ordinary course of business while under CCAA protection, is consistent with the principle that the CCAA can be a vehicle to downsize or wind-down a debtor company's business.
>
> See also *Re Brainhunter Inc.*, 2009 CarswellOnt 8207 at para 15.

64 Whether before or after the enactment of section 36, Canadian courts have approved en bloc sales of a debtor company, recognizing that such sales are consistent with the broad remedial purpose and flexibility of the CCAA.

65 What the provisions of the CCAA can provide in situations such as those facing the Sanjel Group is a court-supervised process of the execution of the sales, with provision for liquidity and the continuation of the business through the process provided by interim financing, a Key Employee Retention Plan that attempts to ensure that key employees are given an incentive to ensure a seamless transition, critical supplier relief that keeps operations functioning pending the closing of the sales and a process whereby a company with operations in Canada, the United States and internationally is able to invoke the aid of both Canadian and US courts during the process. It is true that the actual SISP process preceded the CCAA filing, and I will address that factor later in this decision.

66 As counsel to the Sanjel Group notes, this type of insolvency proceeding is well-suited to the current catastrophic downturn of the economy in Alberta, with companies at the limit of their liquidity. It allows a business to be kept together and sold as a going concern to the extent possible. There have been a number of recent similar filings in this jurisdiction: the filing in Southern Pacific and Quicksilver are examples.

67 The Monitor supports the sales, and is of the view, supported by investigation into the likely range of forced sale liquidation recoveries with financial advisors and others with industry knowledge, that a liquidation of assets would not generate a better result than the consideration contemplated by the proposed sales. The Monitor's investigations were hampered by the lack of recent sales of similar businesses, but I am satisfied by its thorough report that the Monitor's investigation of likely recoveries is the best estimate available. A CS estimate provided a different analysis, but I am satisfied by the evidence that it has little probative value.

68 In summary, this is not an inappropriate use of the CCAA arising from the nature of the proposed sales.

B. The Trustee submits that the proposed sales are the product of a defective SISP conducted outside of the CCAA.

69 It is true that the SISP, and the restructuring negotiations with the Ad Hoc Bondholders, took place prior to the filing under the CCAA, that this was a "pre-pack" filing.

70 A pre-filing SISP is not of itself abusive of the CCAA. Nothing in the statute precludes it. Of course, a pre-filing SISP must meet the principles and requirements of section 36 of the CCAA and must be considered against the Soundair principles. The Trustee submits that such a SISP should be subject to heightened scrutiny. It may well be correct that a pre-filing SISP will be subject to greater challenges from stakeholders, and that it may be more difficult for the debtor company to establish that it was conducted in a fair and effective manner, given the lack of supervision by the Court and the Monitor, who as a court officer has statutory duties.

71 Without prior court approval of the process, conducting a SISP outside of the CCAA means that both the procedure and the execution of the SISP are open to attack by aggrieved stakeholders and bitter bidders, as has been the case here. Any evidence or reasonable allegations of impropriety would have to be investigated carefully, whereas in a court-approved process, comfort can be obtained through the Monitor's review and the Court's approval of the process in advance. However, in the end, it is the specific details of the SISP as conducted that will be scrutinized.

72 Similar issues were considered in *Nelson Education Ltd., Re*, 2015 ONSC 5557 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras 31-32, and in *Bloom Lake, g.p.l., Re*, 2015 QCCS 1920 (C.S. Que.) at para 21.

73 The Trustee submits that the SISP was defective in that its timelines were truncated and that it was destined not to generate offers that maximized value for all stakeholders. The Trustee filed an affidavit of a representative of Moelis indicating that it would be typical in a SISP to establish a deadline for non-binding offers one or two months following commencement of the process, while in this SISP, participants had only 12 to 25 days to evaluate the business and provide non-binding indications of interest. This opinion did not address the previous BAML process that identified likely purchasers and thus lengthened the review process for these parties who participated in the first process. The Trustee's advisor was also critical that the SISP provided only 16 days for final offers, suggesting that it is more typical to provide two months.

74 While likely correct for normal-course SISP's, this analysis does not take into account the high cash burn situation of these debtors, nor the deteriorating market. The Moelis opinion suggests that potential purchaser would have a heightened diligence requirement in the current unfavourable market conditions, requiring extra time for due diligence. However, despite the speed of the SISP, it appears to have generated a range of bids significantly above liquidation value. The process was not limited to the SISP, but included the previous BAML process and the negotiations with the Ad Hoc Bondholders.

75 The evidence discloses a thorough and comprehensive canvassing of the relevant markets for the debtors and their assets despite the aggressive timelines. The BAML process identified some interested parties and Sanjel's financial advisors built on that process by re-engaging with 28 private equity firms that had already expressed interest in these unique assets as well as identifying new potential purchasers, reaching out to 85 potential buyers.

76 Of those 85 parties, 37 executed NDAs, 25 conducted due diligence and 17 met with the management team. Eight submitted non-binding indications of interest, five were invited to submit second-round bids and finally the top three were chosen for the continuation of negotiations to final agreements.

77 While some interested parties may have found the time limits challenging, a reasonable number were able to meet them and submit bids. I am satisfied from the evidence that, despite a challenging economic environment, the process was competitive and robust.

78 I also note the comments of the Monitor in its First Report dated April 12, 2016. While it was not directly involved in the SISP, the Monitor reports that the financial advisors advised the Monitor, that given the size and complexity of the Sanjel Group's operations and the time frames involved, all strategic and financial sponsors known to the advisors were contacted during the SISP and that it is unlikely that extending the SISP time frames in the current market would have resulted in materially better offers.

79 Based on this advice and the Monitor's observations since its involvement in the SISP from mid-February 2016, the Monitor is of the opinion that it is highly improbable that another post-filing sales process would yield offers materially in excess of those received.

80 Finally, I note that the Ad Hoc Bondholders' own March 20 proposal envisaged a pre-packaged CCAA proceedings. A sales process is only required to be reasonable, not perfect. I am satisfied that this SISP was run appropriately and reasonably, and that it adequately canvassed the relevant market for the Sanjel Group and its assets.

C. The Ad Hoc Bondholders submit that negotiations among them, the Sanjel Group and the Syndicate were a sham conducted by Sanjel to delay the Ad Hoc Bondholders from taking action under Chapter 11 while it finalized the APAs. The Trustee alleges that the SISP has been conducted and the CCAA filing occurred in an atmosphere tainted by manoeuvring for advantage, bad faith, deception, secrecy, artificial haste and excessive deference by the Sanjel Group to the Syndicate.

81 These are serious allegations, but they are not supported by the evidence.

82 As the somewhat lengthy history of negotiations establishes, the Ad Hoc Bondholders had almost three months to present and negotiate restructuring proposals, with access to confidential information afforded to their advisors from January 9, 2016, weeks before the SISP participants. They presented four proposals, the last one after final bids had been received in the SISP. Although the final proposal breached the timelines of the SISP process, and could potentially raise an issue with respect to the integrity of the SISP process, Sanjel, the Syndicate and the prospective purchasers are not pressing that argument, as they take the position that the final offer is inferior at any rate.

83 These proposals received responses from Sanjel and the Syndicate, and counter proposals were received. The evidence discloses that, in all proposals and counter proposals, the parties were far apart on a major issue: the extent to which the Syndicate's debt was to be paid down and how far it was willing to allow a portion to remain at risk.

84 The Ad Hoc Bondholders were aware of the SISP from its commencement, and aware of the timing of the process. Throughout the SISP, the financial advisors had regular contact with Moelis and Fried Frank and directly with the Ad Hoc Bondholders. Michael Genereux, the lead partner at PJT with respect to the SISP, has sworn that he believes the Ad Hoc Bondholders were aware of the SISP and that it was progressing at a rapid pace. He says that he urged the Ad Hoc Bondholders to accelerate the pace at which they were advancing their restructuring negotiations.

