

**THE KING'S BENCH  
WINNIPEG CENTRE**

IN THE MATTER OF:      THE APPOINTMENT OF A RECEIVER PURSUANT TO  
SECTION 243 OF THE *BANKRUPTCY AND  
INSOLVENCY ACT*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3 AS AMENDED,  
AND SECTION 55 OF *THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH  
ACT*, C.C.S.M. c. C280

BETWEEN:

**BANK OF MONTREAL,**

Applicant,

- and -

**GENESUS INC., CAN-AM GENETICS INC. and  
GENESUS GENETICS INC.,**

Respondents.

---

**SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF OF THE COURT-APPOINTED RECEIVER  
HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 2025 AT 9:00 A.M.  
BEFORE THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE CHARTIER**

---

**MLT AIKINS LLP**

Barristers and Solicitors  
30th Floor – 360 Main Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3G 4G1

**J.J. BURNELL / ANJALI SANDHU**

Telephone: (204) 957-4663/(204) 957-4760  
Facsimile: (204) 957-0840

File No. 0128056.00004

**THE KING'S BENCH  
WINNIPEG CENTRE**

IN THE MATTER OF:       THE APPOINTMENT OF A RECEIVER PURSUANT TO  
SECTION 243 OF THE *BANKRUPTCY AND  
INSOLVENCY ACT*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3 AS AMENDED,  
AND SECTION 55 OF *THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH  
ACT*, C.C.S.M. c. C280

BETWEEN:

**BANK OF MONTREAL,**

Applicant,

- and -

**GENESUS INC., CAN-AM GENETICS INC. and  
GENESUS GENETICS INC.,**

Respondents.

**BRIEF OF THE RECEIVER**

**INDEX**

PART I	LIST OF DOCUMENTS AND AUTHORITIES RELIED UPON.....	1
PART II	INTRODUCTION.....	2
PART III	POINTS TO BE ARGUED.....	3
PART IV	FACTS.....	4
PART V	ARGUMENT.....	6
PART VI	CONCLUSION.....	11

## **PART I LIST OF DOCUMENTS AND AUTHORITIES RELIED UPON**

### **Documents To Be Relied Upon:**

1. Affidavit of Ed Barrington filed February 12, 2024 (the “**Barrington Affidavit**”)
2. Supplementary Affidavit of Ed Barrington, filed on June 3, 2024
3. Order (Appointing Receiver) pronounced June 11, 2024
4. First Report of the Receiver dated July 2, 2024 (“**First Report**”)
5. Second Report of the Receiver dated July 24, 2024 (the “**Second Report**”)
6. Third Report of the Receiver dated October 2, 2024 (the “**Third Report**”)
7. Fourth Report of the Receiver dated January 22, 2025 (the “**Fourth Report**”)
8. Fifth Report of the Receiver dated June 4, 2025 (the “**Fifth Report**”)
9. Sixth Report of the Receiver dated September 5, 2025 (the “**Sixth Report**”)
10. Seventh Report of the Receiver dated September 8, 2025 (the “**Seventh Report**”)
11. Confidential Supplement to the Seventh Report dated September 8, 2025 (the “**Seventh Confidential Supplement**”)
12. Affidavit of Service of Brittany Chapdelaine, to be sworn

### **Authorities To Be Relied Upon:**

#### **TAB**

1. *The Court of King’s Bench Act*, C.C.S.M. c. C280, ss. 37(1) & 77(1) (the “**KB Act**”)
2. *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3 (the “**BIA**”), ss. 243(1)(c) & 247
3. *Royal Bank v Soundair Corp.*, (1991) 4 OR (3d) 1
4. *Royal Bank of Canada v Keller & Sons Farming Ltd.*, 2016 MBQB 77
5. *Sherman Estate v Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25
6. *Just Energy Group Inc. et al. v Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. et al*, 2022 ONSC 6354
7. *Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.*, 2023 ONSC 4203
8. Compare of draft Sale Approval and Vesting Order (Oakville Property) to the Manitoba Model Sale Approval and Vesting Order

## **PART II INTRODUCTION**

1. This motion brief is filed in support of the relief sought by the Receiver in the Second NM (the sale of the Oakville Property), and is supplementary to the Receiver's motion brief filed on September 8, 2025.
2. On September 6, 2025, the Receiver served upon the parties on the Service List in these proceedings, *inter alia*, a Notice of Motion returnable on September 11, 2025 (the "**First NM**") seeking certain relief set out therein.
3. Following service of the First NM, a sale agreement in respect of a transaction that includes the sale of the Oakville Property was finalized and fully executed by the Receiver and the purchaser.

### **Seventh Report, para 14**

4. As a result, the Receiver has filed a second Notice of Motion (the "**Second NM**"), also returnable on September 11, 2025 seeking, *inter alia*, seeking an Order, *inter alia*: (i) approving the sale transaction of contemplated by the Oakville Sale Agreement (as hereinafter defined) and vesting in the purchaser all of the Receiver's and the Companies' right, title and interest to the assets described in therein (the "**Oakville Purchased Assets**"); and (ii) sealing the Seventh Confidential Supplement.

**PART III      POINTS TO BE ARGUED**

- A. Should this Honourable Court approve the sale transaction of contemplated by the Oakville Sale Agreement (as hereinafter defined) and vest in the purchaser all of the Receiver's and the Companies' right, title and interest to the Oakville Purchased Assets?
  
- B. Should the Seventh Confidential Supplement be sealed?

**PART IV     FACTS**

5.     The Oakville Property is owned by Genesis and was used as its head office. It is located in the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba and consists of approximately 20,280 square feet of land and buildings with a gross area of 6,400 square feet including a commercial service building with an office, a warehouse and a wash bay.

**First Report, Appendix “C” (Sched. “A”)  
Seventh Report, para 9**

6.     On October 13, 2023, prior to the commencement of these receivership proceedings, the Oakville Property was listed with a realtor, Royal LePage Portage Realty (the “**Oakville Realtor**”) for a price of \$420,000.