85 The Ad Hoc Bondholders were aware, or should have been aware, that the Sanjel Group intended a CCAA/Chapter 15 process from at the latest mid-March, 2016. Their representative from A&M was aware of the possibility of a CCAA filing from March 4, 2016. Reference to PWC as Monitor under the CCAA was available through the template APAs from March 4, 2016

86 The Trustee and the Ad Hoc Bondholders submit that the Ad Hoc Bondholders' April 11, 2016 proposal provides superior recovery to the proposed sales generated by the SISP, that it "implies" a purchase price significantly in excess of the values

generated by the APAs. The proposal, which was made directly to the Syndicate, was rejected by the Syndicate. It provides less immediate recovery to the Syndicate, and leaves a substantial portion of the Syndicate debt outstanding in a difficult and highly uncertain economic environment. It fails to address previously-expressed concerns about the need for capital going forward. The implied value of the proposal appears to rest on assumptions about improved economic recovery that the Syndicate does not accept or share.

87 In addition, the proposal would require at least six months to execute and leaves a number of questions outstanding, not the least being whether a plan that raises some and not all unsecured debt to secured status would pass muster. The proposal was rejected by the Syndicate for reasonable and defendable justifications.

88 The Ad Hoc Bondholders describe their proposal as a "germ" of a viable plan. While a germ of a viable plan may be sufficient to justify the commencement of a CCAA proceeding, it is not comparable to the proposed sales generated by a reasonably-run and thorough SISP.

89 The Trustee also submits that the Court should not be deterred by the Syndicate's rejection of the proposal, insisting on its value and citing cases where a creditor's stated intention not to accept a plan did not prevent a CCAA filing from proceeding. This is a different situation: the Ad Hoc Bondholder's proposals are specific proposals with clear risks of timing and certainty. It is not up to this Court to second guess the Syndicate's rejection of such a plan, even if inclined to do so.

90 The Trustee submits that Sanjel did not act in good faith towards the Ad Hoc Bondholders in the period leading up to the filing. The Trustee notes that, contrary to the terms of the Bond Agreement, Sanjel failed to disclose to the bondholders that the Syndicate had issued a demand for payment acceleration and a notice of intention to enforce security pursuant to the terms of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act (the "Demand Acceleration and NOI") on March 18, 2016. While this was a contractual breach, the Ad Hoc Bondholders were well aware that Sanjel was in breach of the Bank Credit Facility, and that the Syndicate was taking steps to enforce its rights in negotiations with Sanjel and the Ad Hoc Bondholders. The Syndicate, and the Ad Hoc Bondholders, were both careful to preserve their rights of enforcement in proposals and counter-proposals. In fact, the Syndicate did not exercise its right to set-off, and has allowed Sanjel to continue to have access to liquidity going into the CCAA process.

91 This failure by Sanjel to advise the Trustee, (and other unsecured creditors that had similar provisions in their contracts), of this further step by the Syndicate does not constitute a reason to refuse to approve that APAs.

92 The Trustee submits that Sanjel failed to make full and plain disclosure during the initial hearing because it failed to disclose that in 2015, 62 % of the Sanjel Group's revenue was generated in the United States. Sanjel made extensive disclosure of its corporate structure and the integration of its business in its initial filing, including the fact that the Sanjel Group's "nerve centre", management team and treasury and financial functions are largely based in Calgary. The factors disclosed were more than sufficient to establish jurisdiction for a CCAA filing. The US Court in the Chapter 15 filing found the Sanjel Group's COMI to be in Calgary. The single statistic of 2015 revenue would not have changed the outcome of the Initial Order.

93 The Trustee's most serious allegation, given its implications for the professional reputations of those involved, is that Sanjel and its counsel and the Syndicate and its counsel misled the Trustee and the Ad Hoc Bondholders in their requests for adjournment of the bondholders' meeting, that the correspondence relating to the requests for adjournment created an obligation to negotiate in good faith, and that Sanjel and the Syndicate failed to do so. The Trustee and the Ad Hoc Bondholders allege that Sanjel and the Syndicate were negotiating with the Ad Hoc Bondholders only to gain time to finalize the APAs and file under the CCAA.

94 Again, this serious allegation is not supported by the evidence. The correspondence relating to the adjournment requests discloses no promises to hold off proceedings. The letter of request for the first adjournment for counsel to the Syndicate, while it refers to engaging with the Ad Hoc Bondholders with respect to the March 2, 2016 proposal, stipulates that in requesting the postponement of the meeting, counsel is not promising any course of action and reserves all rights.

95 The request from counsel to Sanjel refers to the dual track of negotiating a financial restructuring and/or sale of assets. It speaks of focusing on negotiations for the balance of the month, instead of "prospective enforcement action as proposed for

consideration at the scheduled bondholders meeting," as was threatened by the notice of meeting. The Ad Hoc Bondholders were well-compensated financially for this adjournment.

96 The second request to adjourn the meeting to April 14, 2016 was similarly without any promise to forbear and the acceptance of the request by the Trustee did not impose any conditions nor give any reasons for the acceptance. The representatives of the Ad Hoc Bondholders are knowledgeable and sophisticated with respect to financing and insolvency matters. They cannot be said to have been misled by the language used in the adjournment requests.

97 The Trustee submits that the CCAA process to date has been engineered to effect a foreclosure in favour of the Syndicate "to the serious and material prejudice of the Bondholders" and other unsecured creditors.

98 The SISP did not disclose any possibility that, in the current economic climate, the disposition of the assets would generate even enough to cover the debt owed to the secured creditors. The proposals made by the Ad Hoc Bondholders did not offer nearly enough to pay out that debt.

99 The views of the Syndicate and its priority rights must be given due consideration: *Windsor Machine & Stamping Ltd., Re*, 2009 CarswellOnt 4471 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at para 43.

100 Section 6 of the CCAA requires that any compromise of creditors' rights must be supported by a double majority of the affected creditors. The Syndicate (as the principal secured creditor group) and the Ad Hoc Bondholders (as unsecured creditors with other unsecured creditors) would form separate voting classes for the purposes of a vote on any plan of arrangement. Each class must have a double majority of creditors, representing both two-thirds in value and a majority of number, voting in support of the plan as a condition precedent to court approval. Thus, the Syndicate holds an effective "veto" over the approval of any plan proposed by the Ad Hoc Bondholders: *SemCanada Crude Co., Re*, 2009 ABQB 490 (Alta. Q.B.) at para 22.

101 A noted by the Syndicate, the Ad Hoc Bondholders proposals, including the April 11, 2016 proposal, pose substantial risk to the Syndicate, and it is under no obligation to support them. There is no evidence that the Syndicate is acting unreasonably or unfairly in asserting that it would exercise the statutory protection afforded to a secured creditor under the CCAA; in fact, the evidence is that the Syndicate was willing to consider a less than 100% payout in negotiations with the Ad Hoc Bondholders. There was however no, agreement as to the extent of the payout and the extent to which the Syndicate would agree to remain at risk.

102 The prejudice to the bondholders is that they were unable to persuade the secured creditors to compromise or put its financial interests at risk in order to provide the bondholders with some chance that an improved economic climate may save this enterprise. As noted, the Syndicate had doubts that the Ad Hoc Bondholder's proposals would even provide sufficient operating capital to keep the Sanjel Group operating for the months it would take to implement their proposals.

103 The prejudice, if any, to the Ad Hoc Bondholders is that they were not able to pre-empt the CCAA filing with a filing under Chapter 11 of the *United States Bankruptcy Code*, with an automatic stay that, according to US bankruptcy law, has worldwide effect. A subsequent CCAA filing could be considered a breach of the stay, and provoke a jurisdictional issue that would delay proceedings and prove expensive to the Syndicate, improving the Ad Hoc Bondholders' bargaining position.

104 While there is only hearsay opinion before me with respect to the advantages of a Chapter 11 filing, the Trustee suggests that under such a filing:

(a) the Liberty and Step APAs would have been subject to market test and to higher and better offers;

(b) Sanjel could confirm a plan without the consent of the Syndicate; and

(c) parties in interest and estate fiduciaries could pursue claims and causes of action against Sanjel, the Syndicate, Sanjel's equity holders and MacBain.

105 Sanjel cites academic commentary that the cram-down provisions of Chapter 11 require strict compliance so as not to override the protections and elections available to secured creditors in opposition to a plan that they do not support. Specifically, if a class of creditors is impaired, the plan must be fair and equitable with respect to that class.

106 This is an issue for the US Courts. However, even if the Chapter 15 filing was replaced by a Chapter 11 filing, the current CCAA proceedings would not be terminated and any restructuring in the United States would necessarily have to be coordinated with these CCAA proceedings. Accordingly, the voting requirements for any plan of arrangement or the requirements for approval of a sale under the CCAA could not be avoided.

D. The Ad Hoc Bondholders were prejudiced in that they were not provided with information regarding the process and the bids received.

107 The Ad Hoc Bondholders had access to the same information afforded to bidders under the SISP and more. They were able to make proposals both before and after that process. Their financial advisors were afforded an opportunity for due diligence, and exercised it.

108 What they did not receive was disclosure of the details of the bids. There was a dispute about whether or not the Ad Hoc Bondholders could be considered "bidders". While they were not part of the SISP, they certainly had interests in conflict with the SISP bidders. Had the bids been disclosed to them, there would indeed have been concern over the integrity of the process, as such disclosure would allow them to tailor their proposals in such a way as to undermine the bids.

109 The Ad Hoc Bondholders were aware that they would not be given copies of the bids by mid-February, 2016 when the Bondholders Forbearance Agreement was settled, as it included a provision clarifying that they were not entitled to any pricing or bidder information from the SISP.

110 The Bond Forbearance Agreement also recognized that, while Sanjel would negotiate in good faith with the Ad Hoc Bondholders, nothing restricted its ability to enter into or conduct negotiations with respect to potential sales or other transactions. It was only on March 14, 2016 that the Ad Hoc Bondholders requested third party bid information.

111 The Ad Hoc Bondholders were not improperly denied access to information, and would not have been entitled to know details of the third party bids.

V. Conclusion

112 I am satisfied by the evidence before me that the factors set out in section 36(3) of the CCAA and Soundair favour the approval of the proposed sales. Specifically:

(a) the process, while not conducted under the CCAA, was nevertheless reasonable in the circumstances, as established by the evidence. It was brief, but not unreasonably brief, given the previous BAML process, current economic climate and the deteriorating financial position of the Sanjel Group;

(b) while the Monitor was not directly involved and did not actively participate in the SISP process prior to February 24, 2016, the Monitor has reviewed the process and is of the opinion that the SISP was a robust process run fairly and reasonably, and that sufficient efforts were made to obtain the best price possible for the Sanjel Group's assets in that process. I agree with the Monitor's assessment from my review of the evidence.

It is the Monitor's view, based on (i) the advice of CS and PJT, (ii) the nature of the Sanjel Group's operations and assets, (iii) the market conditions over the past year, (iv) the proposals received in the context of the SISP and from the Ad Hoc Bondholders, (v) the current ongoing depressed condition of the market and (vi) the underlying value of the Sanjel Group's assets, it is highly improbably that another post-filing sales process would yield offers for the Canadian and U.S. operations materially in excess of the values contained in the STEP and Liberty APAs.

I accept the Monitor's opinion in that regard, and nothing in my review of the evidence and the submissions of interested parties causes me to doubt that opinion.

(c) The Monitor has provided an opinion that the proposed sales are more beneficial to creditors than a sale or disposition under bankruptcy.

(d) Creditors, other than trade creditors, were consulted and involved in the process.

(e) While the sales provide no return to any creditor other than the Syndicate, I am satisfied that all other viable or reasonable options were considered. While there is no guarantee of further employment arising from the sale, there is the prospect that since the business will continue to operate until the sale, there will be an opportunity for employment for Sanjel employees with the new enterprises, and an opportunity for suppliers to continue to supply them.

(f) I am satisfied from the evidence that the consideration to be received for the assets is reasonable and fair.

I therefore approve the sale approval and vesting orders sought by the Sanjel Group.

VI. Postscript

113 On May 9, 2016, before these reasons were released, I received a copy of a letter dated May 5, 2016 from Fried Frank on behalf of the Ad Hoc Bondholders addressed to Canadian and US counsel for the Sanjel Group, the Monitor, the Syndicate and the prospective purchasers. In extravagant language, the Ad Hoc Bondholders state that they have become aware of information that the addressees are "duty bound" to bring to the attention of the Courts as officers of the Courts. That information is that Shane Hooker has been designated to lead the Canadian cementing operations when the STEP sale closes, according to a STEP press release. Evidently, Mr. Hooker is married to the daughter of Dan MacDonald, the chairman of Sanjel's board, and is the sister of Darin MacDonald, who was Chief Executive Officer of Sanjel and head of the restructuring committee.

114 The letter asserts the following:

a) There are "substantial and material" connections between STEP and the MacDonald family. It appears that the basis for this statement is that Mr. Hooker is married to Mr. MacDonald's daughter and an employee and "executive in residence" of ARC Financial Corp., STEP's financial sponsor in the sale;

b) Mr. Hooker is "an intimate beneficiary of all that is and all that belongs to the MacDonald family." In subsequent correspondence with the Monitor, it appears that the Ad Hoc Bondholders have no evidence to support this allegation;

c) Mr. Hooker is "the loyal son-in-law and brother-in-law" of the MacDonald family. Again, the Ad Hoc Bondholders admit that they have no information to support this allegation;

d) By reason of Mr. Hooker's relationship with the "MacDonald family", the proposed STEP transaction and the entirety of the SISP process "is tainted and worse". "(O)ur clients have every reason to believe the substance, of self-dealing and deception of the highest order";

e) "Mr. Hooker's personal and professional ties to the MacDonald family raise the spectre that all at hand is and has been a thinly-veiled scheme between the Company and the Syndicate and their advisors to deliver, on the one hand, an adequate recovery to the Syndicate and, on the other hand, Sanjel's Canadian assets back into the hands of the MacDonald family thereby working a substantial forfeiture of value to the Bondholders and all other unsecured creditors of the Company".

115 The letter repeats previous allegations that the SISP was "driven by self-interest and self-dealing", "riddled with conflicts of interest," "inappropriate and flawed in every respect", "chilled, inadequate" and "not conducted in good faith and efforts were undertaken to mislead and misdirect the company's stakeholders". It alleges:

a) "That none of this has been brought to the attention of the Courts and all parties in interest is reprehensible at best and has all indicia of fraudulent intent and purpose."

b) "Be advised that with respect to each and all of you and each and all of your respective clients as well as with respect to STEP, Liberty and any and all funding sources and sponsors for each, our clients herby reserve all of their rights and remedies with respect to any and all claims and causes of action of every kind and nature whatsoever whether such claims and causes of action are grounded in contract, tort, equity, statute and otherwise including, but not limited to, any and all breach of fiduciary duties, civil conspiracy, tortious interference and lender liability."

c) "... the efforts to continue with malfeasance wrapped in the cloak of SISP and CCAA by each and all of you and your clients must stop now. As above, the Courts and others should and must be informed, the failure to do so is and will be a misrepresentation and fraud on the Courts."

116 The letter comments that "(w)hen Justice Romaine is in receipt of the information, she will have reason and basis and we believe that Her Ladyship will be constrained, to vacate the order."

117 The Monitor took immediate action to investigate these serious allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, conspiracy and collusion, requesting urgent responses from counsel for Sanjel, the Syndicate, Mr. MacDonald, PJT and CS. Relevant witnesses were contacted and follow-up questions directed. The Monitor was also in contact with Fried Frank to determine the source of the allegations, and what investigation had been undertaken by Fried Frank or the Ad Hoc Bondholders to verify or support their allegations.