**Sixth Report para 11**

7.     On January 20, 2024, an offer was received for the Oakville Property for \$380,000. However, that transaction did not close. Thereafter, two other offers for the Oakville Property were received, however they each contained a purchase price of less than \$380,000 and were not accepted.

**Sixth Report paras 12 & 13**

8.     Following the pronouncement of the Receivership Order, the Receiver continued to work with the Oakville Realtor in respect of the Oakville Property.

9.     On August 16, 2024, the listing price for the Oakville Property was reduced to \$400,000 after the Receiver obtained an appraisal of the Oakville Property. On November 29, 2024, upon the Oakville Realtor’s recommendation, the listing price was further reduced to \$375,000.

**Sixth Report para 14**

10. On January 15, 2025 and April 25, 2025, respectively the Receiver received offers from another prospective purchaser for the Oakville Property. The Receiver entered negotiations with the prospective purchaser, however, an agreement could not be reached.

**Sixth Report paras 16 & 18**

11. On May 29, 2025, upon the Oakville Realtor's recommendation, the listing price was further reduced to \$335,000.

**Sixth Report para 19**

12. On September 2, 2025, the Receiver received an offer from Dustin Pierce for the Oakville Property, and the Receiver entered into negotiations with Mr. Pierce.

**Sixth Report para 20**

13. On September 4, 2025, the Receiver made a counteroffer to Mr. Pierce, who requested that the purchaser be amended to 10243437 Manitoba Ltd. ("**437 MB Ltd.**"). The Receiver agreed and thereafter entered into an agreement of purchase and sale (the "**Oakville Sale Agreement**") for the Oakville Purchased Assets with 437 MB Ltd. as purchaser, subject to this Honourable Court's approval (all other conditions have been waived).

**Seventh Report paras 13 & 14**

14. The Oakville Sale Agreement contains the following key terms:
  - a. Deposit of 2% of the Purchase Price; and
  - b. Closing date of September 30, 2025.

**Seventh Report para 14**

**PART V ARGUMENT**

**A. Should this Court approve the sale transaction contemplated by the Oakville Sale Agreement and vest in 437 MB Ltd. all of the Receiver's and the Companies' right, title and interest to the Oakville Purchased Assets?**

15. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of the Receivership Order, the Receiver is empowered to, *inter alia*:

- a. market any or all of the Property, including advertising and soliciting offers in respect of the Property or any part or parts thereof and negotiating such terms and conditions of sale as the Receiver in its discretion may deem appropriate;
- b. sell, convey, transfer, lease or assign the Property or any part or parts thereof out of the ordinary course of business, in respect of Property which is not livestock:
  - i. without the approval of this Court in respect of any transaction not exceeding \$100,000, provided that the aggregate consideration for all such transactions does not exceed \$500,000; and
  - ii. with the approval of this Court in respect of any transaction in which the purchase price or the aggregate purchase price exceeds the applicable amounts set out in (i);

and in each such case notice under subsection 59(10) of *The Personal Property Security Act* (Manitoba), or section 134(1) of *The Real Property Act* (Manitoba), as the case may be, shall not be required;

- c. apply for a vesting order or other orders necessary to convey the Property or any part or parts thereof to a purchaser or purchasers thereof, free and clear of any liens or encumbrances affecting such Property.

**Receivership Order at paras 3(k)-(m)**

16. In determining whether the Oakville Sale Agreement ought to be approved, the following factors (the “**Soundair Test**”) outlined by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Royal Bank v Soundair Corp.* are considered:
- a. Whether sufficient effort has been made to obtain the best price and the receiver has not acted improvidently;
  - b. The interests of all parties;
  - c. The efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained; and
  - d. Whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

***Royal Bank v Soundair Corp.*, (1991) 4 OR (3d) 1 (ONCA) (“Soundair”), para 16 [Tab 3]**  
***Royal Bank of Canada v Keller & Sons Farming Ltd.*, 2016 MBQB 77 at para 14 [Tab 4]**

17. The Receiver submits that the Oakville Sale Agreement should be approved by this Honourable Court as, *inter alia*:
- a. The Oakville Property was listed with the Oakville Realtor, the sale process was fair and transparent, and sufficient effort was made to obtain the best price for the Oakville Property;
  - b. The Receiver is of the opinion that further marketing of the Oakville Property will not result in better offers being received;
  - c. The Receiver obtained an appraisal of the Oakville Property, and the Receiver is of the view that the purchase price in the Oakville Sale Agreement is fair and reasonable;
  - d. The Receiver has acted in good faith, and has not acted improvidently;
  - e. The process by which the offer made by 437 MB Ltd. was obtained had efficacy and integrity;

- f. The Oakville Sale Agreement and the transaction contemplated therein is in the best interests of the Companies and their respective stakeholders, as, *inter alia*:
- i. The Bank of Montreal, the mortgage holder on the Oakville Property is supportive of the transaction;
  - ii. Closing the Oakville Sale Agreement will eliminate ongoing holding costs of the receivership estate for the Oakville Property, such as property taxes, insurance and utilities; and
  - iii. The net proceeds from the sale of the Oakville Purchased Assets will stand in the stead and place of the Oakville Purchased Assets. No secured or unsecured creditors will be prejudiced by the transaction; and
- g. There has been no unfairness in the working out of the process, and the Oakville Sale Agreement was negotiated in good faith with an arm's length party.

**Seventh Report, paras 15 & 17(a)  
Seventh Confidential Supplement, Appendices A & B**

**B. Should the Seventh Confidential Supplement be Sealed?**

18. Section 77(1) of the KB Act provides for the sealing of Court documents, as follows:

The court may order that a document filed in a civil proceeding is confidential, is to be sealed and is not a part of the public record of the proceeding.