118 On Saturday, May 7, 2016, Fried Frank made the further allegation that potential bidders in the SISP were provided with forecasts that were far worse than actual results in order to facilitate the alleged fraud and conspiracy. The Monitor added this allegation to its investigation.

119 The Monitor was satisfied by its rapid but thorough investigations that:

a) Mr. Hooker and Mr. MacDonald have been estranged for the last two and a half-years, and have had no communication on any personal or business matters;

b) Mr. Hooker left Sanjel in March, 2014 and began working for ARC Financial in the fall of 2015 to assist ARC in an unrelated transaction. ARC is a large private investor focussed on energy, which provides financing through a number of funds financed by from third party investors. ARC is the primary financial stakeholder in the STEP acquisition. No one from the MacDonald family has an ownership position in ARC, nor are any of them investors in any ARC funds. Mr. Hooker has no involvement in ARC's fundraising efforts or fund deployment and he has no ownership interest in ARC;

c) Mr. MacDonald had no involvement in the negotiation of the STEP APA, other than attendance as a Sanjel representative at three meetings between November 2015 and January 2016, before the SISP was commenced;

d) Mr. Crilly as CFO of Sanjel (and later CRO) led the SISP process for Sanjel, while Mr. MacDonald concentrated on attempting to find a buyer for the whole company;

e) The senior Mr. MacDonald has not had an active role in Sanjel's management for years, was not involved in the SISP and does not own shares in STEP or ARC;

f) Mr. Hooker's involvement with the SISP and negotiations with STEP was limited to conducting on-site diligence on behalf of STEP;

g) Sanjel has no direct or indirect ownership interest or other financial interest in ARC, STEP, the newly formed company that will be purchasing the cementing assets or any other entity owned or controlled by ARC;

h) No consideration was provided to Mr. Hooker or either Mr. MacDonald in connection with the STEP APA;

i) In the opinion of many of those who provided responses, the relationship between Mr. Hooker and Mr. MacDonald had an adverse effect, if anything, on the merits of the STEP bid. The advisors and the Syndicate repeat their previous position that the STEP offer, in combination with the Liberty offer, was materially superior to any en bloc bid or combination of bids, and was supported on the basis of its economic merits.

120 This information was largely confirmed by a number of sources. The Monitor did not obtain sworn statements, nor conduct any kind of discovery process. It did not present the information in its Sixth Report to the Court as evidence, but as a report on its investigation to determine whether there was any probative value to the Ad Hoc Bondholders' allegations.

121 When the Monitor was unable to find any real evidence to support the allegations, other than the bare fact that Mr. Hooker is an employee of ARC and is married to Mr. MacDonald's sister, it asked the Ad Hoc Bondholders if they had any supporting evidence. The substance of counsel to the Ad Hoc Bondholders' response is that there is an appearance of inappropriate dealing (arising from the relationship), and that it was up to the Monitor to investigate this.

122 The Ad Hoc Bondholders instead provided the Monitor with a list of additional questions that they wish the Monitor to investigate through sworn statements subject to cross-examination. These questions appear designed to elicit some evidence that may support the Ad Hoc Bondholder's speculations.

123 The Monitor cannot be faulted for failing to obtain sworn evidence from relevant parties. The allegations were made after approval of the APAs in the context of tight timelines to the closing of the transactions and the risk of losing the recommended sales transactions. If the Monitor had discovered anything that would give any legitimacy to the allegations, or raise any doubt about the integrity of the SISP, it may have been appropriate to direct further investigation, including sworn evidence. However, mere speculation resting on a family relationship is insufficient to require the Monitor to undertake further expensive investigation or to conduct a fishing expedition. This is particularly the case as there is no real evidence that Mr. Hooker's prospective employment will benefit either Mr. MacDonald or Sanjel in any way, or Mr. Hooker himself, other than the offer of employment.

124 This is not a case where evidence that should be presented in affidavit form has been incorporated improperly into a Monitor's report. The Monitor decided, quite properly, that at this stage of the process, a quick investigation to determine whether there was any real basis for the Ad Hoc Bondholders complaint was warranted. This investigation has satisfied the Monitor that, other than the fact that Mr. Hooker is indeed Mr. MacDonald's brother-in-law, there is no evidence of collusion between them, Mr. MacDonald was not involved in the STEP APA, Mr. Hooker was in no position to influence that STEP APA and no evidence that Mr. Hooker or the "MacDonald family" will profit in any way from the STEP APA, other than Mr. Hooker's offer of employment.

125 Given the lack of any indicia that there is any basis for the Ad Hoc Bondholders' speculations of fraud or conspiracy, there is no reason for this Court to require the Monitor to take further steps to investigate the allegations, which appear to be thinly veiled and reckless attempts to delay and obfuscate the process.

126 With respect to the allegations that potential bidders were provided with forecasts far worse than actual results in order to facilitate the alleged fraud and conspiracy, the Monitor has reviewed the forecasts and the variances from the forecasts provided during the SISP to actuals. The Monitor reports that these relate to collection of accounts receivable and payment of accounts payable. The actual collection of receivables was better than forecasted for the months of March and April. However, the Monitor understands that is a temporary timing variance based on earlier collection of receivables and does not represent a permanent improvement in Sanjel's actual cash position.

127 Thus, the Monitor is of the view that the allegations by the Ad Hoc Bondholders with respect to forecasts being far worse than actual results lack merit.

128 I accept the Monitor's advice on this issue.

129 With respect to disclosure, the Monitor was not aware of the connection between STEP and the company alleged in the Fried Frank letter. The Monitor has reported that it did not become aware of anything that would support or substantiate the allegations since its involvement in the SISP process after February 24, 2016.

130 The Ad Hoc Bondholders' allegations are in essence that the SISP was structured to achieve a preferential outcome for the MacDonald family through the familial connections between Mr. Hooker and the MacDonald family. If a sale of assets of a debtor company is to be made to a person related to the debtor, the Court may only approve the sale 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 debtor company; 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: CCAA section 36(4).

131 A related party pursuant to section 36(5) is defined to include certain categories of persons, and neither Mr. Hooker, his wife or either Mr. MacDonald fall into these categories.

132 There is no evidence or indication that any member of the "MacDonald family" will benefit from the STEP APA, other than Mr. Hooker's offer of employment. I am therefore satisfied that section 36(3) is not applicable to the STEP or the Liberty transactions and that no disclosure of any relationship was necessary before the APAs were approved.

133 Even if disclosure had been made, given the evidence before me with respect to the SISP process and the offers received, I would have been satisfied the requirements of section 36(3) were met.

134 In conclusion, the allegations of the Ad Hoc Bondholders do not change my decision with respect to approval of the APAs. I see no reason why the Monitor should continue its investigation.

135 The issue of who should bear the cost of the investigation into these allegations is reserved.

Debtors' application granted; trustee's application dismissed.

End of Document

TAB 9

2023 ONSC 5911
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Romspen Investment Corporation v. Tung Kee Investment Canada Ltd. et al.

2023 CarswellOnt 16404, 2023 ONSC 5911

IN THE MATTER OF SECTION 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

Romspen Investment Corporation (Applicant) AND Tung Kee Investment Canada Ltd. and Tung Kee Investment Limited Partnership (Respondents)

Peter J. Osborne J.

Heard: October 6, 2023
Judgment: October 19, 2023
Docket: CV-23-00703161-00CL

Counsel: Davis Preger, Lisa Corne, David Seifer, for Applicant
Maya Poliak, for Respondents
Roger Jaipargas, for Amber Mortgage Inv. Corp.
Vern DaRe, for 2149602 Ontario Inc., Frank Pa and Stephen Tung
Bota McNamara, Amandeep Sidhu, for Sow Capital Ontario Limited
Justin Chan, for DX Strategies
Ian Klaiman, for 2816513 Ontario Inc.
Ken Rosenberg, for Times Group
Chad Kopach, for Proposed Receiver - EY

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Corporate and Commercial; Estates and Trusts; Insolvency; Property
Headnote
Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Receivers — Appointment
Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Administration of estate — Sale of assets

APPLICATION for order appointing receiver and manager over assets and property of respondents and for related relief; MOTION by moving party for order authorizing and permitting completion of sale of certain property.

***Peter J. Osborne J.*:**

The Receivership Application, the Two Sale Approval Motions and the Positions of the Parties

1 The Applicant, Romspen Investment Corporation ("Romspen"), seeks an order allowing the Application and appointing Ernst & Young Inc. as receiver and manager (the "Receiver") over the assets and property of the Respondents / Debtors Tung Kee Investment Canada Ltd. (TKIC") and Tung Kee Investment Limited Partnership ("TKIL") including the property at 3143 19th Ave., Markham, Ontario (the "Property").

2 The Property consists of three separate legally described parcels which collectively comprise an area of approximately 66.29 acres of developable vacant land. The Debtors had planned a mixed-use development including a film studio, offices, a hotel and retail, although that did not proceed.

3 Within the Application, Romspen moves for an order approving an agreement of purchase and sale between Romspen and Times 1010 Inc. ("Times") dated September 15, 2023, as amended (the "Times Transaction"), and authorizing the Receiver to complete the Times Transaction and vest title to the Property in Times. The Times Transaction is scheduled to close on November 15, 2023. Romspen has first position mortgage security registered against title to the Property.

4 Romspen also seeks as corollary relief a sealing order in respect of Confidential Exhibits 1 through 3 to the Supplementary Affidavit of Wesley Roitman sworn September 29, 2023, and the Confidential Appendices to the First Report of the Proposed Receiver.

5 Sow Capital Ontario Limited ("Sow") moves by way of its own motion for an order authorizing and permitting the completion of the sale of the Property, under power of sale, to 2816513 Ontario Inc. (the "281 Transaction"). Sow does not oppose the appointment of the Receiver, but seeks in its motion an order that the Receivership Order, if granted, be suspended until after November 30, 2023, the scheduled closing date for the 281 Transaction.

6 The appointment of a receiver is not opposed by any party appearing today, and indeed is supported by the Respondents / Debtors as well as subsequent ranking mortgagees and the holder of a lien registered against title to the Property. As stated, Sow however seeks an order that no receivership powers be executed or acted upon until after the 281 Transaction closes.

7 Approval of either sale transaction is, obviously, contested.

8 Approval of the Times Transaction sought by Romspen is supported by Amber Mortgage Investment Corporation ("Amber") as second mortgagee, 2149602 Ontario Inc. ("214") as third mortgagee, and DX Strategies Inc. ("DX") as lienholder.

9 I pause to observe that DX takes the position that it should be entitled to a priority over all five mortgages although all parties agree that priority and distribution issues are for another day and need not be determined to dispose of the competing motions today.

10 The third mortgagees, Frank Pa and Steven Tung, were represented in Court but did not take a position on either sale.

11 The Respondents / Debtors oppose the approval of either transaction and submit that only an auction conducted by the Receiver can generate the highest price for the Property. They further request that if either transaction is approved, this Court grant an order specifically reserving their rights to bring an action for improvident sale, as their counsel advised they intend to do.

12 By way of related relief, the Respondents / Debtors seek an order that the proceeds of sale be held in trust and not be distributed to any mortgagees until their improvident sale action has been determined.

13 The proposed Receiver, in its First Report dated October 4, 2023, supports and recommends approval of the Times Transaction and recommends that no auction process be undertaken, as the proposed Receiver does not believe that further marketing of the Property would yield any higher or better offers. It submits that the terms of the proposed approval and vesting order are reasonable.

14 Many of the background facts and the chronology are not in dispute.

15 Romspen advanced a secured loan to the Debtors, which are Ontario corporations. The loan has been in default since September 1, 2022. As of July 6, 2023, the amount owing under the Romspen loan was $32,628,671.54. Interest accrues at a *per diem* rate of $8,359.84.

16 Romspen's security includes a first ranking mortgage over the Property and security interest over all of the personal property of the Debtors. The mortgage and the security documents contain contractual agreements to the appointment of a receiver upon default.

17 There are five mortgages registered on title to the Property including the Romspen mortgage and the Sow mortgage:

Ranking Priority	*Creditor*	*Principal Face Amount*
First	Romspen	$30 million
Second	Amber Mortgage Investment Corporation	$8.5 million
Third	2149602 Ontario Inc,	$3,744,759.41 (Cdn) and $26,279,223.54 (HK)
Fourth	Frank Pa and Steven Tung	$3.54 million
Fifth	Sow Capital Ontario Limited	$20 million

18 In addition to the mortgages, a construction lien and certificate of action are also registered against title to the Property. They reflect that the Respondent TKIC is indebted to DX Strategies Inc. in the amount of $4,653,028.11 in respect of the supply of project management and architectural services.

19 Efforts on the part of the Debtors to refinance and sell the Property have not borne fruit.

20 On October 7, 2022, Romspen made formal demand for payment of its loan and issued a Notice of Intention to Enforce Security under section 244 (1) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* ("BIA"). The cure period has long expired. The loan has not been repaid.

21 On October 25, 2022, Romspen issued a notice of sale under its mortgage, and on May 1, 2023, it accepted an offer to purchase the Property although the buyer terminated that agreement prior to the expiry of the condition period. The Property has been subsequently listed for sale by Romspen since April 4, 2023 with Royal LePage as broker.

22 Romspen has lost faith in the ability of the Debtors and their management to resolve the situation, with the result that it seeks the appointment of a receiver pursuant to both section 243(1) of the *BIA* and section 101 of the *Courts of Justice Act* ("*CJA*").

23 The Appointment Order, if granted, authorizes the Receiver to sell the Property.

24 The Property has been marketed extensively since being listed with Royal LePage in April, and has been listed for sale on MLS for over 160 days. In addition, the Respondents and Sow have been attempting to sell and/or refinance the Property since at least 2021.

25 Romspen therefore seeks the approval of the Times Transaction and an order authorizing the Receiver to complete the Transaction and, upon delivery of a Receiver's certificate, an order vesting title to the Property, free and clear of all Encumbrances other than Permitted Encumbrances as defined in the Times Transaction, in Times.

26 The Times Transaction reflects a purchase price that is higher than the fair market value of the Property as reflected in appraisals commissioned by each of Romspen and Sow. It is unconditional save for the issuance of an approval and vesting order.

27 For its part, Sow, as fifth ranking mortgagee, served its own Notice of Sale on May 17, 2023 and entered into the 281 Transaction on July 18, 2023. That agreement therefore predates the agreement for the Times Transaction. The 281 Transaction is now unconditional. Sow therefore seeks an order permitting it to complete its power of sale to 281 pursuant to section 23 of the *Mortgages Act*.

The Proposed Receivership

28 The first issue is whether a receiver should be appointed.

29 The test for the appointment of a receiver pursuant to section 243 of the *BIA* or section 101 of the *CJA* is not in dispute. Is it just or convenient to do so?

30 In making a determination about whether it is, in the circumstances of a particular case, just or convenient to appoint a receiver, 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. These include the rights of the secured creditor pursuant to its security: *Bank of Nova Scotia v. Freure Village on the Clair Creek* 1996 O.J. No. 5088, 1996 CanLII 8258.

31 Where the rights of the secured creditor include, pursuant to the terms of its security, the right to seek the appointment of a receiver, the burden on the applicant is lessened: while the appointment of a receiver is generally an extraordinary equitable remedy, the courts do not so regard the nature of the remedy where the relevant security permits the appointment and as a result, the applicant is merely seeking to enforce a term of an agreement already made by both parties: *Elleway Acquisitions Ltd. v. Cruise Professionals Ltd.,*2013 ONSC 6866 ("*Elleway* ") at para. 27. However, the presence or lack of such a contractual entitlement is not determinative of the issue.