**KB Act, C.C.S.M. c. C280, s. 77(1) [Tab 1]**

19. In *Sherman Estate v Donovan*, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that three prerequisites must be met in order for a Court to make an order limiting openness of the courts, including a sealing order. These prerequisites are:
- a. Court openness poses a serious risk to a competing interest of public importance;

- b. The order sought is necessary to prevent the identified risk because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and
- c. The benefits of the order restricting Court openness outweighs its negative effects.

***Sherman Estate v Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25 (“Sherman Estate”) at para 38 [Tab \*\*\*]**

20. The Supreme Court in *Sherman Estate* confirmed that a “*general commercial interest of preserving confidential information*” can constitute an important public interest.”

**Sherman Estate at paras 41 and 43 [Tab 5]**

21. In insolvency proceedings, Courts have frequently found that confidential and commercially sensitive information related to a proposed transaction should be sealed, as the dissemination of such information would pose a serious risk to the commercial interests of the insolvent company in the event that the transaction should not be completed. The sealing of key economic terms of a transaction is routine in insolvency proceedings on the basis that there is a broader public interest in maintaining confidentiality in such information.

***Just Energy Group Inc. et al. v Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. et al*, 2022  
ONSC 6354 at para 72 [Tab 6]  
*Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.*, 2023 ONSC 4203 at  
para 29 [Tab 7]**

22. The Seventh Confidential Supplement contains *inter alia*: (i) the unredacted Oakville Sale Agreement, which contains the Purchase Price (as defined therein); and (ii) an appraisal of the Oakville Property, as well as other commercially sensitive information.

**Seventh Confidential Supplement, Appendices A & B**

23. The disclosure of the information in the Seventh Confidential Supplement would have a detrimental impact on the Companies and their respective stakeholders, as such disclosure may undermine any future efforts to maximize the realizations from the Oakville Property if the proposed transaction contemplated in the Oakville Sale Agreement is not approved by the Court, or if the transaction proposed therein does not close, for whatever reason.

**Seventh Report, para 7**

24. In the circumstances, the Sealing Order provides the least restrictive manner to preserve the confidentiality of the information contained in the Seventh Confidential Supplement and to protect the Companies and their respective stakeholders, and there is no reasonably alternative measures that will prevent the risks thereto.

25. The Sealing Order will only be in effect for a limited time period, until the closing of the transactions respectively contemplated in the Oakville Sale Agreement, or upon further order by this Court.

26. The Receiver respectfully submits that the Sealing Order will not prejudice any of the Companies' respective stakeholders. The benefits of the Sealing Order sought outweigh any negative effects.

27. The Receiver is of the view that the Seventh Confidential Supplement contains commercially sensitive information and should be sealed.

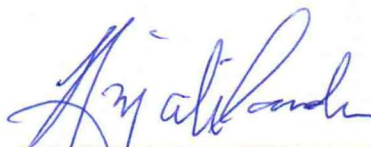
**Seventh Report, para 7**

28. In these circumstances, the Receiver submits that the prerequisites outlined in Sherman Estate are met and the granting of the Sealing Order is just and appropriate.

**PART VI CONCLUSION**

29. For the foregoing reasons, the Receiver respectfully submits that the relief sought by the Receiver in this motion should be granted by this Honourable Court.

**ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 9th DAY OF  
SEPTEMBER, 2025.**



---

J.J. BURNELL / ANJALI SANDHU  
MLT Aikins LLP  
Barristers & Solicitors  
30th Floor - 360 Main Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4G1

**Tab 1**



# MANITOBA

## THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH ACT

C.C.S.M. c. C280

## LOI SUR LA COUR DU BANC DU ROI

c. C280 de la *C.P.L.M.*

As of 9 Sept. 2025, this is the most current version available. It is current for the period set out in the footer below.

Le texte figurant ci-dessous constitue la codification la plus récente en date du 9 sept. 2025. Son contenu était à jour pendant la période indiquée en bas de page.

(a) an Act of the Legislature or of the Parliament of Canada;

(b) an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom affecting the province and enacted before the coming into force of the Statute of Westminster, 1931; or

(c) a rule or order of the court.

a) une loi de la Législature ou du Parlement du Canada;

b) une loi du Parlement du Royaume-Uni visant la province et édictée avant l'entrée en vigueur du Statut de Westminster, 1931;

c) une règle ou une ordonnance de la Cour.

### **Rules of law and equity**

**33(3)** The court shall administer concurrently all rules of equity and the common law.

### **Rules of equity to prevail**

**33(4)** Where a rule of equity conflicts with a rule of the common law, the rule of equity prevails.

S.M. 2012, c. 40, s. 15.

### **Declaratory orders**

**34** The court may make a binding declaration of right whether or not consequential relief is or could be claimed.

### **Relief against penalties**

**35** The court may grant relief against penalties and forfeitures on such terms as to compensation or otherwise as are considered just.

S.M. 2010, c. 33, s. 11.

### **Damages**

**36** The court may award damages in addition to, or in substitution for, an injunction or specific performance.

### **Vesting orders**

**37(1)** The court may by order vest in a person an interest in real or personal property that the court has authority to order to be disposed of, encumbered or conveyed.

### **Règles de common law et d'equity**

**33(3)** La Cour applique simultanément les règles d'equity et de common law.

### **Prépondérance des règles d'equity**

**33(4)** Les règles d'equity l'emportent sur les règles incompatibles de common law.

### **Ordonnances déclaratoires**

**34** Le tribunal peut rendre un jugement déclaratoire, que des mesures de redressement accessoires soient ou non réclamées ou puissent être ou non réclamées.

### **Pénalités**

**35** Le tribunal peut accorder des mesures de redressement contre les pénalités et les confiscations, selon les conditions qu'il estime justes pour les indemnisations ou pour toute autre affaire.

### **Dommages-intérêts**

**36** Le tribunal peut accorder des dommages-intérêts en plus d'une injonction ou d'une exécution intégrale ou au lieu de celle-ci.