32 The Courts have considered numerous factors which have been historically taken into account in the determination of whether it is appropriate to appoint a receiver and which I have considered in this case:

> a. whether irreparable harm might be caused if no order is made, although as stated above, it is not essential for a creditor to establish irreparable harm if a receiver is not appointed where the appointment is authorized by the security documentation;
>
> b. the risk to the security holder taking into consideration the size of the debtor's equity in the assets and the need for protection or safeguarding of assets while litigation takes place;
>
> c. the nature of the property;
>
> d. the apprehended or actual waste of the debtor's assets;
>
> e. the preservation and protection of the property pending judicial resolution;
>
> f. the balance of convenience to the parties;
>
> g. the fact that the creditor has a right to appointment under the loan documentation;
>
> h. the enforcement of rights under a security instrument where the security-holder encounters or expects to encounter difficulties with the debtor;
>
> i. the principle that the appointment of a receiver should be granted cautiously;
>
> j. the consideration of whether a court appointment is necessary to enable the receiver to carry out its duties efficiently;
>
> k. the effect of the order upon the parties;
>
> l. the conduct of the parties;
>
> m. the length of time that a receiver may be in place;
>
> n. the cost to the parties;
>
> o. the likelihood of maximizing return to the parties; and
>
> p. the goal of facilitating the duties of the receiver.

See: *Canadian Equipment Finance and Leasing Inc. v. The Hypoint Company Limited*, 2022 ONSC 6186, and *Maple Trade Finance Inc. v. CY Oriental Holdings Ltd.*, 2009 BCSC 1527at para. 25, citing *Bennett on Receivership*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Carswell, 1999).

33 How are these factors to be applied? The British Columbia Supreme Court put it, I think, correctly: "these factors are not a checklist but a collection of considerations to be viewed holistically in an assessment as to whether, in all the circumstances, the appointment of a receiver is just or convenient: *Pandion Mine Finance Fund LP v. Otso Gold Corp.*, 2022 BCSC 136 at para. 54.

34 Accordingly, is it just or convenient to appoint a receiver in the present case. In my view, it is.

35 While certainly not determinative of the issue, the fact that the appointment of a receiver is not opposed by any party, and the somewhat unusual fact that the appointment of the receiver is in fact consented to and indeed supported by the Respondents / Debtors themselves, is very telling.

36 Romspen has a contractual entitlement to the appointment of a receiver in the event of a default, which has clearly occurred here, as is acknowledged by the Respondents. But even more substantively, I am satisfied that a Court-appointed receiver is appropriate here to bring order and transparency to the chaos that has been the hallmark of dealings with the Property for a considerable period of time prior to the bringing of this Application, and continue to date. This chaos is clearly evidenced by the competing motions for sale approval and the strongly held views and acrimony between and among many of the key stakeholders even today.

37 Chaos is usually antithetical to the achievement of the overarching objective of maximizing recovery for stakeholders. I am satisfied that this objective can be achieved, and indeed in the present circumstances can only be achieved, under the supervision of a Court-appointed Receiver. I recognize, naturally, that if either Transaction is approved, the role of the Receiver will necessarily be materially impacted accordingly.

38 The factors relevant to the appointment of a receiver are easily satisfied here. The Romspen loan has been in default for over a year and has not been repaid notwithstanding demands, the section 244 *BIA* notice, and the Romspen notice of sale. The loan matured according to its terms on January 1, 2023. As is evident from the summary above, the Property is highly leveraged with numerous mortgages. Romspen has lost faith in the ability of the Debtors and their management to address the situation, and none of the efforts of the Debtors to refinance the loan or sell the Property have yielded any results.

39 A Court-appointed receiver will ensure that the interests of all of the stakeholders of the Debtors are considered.

40 The proposed Receiver is an appropriate candidate to fulfil this role and is extremely qualified to do so. It has consented to the appointment.

41 EY is appointed Receiver.

42 In my view, there is no basis or justification here to appoint the Receiver, but suspend or hold in abeyance its ability to exercise its receivership powers. Romspen and the supporting subordinate mortgagees all oppose any such suspension, and so do the Respondents who want the Receiver to immediately commence a sales and auction process.

43 The only party who submits that a suspension would be appropriate is Sow. It advances no adequate basis for what is, effectively, an adjournment of the appointment of the Receiver since for all practical purposes the appointment of the Receiver albeit with the suspension of its powers, amounts to the same thing.

44 Sow makes this request openly and transparently so that the Receiver cannot and will not interfere with the closing of the 281 Transaction. I am satisfied that there is no basis upon which the appointment of the Receiver, which I have found to be both just and convenient now, should be impaired and held in abeyance for approximately two months.

45 In certain circumstances, and particularly with the consent of the parties where there is a pending transaction that is scheduled to be completed imminently, it may well be appropriate to appoint a receiver but suspend for a brief period of time all or some of the powers granted to it under the receivership order. However, I would think it would be the relatively rare case where, on a contested basis, it is on the one hand just or convenient to appoint a receiver at a given point in time, and yet on the other hand also just and equitable that receivership powers not be exercised for a period of time.

Should Either Transaction be Approved?

46 The next issue is whether any (either) Transaction should be approved now, or whether a further sales process ought to be undertaken by the Receiver.

47 The factors to be considered by the Court in determining whether a sale transaction in a receivership should be approved are well settled:

> a. whether the party seeking sale approval has 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.

See: *Royal Bank of Canada v. Soundair Corp.*, [1991] 46 O.A.C. 3211991, CanLII 2727 (ONCA) at para. 16.

48 Courts have approved immediate sales of property (colloquially referred to as "quick flip sales") in circumstances where a marketing process was conducted by a party other than a receiver, if the process was nonetheless fair and reasonable and where the court was of the view that no purpose would be served by a further marketing process: see *Textron Financial Canada Limited v. Beta Limitee/Beta Brands Limited*2007 CanLII 297ONSC; *Fund 321 Limited Partnership v. Samsys Technologies Inc.*2006 CanLII 13572ONSC; *Tool-Plas Systems Inc., Re*, 2008 CanLII 54791 (ONSC) at para. 15; and *Montrose Mortgage Corp. v. Kingsway Arms Ottawa Inc.* 2013 ONSC 6905 ("*Montrose* ").

49 In such circumstances, the *Soundair* Principles still apply, but courts will scrutinize with special care the adequacy and the fairness of the sales and marketing process. D. M. Brown, J., as he then was, expressed it this way in *Montrose* at para. 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. 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* and *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*, 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* 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.
> >
> > 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.

50 I am satisfied that it is not appropriate in the circumstances of this case to direct the Receiver to conduct a further sales and marketing process, with the result that one or other of the two Transactions should be approved now.

51 The availability of the Property, and the opportunity to purchase it if such was desired, has not caught the market by surprise. On the contrary, it has been openly available for approximately two years.

52 I am satisfied that the potential reward to be realized with a further sales process is outweighed by the risk of lower recovery for stakeholders. The Respondents themselves have attempted to sell or refinance the Property since January 2022 and have failed.

53 The process undertaken by or at the direction of Romspen, which is discussed further below, has been robust. Royal LePage was engaged to list the Property for sale on MLS in April, 2023 at a listing price of $69.5 million. Two offers were received by the initial bid deadline, and Romspen accepted the higher offer although it was subject to a due diligence condition. Regrettably, the buyer terminated the agreement and a few months later, on July 15, 2023, the same buyer submitted an unconditional offer with a purchase price equivalent to 75% of the price originally offered. Romspen did not accept that offer.

54 On July 12, 2023, the listing price of the Property was reduced by $5 million to $64.5 million.

55 Royal LePage conducted a process that I am satisfied was thorough and extensive. The Property was listed for sale on MLS for 162 days and exposed to a wide audience of land developers and commercial brokers. The process was multifactorial and included, among other things:

a. physical signs at the Property;

b. advertising on the realtors' business websites and through marketing brochures, as well as advertising on over 100 other websites. Statistics from realtor.ca, the largest online search engine in Canada, reflect that the Property was viewed 6309 times on 32 sites;

c. proactive email announcements by Royal LePage to subscribers that included over 1000 cooperating and regional brokers and 201 land developers in Ontario. Of those recipients, 540 brokers and 70 land developers opened the email; and

d. advertising specifically to the Mandarin speaking and Asian market in Canada.

56 The Receiver recommends approval of the Times Transaction and states that it does not believe that further marketing of the Property will result in superior offers.

57 In its First Report, the (then proposed) Receiver concludes that Romspen sales process was conducted in a manner that:

a. was fair to all who participated in it and consider the interests of all parties;

b. maintained appropriate efficacy, integrity, and a level playing field for all potential and actual bidders;

c. was marketed to a wide range of audiences, including land developers and commercial brokers;

d. made sufficient efforts to obtain the best price and not act improvidently; and

e. resulted in an offer for the Property that provides certainty as to closing, is higher than all other offers, and is also higher than the three appraisals commissioned for the Property (one by Romspen, and two by Sow).

58 All of these factors lead the Receiver to the conclusion that a further marketing campaign of the Property would not yield higher or better offers.

59 Even Sow submits that appointing a receiver, or at least appointing a receiver with the power to act immediately and not suspending those powers, would increase costs and likely would not realize a more favourable sale price with the result that creditors would be prejudiced (see Wong Affidavit, para. 30).

60 As against this, given the very significant encumbrances against the Property, interest is accruing at a rate of approximately $709,000 per month. Those costs, combined with the additional professional fees reasonably expected to be incurred to conduct a sales and marketing process, weigh heavily in favour of a realization of proceeds as soon as possible.

61 Finally, I observe that in its responding materials filed on these motions, Sow did not redact confidential information in connection with the 281 Transaction specifically including the purchase price or the results of the appraisals that it had commissioned. That information is reproduced again in its factum, also openly filed. Even at the hearing of these motions, no sealing order was sought by Sow.

62 While this may not be fatal to the success of a further sales and marketing process if one were ordered, I agree with the conclusion of the Receiver that the disclosure of this confidential information is likely to have a negative impact on any future sales process, as it effectively sets a price ceiling at an amount between the two appraisal values now publicly disclosed by Sow. At best, it is unhelpful to a new sales process.

63 For all of these reasons, I am satisfied that a further sales process is neither necessary nor appropriate here.

Which Transaction Should be Approved?

64 The next question, then, is which Transaction ought to be approved: the Times Transaction or the 281 Transaction.

65 In my view, the Times Transaction should be approved.

66 While both Transactions are unconditional and the scheduled closing date for each of them is not sufficiently different to be a material factor (they are only two weeks apart, although given the dollar values at play in the present case even that short period of time represents an interest cost savings of approximately $334,000 in favour of the Times Transaction), the Times Transaction represents the better outcome for all stakeholders.

67 The purchase price payable under the Times Transaction is higher than:

a. the purchase price payable under the 281 Transaction;

b. the values reflected in the appraisal reports of the appraisers commissioned by each of Romspen (who commissioned one appraisal report from Altus), and Sow (who commissioned two appraisal reports, one each from Avison Young and Wagner Andrews Kovacs respectively); and

c. the purchase price payable under the purchase agreement entered into in April, 2023 by the Debtors and the proposed purchaser Lee Li international Inc., by a delta of $4 million.

68 The proposed purchaser in the Times Transaction, Times, is a well-known developer in the greater Toronto area with a good track record. It has carried on business in Ontario for over 35 years and has completed numerous commercial and residential developments. It has provided Romspen with a letter from its bank confirming that it has the financial resources to close the transaction.

69 On the other hand, the 281 Transaction was entered into on July 18, 2023 with an initial closing date of October 16, 2023. That was subsequently extended to November 30, 2023 although no explanation has been offered as to why that extension was required or granted. This extension was also sought and granted after the deal had become firm and conditions waived or satisfied, with the result that the unexplained extension of closing is further perplexing.

70 The process leading to the 281 Transaction did not include many of the hallmarks of the typical power of sale process with attendant marketing and sale features. On the contrary, the affidavit evidence of Mr. Philip Wong on which Sow relies, is non-specific. He states that Sow engaged various "investment consultants" to market the Property to "potential investors" and that its investment consultant was actively speaking with the potential buyer but that buyer was "outbid". There is no explanation

for what any of this actually means, and raises more questions than it provides answers. I note that I have specifically reviewed and considered the evidence of Mr. Wong as set out in his affidavit at paragraphs 26 - 35. The Property was not listed on MLS nor widely advertised to the open market.

71 Moreover, Mr. Wong is a director of both the fifth mortgagee, Sow, which endorses and supports the 281 Transaction, and also of the Respondent TKIC. He was involved, at least for a period of time, and the pursuit of zoning and other municipal approvals in respect of the Property and the potential development thereof.

72 The evidence of the Respondents is to the effect that Mr. Wong, the principal of Sow, was a "business partner" of the Respondents, who was involved in both assisting them with their municipal zoning applications and communicating with potential purchasers. They say that Mr. Wong was "well apprised of all of the municipal approvals obtained". However, they submit, "on or around June, 2023, the Respondents and Mr. Wong had a falling out. The Respondents have not had any business or personal dealings with Mr. Wong or Sow since then."

73 The Respondents and Sow rely on this "falling out on or around June, 2023", without further context or explanation, to support their argument that there has been no acting in concert between the Respondents and Sow.

74 There is no evidence of a non-arm's-length relationship at the relevant time. However, in my view, the unexplained extension of the closing date reflects a greater execution risk with the 281 Transaction, and a sales process undertaken by Sow leading to that agreement that was at best more opaque, and was less transparent and clear, than was the process undertaken by Romspen.

75 Separate entirely from the involvement of Mr. Wong, the Respondents themselves submit, and the evidence of Pui Ling Lai on which they rely states, that the process undertaken by Sow "has not demonstrated that it has sufficiently exposed the Real Property to market" and that "the Real Property was marketed by Sow to a close small group of Sow's private clients only. Sow did not retain industry recognized commercial realtors and did not demonstrate that it has the necessary commercial real estate experience to market this property for sale."

76 Another factor is the fact that the affidavit filed by the proposed purchaser and the 281 Transaction (the relevance and appropriateness of which is discussed below) is from Hunter Lam, who is the Vice President of Business Development and Planning of Lee Li Holdings Inc., which he describes as a related and associated company of the proposed purchaser, 281. Lee Li was the purchaser in the earlier agreement of purchase and sale referred to above that ultimately did not close. The position of these parties is that they have no relationship with Sow, the fifth mortgagee who endorses and supports the closing of the 281 Transaction.

77 What remains unexplained is why Sow, who supported the earlier agreement at a purchase price some $4 million lower than the purchase price reflected in the Times Transaction, now does not support approval of the latter.

78 Having considered all of the relevant factors, I find that the balance favours the process leading to the Times Transaction.

79 Moreover, and in any event, and as stated above, the purchase price payable under the 281 Transaction is less than the proceeds that will be generated under the Times Transaction net of the real estate commission payable to Royal LePage.

80 This itself is a significant factor. That significance is magnified, in my view, when one considers the lack of any explanation from Sow, as fifth mortgagee, to explain its support for the 281 Transaction and its opposition to the Times Transaction, since the risk that it will suffer a greater shortfall is greater with the 281 Transaction.

81 The Respondents rely on the Affidavit of Pui Ling Lai sworn October 5, 2023 in support of their position that neither Transaction should be approved and that the Receiver should undertake a sales and marketing process. They submit that neither Transaction represents the best and highest price for the Property and, as stated above, such can be realized only through a further sales process undertaken by the Receiver.

82 In my view, however, none of those submissions, which are advanced vigourously, can overcome the practical reality that the Property has been exposed to the market as described above for a very significant period of time, and to an audience that includes both any potential purchasers with access to realtor.ca, and specific, targeted marketing to known commercial real estate brokers and land developers. Yet, none stepped forward with a higher price or otherwise more favourable offer.