### **Ordonnance d'envoi en possession**

**37(1)** Le tribunal peut, par ordonnance, investir une personne d'un intérêt dans un bien réel ou personnel qu'il peut aliéner, grever ou céder par ordonnance.

## PART XIII

### PUBLIC ACCESS

#### Hearings open to public

**76(1)** Subject to subsection (2) or unless otherwise provided by statute or the rules, a hearing held by the court or a judge is open to the public.

#### Exception

**76(2)** The court may by order exclude the public from a hearing where the possibility of serious harm or injustice to a person justifies a departure from the general principle that hearings of the court are open to the public.

#### Disclosure of what transpires

**76(3)** Where the public is excluded from a hearing, disclosure of information relating to the hearing, including disclosure of what transpires in the hearing, is not contempt of court unless the court expressly prohibits such disclosure.

#### Sealing confidential documents

**77(1)** The court may order that a document filed in a civil proceeding is confidential, is to be sealed and is not a part of the public record of the proceeding.

#### Documents public

**77(2)** Upon payment of the prescribed fee, if any, a person may see

- (a) a list of the proceedings in the court, or
- (b) a document that is filed in a proceeding,

unless otherwise provided by statute, by the rules or by an order.

## PARTIE XIII

### DROIT D'ACCÈS DU PUBLIC

#### Audiences publiques

**76(1)** Sauf disposition contraire d'une loi ou des règles ou sous réserve du paragraphe (2), une audience que tient le tribunal ou un juge est publique.

#### Exception

**76(2)** Le tribunal peut, par ordonnance, tenir une audience à huis clos si la possibilité d'un préjudice ou d'une injustice grave à l'endroit d'une personne justifie une dérogation au principe général d'accès du public aux audiences de la Cour.

#### Divulgence de renseignements

**76(3)** Si une audience est tenue à huis clos, la divulgation de renseignements relatifs à l'audience, y compris la divulgation de faits qui se produisent durant l'audience, ne constitue pas un outrage au tribunal sauf si le tribunal interdit expressément une telle divulgation.

#### Documents confidentiels

**77(1)** Le tribunal peut ordonner qu'un document déposé dans le cadre d'une instance civile soit confidentiel, soit fermé et ne fasse pas partie du dossier public de l'instance.

#### Droit d'accès à certains documents

**77(2)** Sauf disposition contraire d'une loi, des règles ou d'une ordonnance et sur paiement, le cas échéant, du droit prescrit, une personne peut avoir accès :

- a) soit à une liste des instances dont le tribunal est saisi;
- b) soit à un document déposé dans le cadre d'une instance.

**Tab 2**



CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

## Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act

## Loi sur la faillite et l'insolvabilité

R.S.C., 1985, c. B-3

L.R.C. (1985), ch. B-3

Current to August 21, 2025

À jour au 21 août 2025

Last amended on December 12, 2024

Dernière modification le 12 décembre 2024

**(g)** generally, for carrying into effect the purposes and provisions of this Part.

R.S., 1985, c. B-3, s. 240; 1992, c. 27, s. 88.

### Audit of proceedings

**241** The accounts of every clerk that relate to proceedings under this Part are subject to audit in the same manner as if the accounts were the accounts of a provincial officer.

R.S., c. B-3, s. 212.

### Application of this Part

**242 (1)** The Governor in Council shall, at the request of the lieutenant governor in council of a province, declare, by order, that this Part applies or ceases to apply, as the case may be, in respect of the province.

### Automatic application

**(2)** Subject to an order being made under subsection (1) declaring that this Part ceases to apply in respect of a province, if this Part is in force in the province immediately before that subsection comes into force, this Part applies in respect of the province.

R.S., 1985, c. B-3, s. 242; 2002, c. 7, s. 85; 2007, c. 36, s. 57.

## PART XI

# Secured Creditors and Receivers

### Court may appoint receiver

**243 (1)** Subject to subsection (1.1), on application by a secured creditor, a court may appoint a receiver to do any or all of the following if it considers it to be just or convenient to do so:

**(a)** take possession of all or substantially all of the inventory, accounts receivable or other property of an insolvent person or bankrupt that was acquired for or used in relation to a business carried on by the insolvent person or bankrupt;

**(b)** exercise any control that the court considers advisable over that property and over the insolvent person's or bankrupt's business; or

**f)** changer ou prescrire, à l'égard de toute province, les catégories de dettes auxquelles la présente partie ne s'applique pas;

**f.1)** régir le renvoi des procédures dans une province autre que celle où l'ordonnance de fusion a été rendue;

**g)** prendre toute autre mesure d'application de la présente partie.

L.R. (1985), ch. B-3, art. 240; 1992, ch. 27, art. 88.

### Vérification des comptes

**241** Les comptes de chaque greffier, relatifs aux procédures prévues par la présente partie, sont sujets à vérification de la même manière que s'ils étaient les comptes d'un fonctionnaire provincial.

S.R., ch. B-3, art. 212.

### Application

**242 (1)** À la demande du lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil d'une province, le gouverneur en conseil déclare par décret que la présente partie commence à s'appliquer ou cesse de s'appliquer, selon le cas, dans la province en question.

### Application automatique

**(2)** Sous réserve d'une éventuelle déclaration faite en vertu du paragraphe (1) indiquant qu'elle cesse de s'appliquer à la province en cause, la présente partie s'applique à toute province dans laquelle elle était en vigueur à l'entrée en vigueur de ce paragraphe.

L.R. (1985), ch. B-3, art. 242; 2002, ch. 7, art. 85; 2007, ch. 36, art. 57.

## PARTIE XI

# Créanciers garantis et séquestres

### Nomination d'un séquestre

**243 (1)** Sous réserve du paragraphe (1.1), sur demande d'un créancier garanti, le tribunal peut, s'il est convaincu que cela est juste ou opportun, nommer un séquestre qu'il habilite :

**a)** à prendre possession de la totalité ou de la quasi-totalité des biens — notamment des stocks et comptes à recevoir — qu'une personne insolvable ou un failli a acquis ou utilisés dans le cadre de ses affaires;

**b)** à exercer sur ces biens ainsi que sur les affaires de la personne insolvable ou du failli le degré de prise en charge qu'il estime indiqué;

(c) take any other action that the court considers advisable.

### Restriction on appointment of receiver

(1.1) In the case of an insolvent person in respect of whose property a notice is to be sent under subsection 244(1), the court may not appoint a receiver under subsection (1) before the expiry of 10 days after the day on which the secured creditor sends the notice unless

(a) the insolvent person consents to an earlier enforcement under subsection 244(2); or

(b) the court considers it appropriate to appoint a receiver before then.

### Definition of receiver

(2) Subject to subsections (3) and (4), in this Part, **receiver** means a person who

(a) is appointed under subsection (1); or

(b) is appointed to take or takes possession or control — of all or substantially all of the inventory, accounts receivable or other property of an insolvent person or bankrupt that was acquired for or used in relation to a business carried on by the insolvent person or bankrupt — under

(i) an agreement under which property becomes subject to a security (in this Part referred to as a “security agreement”), or

(ii) a court order made under another Act of Parliament, or an Act of a legislature of a province, that provides for or authorizes the appointment of a receiver or receiver-manager.

### Definition of receiver — subsection 248(2)

(3) For the purposes of subsection 248(2), the definition **receiver** in subsection (2) is to be read without reference to paragraph (a) or subparagraph (b)(ii).

### Trustee to be appointed

(4) Only a trustee may be appointed under subsection (1) or under an agreement or order referred to in paragraph (2)(b).

c) à prendre toute autre mesure qu’il estime indiquée.

### Restriction relative à la nomination d’un séquestre

(1.1) Dans le cas d’une personne insolvable dont les biens sont visés par le préavis qui doit être donné par le créancier garanti aux termes du paragraphe 244(1), le tribunal ne peut faire la nomination avant l’expiration d’un délai de dix jours après l’envoi de ce préavis, à moins :

a) que la personne insolvable ne consente, aux termes du paragraphe 244(2), à l’exécution de la garantie à une date plus rapprochée;

b) qu’il soit indiqué, selon lui, de nommer un séquestre à une date plus rapprochée.

### Définition de séquestre

(2) Dans la présente partie, mais sous réserve des paragraphes (3) et (4), **séquestre** s’entend de toute personne qui :

a) soit est nommée en vertu du paragraphe (1);

b) soit est nommément habilitée à prendre — ou a pris — en sa possession ou sous sa responsabilité, aux termes d’un contrat créant une garantie sur des biens, appelé « contrat de garantie » dans la présente partie, ou aux termes d’une ordonnance rendue sous le régime de toute autre loi fédérale ou provinciale prévoyant ou autorisant la nomination d’un séquestre ou d’un séquestre-gérant, la totalité ou la quasi-totalité des biens — notamment des stocks et comptes à recevoir — qu’une personne insolvable ou un failli a acquis ou utilisés dans le cadre de ses affaires.

### Définition de séquestre — paragraphe 248(2)

(3) Pour l’application du paragraphe 248(2), la définition de **séquestre**, au paragraphe (2), s’interprète sans égard à l’alinéa a) et aux mots « ou aux termes d’une ordonnance rendue sous le régime de toute autre loi fédérale ou provinciale prévoyant ou autorisant la nomination d’un séquestre ou d’un séquestre-gérant ».

### Syndic

(4) Seul un syndic peut être nommé en vertu du paragraphe (1) ou être habilité aux termes d’un contrat ou d’une ordonnance mentionné à l’alinéa (2)b).

### Intellectual property — disclaimer or resiliation

**(2)** If the insolvent person or the bankrupt is a party to an agreement that grants to another party a right to use intellectual property, the disclaimer or resiliation of that agreement by the receiver does not affect that other party's right to use the intellectual property — including the other party's right to enforce an exclusive use — during the term of the agreement, including any period for which the other party extends the agreement as of right, as long as the other party continues to perform its obligations under the agreement in relation to the use of the intellectual property.

2018, c. 27, s. 268.

### Good faith, etc.

**247** A receiver shall

- (a)** act honestly and in good faith; and
- (b)** deal with the property of the insolvent person or the bankrupt in a commercially reasonable manner.

1992, c. 27, s. 89.

### Powers of court

**248 (1)** Where the court, on the application of the Superintendent, the insolvent person, the trustee (in the case of a bankrupt), a receiver or a creditor, is satisfied that the secured creditor, the receiver or the insolvent person is failing or has failed to carry out any duty imposed by sections 244 to 247, the court may make an order, on such terms as it considers proper,

- (a)** directing the secured creditor, receiver or insolvent person, as the case may be, to carry out that duty, or
- (b)** restraining the secured creditor or receiver, as the case may be, from realizing or otherwise dealing with the property of the insolvent person or bankrupt until that duty has been carried out,

or both.

### Idem

**(2)** On the application of the Superintendent, the insolvent person, the trustee (in the case of a bankrupt) or a creditor, made within six months after the statement of accounts was provided to the Superintendent pursuant to subsection 246(3), the court may order the receiver to submit the statement of accounts to the court for review, and the court may adjust, in such manner and to such extent as it considers proper, the fees and charges of the receiver as set out in the statement of accounts.

1992, c. 27, s. 89.

### Propriété intellectuelle — résiliation

**(2)** Si la personne insolvable ou le failli est partie à un contrat qui autorise une autre partie à utiliser un droit de propriété intellectuelle, la résiliation de ce contrat par le séquestre n'empêche pas l'autre partie d'utiliser le droit en question ni d'en faire respecter l'utilisation exclusive, à condition que cette autre partie respecte ses obligations contractuelles à l'égard de l'utilisation de ce droit, et ce, pour la période prévue au contrat et pour toute prolongation de celle-ci dont elle se prévaut de plein droit.