83 Finally, the Respondents submit that they are really the only fulcrum stakeholders affected by the result here, since Romspen in first position, and maybe also Sow in fifth position, will be paid out in full. They therefore submit that there is no prejudice to any of the mortgagees, specifically including Romspen and Sow, to permit the Receiver time to market and sell the property.

84 I cannot accept that there is no prejudice to the mortgagees. The market is uncertain as evidenced by, among other things, the lack of a large number of offers generally and by the fact that the purchaser under the April, 2023 transaction who initially walked away, subsequently submitted an unconditional offer but only at 75% of its originally proposed purchase price.

85 I cannot accept the bald assertion by the Respondents that this case is distinguishable from the facts in *Elleway* , since the facts here clearly demonstrate that there will be no erosion of realization on security by the mortgagees caused by additional delay. There may very well be erosion of realization by further delay, with the professional costs and the very significant interest that continues to accrue on all of the mortgages.

86 In short, I am satisfied that it is in the best interests of the stakeholders that, as recommended by the Receiver, the Times Transaction, representing an unconditional commitment to purchase the Property in a very short period of time, be approved, and that another sales process is unlikely to yield a higher or otherwise better offer for the Property.

87 It follows that I decline to impose the term urged by the Respondents to the effect that this approval is without prejudice to their right to still attack the transaction as an improvident sale. I accept the submission of Romspen that such a condition or term is antithetical to the basis upon which the sale transaction is approved in the first place. The purchaser in the Times Transaction wants, and in my view is entitled to, a vesting order confirming that title is free and clear. The other stakeholders equally desire this, in order that purchasers are properly incentivized to offer maximum value and favourable terms.

88 Finally, I observe that 281, the proposed purchaser in the 281 Transaction, submitted a Responding Motion Record containing the affidavit of a senior officer of 281 and related entities, submitted a factum, and had counsel who appeared on the motion.

89 As a preliminary matter, I accept the general proposition urged by counsel for Times, that unsuccessful bidders have no standing to challenge a receiver's motion to approve the sale to another candidate. As stated by Farley, J. in *Skyepharma PLC and Hyal Pharmaceutical Corporation*, 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 at para. 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.

90 281 argues here that the prohibition expressed in *Skyepharma* does not apply here since 281 does not come to Court as an unsuccessful purchaser, but rather as a successful purchaser under a power of sale proceeding who is entitled at law to have its agreement approved.

91 In the circumstances, and without granting standing, I agreed to hear brief submissions from 281, and, in fairness, therefore from Times. I remain of the view that an unsuccessful bidder has no standing to challenge a sale approval motion in respect

of that sale to another purchaser. In my view, the fact that in this case the sale agreement was entered into before the Receiver was appointed, does not change that analysis.

92 281 is still only a proposed purchaser pursuant to one of two transactions before the Court. Its views can and should be accorded little if any weight in a consideration of the appropriate factors affecting the determination of whether a "quick flip" transaction should be approved as set out in *Soundair* and *Montrose* .

93 Even if I am in error with respect to the weight to be given to any submissions from 281, they do not in any event change my conclusion as to the result here.

94 281 argues that this Court cannot approve the Times Transaction since, as soon as the 281 Transaction agreement of purchase and sale was entered into, a constructive trust arose resulting in an equitable conversion that transferred beneficial ownership in the Property to the purchaser under that agreement: in this case, 281.

95 It relies on the decision of the Court of Appeal for Ontario in *Simcoe Vacant Land Condominium Corp. No. 272 v. Blue Shores Developments Ltd.*, 2015 ONCA 378 at paras. 47 and 48.

96 I do not read that decision as supporting the relief sought by 281 in the present circumstances. In *Blue Shores*, the Court of Appeal stated that the common law has long recognized that a valid contract for the purchase and sale of land gives rise to a trust relationship, with the purchaser acquiring a beneficial interest, and that this principle applies to condominiums.

97 However, in *Blue Shores*, there was no insolvency of the debtor (or mortgagor), no competing power of sale proceedings, and no Court-appointed receivership. In my view, that case does not stand for the proposition for which it is advanced here, which is that, effectively and for all practical purposes, a mortgagee who holds a mortgage of an insolvent mortgagor/debtor who has defaulted on that mortgagee's mortgage as well as other mortgages registered on title to the same property, can circumvent completely a process already underway and somehow "trump" that process or the rights of any purchaser that derived therefrom, and force the completion of its own power of sale.

98 That would thwart a fair, open and transparent sales process intended to maximize the outcome for all stakeholders which is the outcome sought to be achieved by the application of the factors as set out in cases like *Soundair* and *Montrose* .

99 To be clear, it is certainly not the case that a mortgagee who holds a mortgage that is in default is not entitled to institute power of sale proceedings, or that a purchaser under that power of sale is not entitled to insist upon the completion of the transaction just because the mortgagor may be in default of its obligations under other mortgages registered against title to the same Property.

100 However, in circumstances such as those present here, where the power of sale proceeding instituted by Romspen was already underway, a subsequent ranking mortgagee ought not to be able to "jump the line" and, off on its own and without the knowledge or involvement of any other parties, enter into an agreement with the purchaser, and then take the position that such an agreement is beyond challenge because the purchaser enjoys an equitable conversion of the beneficial interest in the property through a constructive trust that arises upon execution of the agreement of purchase and sale.

101 The 281 Transaction resulted from the power of sale proceeding initiated by Sow, whose mortgage ranks fifth in priority. Separate and apart from the insolvency context referred to above, the position of Sow is that, as fifth mortgagee, it has the legal right to foreclose any rights of redemption held by prior ranking mortgagees, without paying out the amounts owing under those prior ranking mortgages, and circumvent a sales and marketing process already underway by the first ranking mortgagee. I do not accept that, in the particular circumstances of this case.

Sealing Order

102 Subsection 137(2) of the *Courts of Justice Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.42, provides for the Court's authority to grant a sealing order. It provides that the Court may order that any document filed in a civil proceeding be treated as confidential, sealed and not part of the public record.

103 The Supreme Court of Canada in *Sherman Estate v Donovan,*2021 SCC 25, at para. 38, recast the test from *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*2002 SCC 41 (CanLII):

> 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 principles 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 the court to exercise discretion in a way that limits the open court presumption must establish that:
>
> a) court openness poses a serious risk to an important public interest;
>
> b) the order sought is necessary to prevent this serious risk to the identified interest because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and
>
> c) as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects.
>
> Only where all 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 the 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. 188at paras. 7 and 22.

104 Under the first branch of the three-part test, an "important commercial interest" is one that can be expressed in terms of the public interest in confidentiality. Here, as in *Sierra Club*, the moving party submits that the commercial interest affected can be characterized more broadly as the general commercial interest of preserving confidential information as well as maintaining the sanctity of contract.

105 As noted above, there is no opposition to the sealing order requested here. In my view, the test is easily met. The material sought to be sealed represents sensitive commercial information that could reasonably be expected to negatively affect any sales and marketing process in the event that the Times Transaction does not close and the Property must be marketed again.

106 Such a result would negatively affect the interests of all stakeholders and the process generally. The order sought is proportionate and time-limited, with effect only until the Transaction is completed.

107 The sealing order is appropriate and is granted.

Result and Disposition

108 The Receiver is appointed and the receivership is effective immediately. The form of receivership order is consistent with the Model Order with the Commercial List modified as appropriate to reflect the circumstances of this proceeding. The terms and scope of the receivership are appropriate.

109 The Times Transaction is approved and the Purchaser is entitled to an approval and vesting order.

110 The sealing order is granted.

111 Orders to go to reflect these Reasons. The draft orders submitted require modest changes to reflect the parties present, the materials reviewed, and the result. Counsel for Romspen may submit revised draft orders for signature through my judicial assistant, Ms. Mary Sibenik at *mary.sibenik@ontario.ca*.

Order accordingly.

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