2018, ch. 27, art. 268.

### Obligation de diligence

**247** Le séquestre doit gérer les biens de la personne insolvable ou du failli en toute honnêteté et de bonne foi, et selon des pratiques commerciales raisonnables.

1992, ch. 27, art. 89.

### Pouvoirs du tribunal

**248 (1)** S'il est convaincu, à la suite d'une demande du surintendant, de la personne insolvable, du syndic — en cas de faillite —, du séquestre ou d'un créancier que le créancier garanti, le séquestre ou la personne insolvable ne se conforme pas ou ne s'est pas conformé à l'une ou l'autre des obligations que lui imposent les articles 244 à 247, le tribunal peut, aux conditions qu'il estime indiquées :

- a)** ordonner au créancier garanti, au séquestre ou à la personne insolvable de se conformer à ses obligations;
- b)** interdire au créancier garanti ou au séquestre de réaliser les biens de la personne insolvable ou du failli, ou de faire toutes autres opérations à leur égard, jusqu'à ce qu'il se soit conformé à ses obligations.

### Idem

**(2)** Sur demande du surintendant, de la personne insolvable, du syndic — en cas de faillite — ou d'un créancier, présentée au plus tard six mois après la transmission au surintendant de l'état de comptes visé au paragraphe 246(3), le tribunal peut ordonner au séquestre de lui soumettre cet état de comptes pour examen; le tribunal peut, de la manière et dans la mesure qu'il estime indiquées, ajuster les honoraires et dépenses du séquestre qui y sont consignés.

1992, ch. 27, art. 89.

**Tab 3**

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

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 doing 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 consideration 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 order to make a serious bid.

51 The offering memorandum had not been completed by February 11, 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 J.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 diligence 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 constitutes 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 4**

2016 MBQB 77

Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench

Royal Bank of Canada v. Keller & Sons Farming Ltd.

2016 CarswellMan 346, 2016 MBQB 77, 270 A.C.W.S. (3d) 312, 39 C.B.R. (6th) 29

**IN THE MATTER OF The Appointment of a Receiver pursuant to Section 243 of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3, as amended, and Section 55 of The Court of Queen's Bench Act, C.C.S.M. c. C280**

ROYAL BANK OF CANADA (Plaintiff) and KELLER & SONS  
FARMING LTD. and KELLER HOLDINGS LTD. (Defendants)

Chartier J.

Judgment: April 22, 2016\*

Docket: Winnipeg Centre CI 15-01-98054

Proceedings: affirmed *Royal Bank of Canada v. Keller & Sons Farming Ltd.* (2016), 397 D.L.R. (4th) 573, 2016 MBCA 46, 2016 CarswellMan 147, Diana M. Cameron J.A., Freda M. Steel J.A., Janice L. leMaistre J.A. (Man. C.A.)

Counsel: J. Michael J. Dow, for Plaintiff, Royal Bank of Canada and also National Bank of Canada

G. Bruce Taylor, for Defendants

Arthur J. Stacey, for Receiver, Ernst & Young Inc.

Faron J. Trippier, for Marcus Keller

Richard W. Schwartz, for Shilo Farms Ltd.

David E. Swayze, for Prospective Purchasers

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

MOTION by receiver for sale of debtor company's land, buildings and related irrigation infrastructure equipment to buyer.

**Chartier J.:**

**INTRODUCTION**

1 Ernst & Young Inc. (the "Receiver"), the Receiver of all assets of the defendants, filed a motion on April 1, 2016 returnable for April 8, 2016 for, amongst other things, approval of the sale of the Keller land, buildings and related irrigation infrastructure equipment (the "Keller Lands") to Spud Plains Farms Ltd., A&A Farms Ltd., T.A. Farms Ltd. and A&M Potato Growers Ltd., collectively referred to as the "Adriaansen Group". The Receiver's motion was opposed by Shilo Farms Ltd. ("Shilo"), an unsecured creditor and unsuccessful bidder, as well as Marcus Keller, the sole shareholder of the defendant debtor companies and also employed as the general manager of Shilo. After adjourning the initial hearing date one week to April 15, I granted the various orders sought by the Receiver including the approval of the agreement of purchase and sale between the Receiver and the Adriaansen Group. These are my reasons for so doing.

**DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

2 On April 7, Shilo filed written submissions seeking an adjournment of the Receiver's motion and seeking disclosure of the Second Confidential Reports. This essentially was also the position of Marcus Keller, who also filed materials on that same day.

3 At the conclusion of the proceedings on April 8, I requested that the Receiver review the Second Confidential Reports and redact any information that they believed confidential and provide it to Shilo and Marcus Keller. If disclosure remained an issue, the Receiver was to file a brief by 9:00 a.m. on Monday, April 11, and Shilo and Marcus Keller would respond by 5:00 p.m. on April 11. I would then make a decision on further disclosure of the Confidential Reports on the basis of the written submissions. The matter was also adjourned from April 8 to April 15 where I heard submissions from the Receiver and the secured creditors, Royal Bank of Canada and National Bank of Canada supporting the sale, and from Shilo and Marcus Keller opposing the sale.

4 The Receiver provided a copy of the Second Confidential Reports with redactions and written submissions were filed by the parties. On April 12, 2016, I ordered that no further disclosure of the Second Confidential Reports be made beyond the redacted copies provided by the Receiver.

5 I made that decision in light of the decision of *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.), and also considering some of the other authorities to which I was referred, including the decision in *Skyepharma PLC v. Hyal Pharmaceutical Corp.* (2000), 47 O.R. (3d) 234 (Ont. C.A.). I found that the remaining redacted portions contained sensitive commercial information which would put the Receiver at a disadvantage should the present sale not close. It followed that such disclosure could affect the interests of the creditors whose interests were central in these proceedings. I further found that the salutary effects of non-disclosure of the redacted material outweighed the deleterious effects on the rights and interest of Shilo and Marcus Keller to have access to that material.

#### RECEIVER'S REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF THE SALE

6 A decision on the approval of a sale of property by a court has, by its very nature, a certain amount of urgency as the sale remains contingent and unfinalized until the court approves it. Sometimes, as in the decision of *Shape Foods Inc. (Receiver of)*, *Re*, 2009 MBQB 171, 241 Man. R. (2d) 235 (Man. Q.B.), there is a closing date for the sale. Although here there was no such closing date, we are dealing with farmlands and one way or another the farmlands will have to be dealt with in terms of preparation of soil and seeding as we are now in the middle of the month of April which is a critical time for a farm operation.

7 I heard submissions of counsel and I have considered the materials that have been filed, including the material in the reports filed by the Receiver which update the sales process and analyze the proposed sale transaction. I am satisfied that the sale to the Adriaansen Group should be approved.

#### FACTS

8 The Receiver was granted authority to sell property in the order granted by Justice Schulman on October 8, 2015. The Receiver's approach to sell the Keller Lands was to solicit offers by way of a modified sale and investor solicitation process. Ultimately, three parties submitted non-binding expressions of interest prior to the deadline set by the Receiver of January 12, 2016. One of these expressions of interest was accepted but the offer was subsequently withdrawn by the party on February 24, 2016. The Receiver then contacted the two remaining offerors, Shilo and the Adriaansen Group, asking them to resubmit improved offers. Offers were received and confirmed. The Adriaansen Group offer was then verbally accepted by the Receiver. Subsequent to this verbal acceptance, Shilo increased their offer, which the Receiver also considered.

9 I will also mention that appraisals of various assets were obtained by the Receiver, including on the Keller Lands. They have been sealed pursuant to a confidentiality order that I granted. I have reviewed and considered these appraisals in arriving at my decision.

10 The Receiver made a comparison of the two bids from the Adriaansen Group and Shilo that it received when each party was asked to resubmit improved offers. The Adriaansen Group made an offer totalling \$19,620,000. Shilo made an offer of \$19,450,000 being an amount of \$18,750,000 for the Keller Lands plus \$700,000 as a settlement of certain disputed claims between the Receiver and Shilo. There are two claims, one involving a claim by the Receiver for amounts allegedly owing on the lease of the Keller Lands to Shilo in the amount of \$260,495, and the other involving the Elk Haven Farm Partnership for crop inputs on which the Receiver says Shilo owes it \$839,191. This additional amount submitted by Shilo for settlement of

claims was the subject of much of Shilo's submissions opposing the sale. The Adriaansen Group advised the Receiver that if successful it would be reselling a parcel of the Keller Lands known as Parcel 4. By agreement between the Receiver and the Adriaansen Group, depending on the amount obtained on the resale, it was possible for the Receiver to obtain further proceeds from that resale.

11 As previously indicated, after verbally accepting the offer from the Adriaansen Group, the Receiver was contacted by Shilo (through Marcus Keller) to submit an increase to the aggregate amount of the offer from \$19,450,000 to \$20 million, which is an additional \$550,000. Shilo also indicated it would make arrangements to repay amounts owing to the defendants' unsecured creditors.

12 In comparing the proposals, what was noted by the Receiver is that the amount offered by the Adriaansen Group is higher than the offer of Shilo when the settlement amount is removed from the Shilo offers. The Adriaansen Group offer being \$19,620,000 while the Shilo offer was \$19,300,000 (\$20 million less the \$700,000). The other matter noted is that the Receiver could still realize on the claims against Shilo upon acceptance of the Adriaansen Group offer, the claims estimated at \$1,100,000 by the Receiver. The Receiver also noted a potential to further increase the proceeds depending on the subsequent reselling of Parcel 4 of the Keller Lands.

13 Ultimately, while the offers were relatively close, the Receiver accepted the offer that was the highest bid for the Keller Lands even with the increased bid by Shilo.

#### ANALYSIS

14 The duties which a court must perform when reviewing a sale by court-appointed receiver are set out in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 83 D.L.R. (4th) 76 (Ont. C.A.). They are as follows:

- (i) the court should consider whether the Receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently;
- (ii) the court should consider the interests of all parties;
- (iii) the court should consider the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained; and
- (iv) the court should consider whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

15 Regarding this latter point, the court in *Soundair* indicated that as a general rule it is not "appropriate for the court to go into the minutia of the process" but indicated that "the court has a responsibility to decide whether the process was fair." This was the main focus of the submissions of Shilo in opposing the sale.

16 The court in *Soundair* adopted two statements from the decision in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87 (Ont. H.C.), as follows (pp. 102-3):

... The first is at p. 109 ...

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.

17 Finally, in *Soundair*, Galligan J. referred to the decision of *Selkirk, Re* (1986), 58 C.B.R. (N.S.) 245 (Ont. S.C.), which states (p. 99):

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 consideration 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.

18 I will now apply the relevant criteria to this transaction.

***(i) The court should consider whether the Receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently***

19 The sales process conducted by the Receiver, as outlined in the First Confidential Report at paragraphs 91 to 95 as well as the subsequent Confidential Reports, produced competitive offers. The competitiveness of the offers is a clear indication that the Receiver's process was proper and provident in effecting the best price in the circumstances.

20 The Receiver's decision that based on the numbers the Adriaansen Group offer is higher than the Shilo offer is reasonable.

21 The secured creditors support the sale. Given the outstanding amounts owing to the secured creditors, the Royal Bank of Canada and the National Bank of Canada, and the amounts that would be generated from the sale of assets, counsel for the Receiver estimated there will likely be a shortfall of approximately \$2 million. As a result, they are the only parties with a direct interest in the proceeds of sale.

***(ii) The court should consider the interests of all parties***

22 The Royal Bank of Canada and the National Bank of Canada are owed as secured creditors \$24,300,000 with interest accruing as of October 2, 2015. There is also a second mortgage to Karen Keller on the Keller Lands for \$1,100,000. The Royal Bank of Canada and the National Bank of Canada support the Receiver's proposal in favour of the purchaser. They will face a shortfall and not be paid in full. These secured creditors are the only parties with a material commercial interest. It is in the interests of the secured creditors that the approval of the Receiver's proposal to sell to the Adriaansen Group be given. I will address the issue of the unsecured creditors later in my reasons.

***(iii) The court should consider the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained***

***(iv) The court should consider whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process***

23 The principal objection of Shilo is that there was unfairness in the process, in particular in the latter stages, when it said the Receiver "muddied the waters" in the sales process by inviting Shilo to settle outstanding claims unrelated to the sale of the Keller Lands. In other words, it was a mistake on the Receiver's part to say to Shilo that its bid would be more favourably received by the Receiver if it included an amount to settle outstanding claims by the Receiver against Shilo. I do not agree that having made such an invitation to Shilo created an unfairness in the process. I find this for the following reasons:

- (a) since the Receiver was dealing with a prospective purchaser, Shilo, with which it had outstanding claims, this was an efficient way to proceed in wrapping up other aspects of the receivership and possibly obtaining an increased overall bid;
- (b) the Receiver separately allocated the amounts put forward by Shilo to either the Keller Lands or the settlement of the claims;
- (c) it was open for Shilo to offer as much or as little as it wanted to settle the claims and as much or as little as it wanted to put forward on the amount of the Keller Lands;
- (d) the amount that Shilo did offer for the Keller Lands was not as high as the offer put forward by the Adriaansen Group.

24 While Shilo alleges some confusion, I am satisfied from reviewing the Second Confidential Reports and the affidavit of Rodger Johnson that Shilo's offer was broken down by the Receiver in terms of the offer for the Keller Lands and the amount towards settlement of the outstanding claims by the Receiver against Shilo.

25 Also, it was reasonable for the Receiver, in assessing Shilo's offer, not to take into account that part of Shilo's offer as it related to paying unsecured creditors certain amounts, for the reasons it says at para. 32(d) of the Second Confidential Reports. Moreover, giving it weight would run afoul of the interests of the secured creditors and the primacy of claims in an insolvency.

26 I had some initial concerns as to whether the Receiver had considered Shilo's increased offer which came subsequent to its verbal acceptance of the Adriaansen Group offer or whether they considered it too late, but I am satisfied that the Receiver did take into account Shilo's increased offer and they discuss the increased offer in their analysis of the two proposals.

27 Marcus Keller argued that Shilo's bid was the better overall bid. The Receiver's considered view was otherwise, and is entitled to deference.

28 I am of the view that a business judgment of the Receiver in this case is entitled to deference. I find that the Receiver has fully canvassed the market for the Keller Lands in an open, fair and transparent manner to all potential interested purchasers. In my view, the Receiver in marketing the property, and its proposed sale to the Adriaansen Group, has satisfied the criteria in the decision of *Crown Trust Co.*, adopted by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Soundair*.

## STANDING

29 I am in general agreement with the analysis of Menzies J. in the *Shape Foods* decision on the issue of standing. In that regard although I heard from Marcus Keller as a shareholder of the defendant debtor companies, something more is required for him to have standing in these proceedings. Having said that, given the exigencies of time, I heard his submissions in court. The status of Shilo is a little more complicated. The passage from the decision of *Skyepharma plc*, relied on by Menzies J., also states at para. 29:

In limited circumstances, a prospective purchaser may become entitled to participate in a sale approval motion. For that to happen, it must be shown that the prospective purchaser acquired a legal right or interest from the circumstances of a particular sale process and that the nature of the right or interest is such that it could be adversely affected by the approval order. A commercial interest is not sufficient.

30 That does appear to open the door to prospective purchasers such as Shilo. The difficulty is that without hearing from prospective purchasers and in certain circumstances allowing them disclosure, it is difficult to assess whether or not they should have standing. Ultimately, I have decided here that there was no unfairness in the process to Shilo, or anyone, and it follows that there was no interest or right of Shilo that was adversely affected. But in the circumstances I heard from Shilo at the hearing of the motion. I am mindful, however, of the caution expressed by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Skyepharma plc*, as follows (para. 30):

There is a sound policy reason for restricting, to the extent possible, the involvement of prospective purchasers in sale approval motions. There is often a measure of urgency to complete court approved sales. This case is a good example. When unsuccessful purchasers become involved, there is a potential for greater delay and additional uncertainty. This potential may, in some situations, create commercial leverage in the hands a disappointed would be purchaser which could be counterproductive to the best interests of those for whose benefit the sale is intended.

## CONCLUSION

31 In conclusion, the sales process conducted by the Receiver and the agreement that has been submitted for court approval satisfies the principles set out in the *Soundair* decision. The Receiver sought prior court approval for a sales process and it followed that process. It then proceeded with the three expressions of interest and chose the superior one. When that first offer fell through the Receiver afforded the two other offerors an opportunity to submit improved bids and allowed them to improve their bids further. The Receiver accepted what it viewed as the superior bid after comparing them, and its business judgment is entitled to deference. In the end, I find the Receiver acted reasonably, prudently and fairly. I see no reason not to approve the sale.

32 I am, therefore, approving the sale agreement and granting the requested vesting order, as well as the balance of the relief sought by the Receiver in its motion.

*Motion granted.*

## Footnotes

- \* Affirmed at *Royal Bank of Canada v. Keller & Sons Farming Ltd.* (2016), 2016 CarswellMan 147, 2016 MBCA 46, 397 D.L.R. (4th) 573, 39 C.B.R. (6th) xxx (Man. C.A.).

**Tab 5**

2021 SCC 25, 2021 CSC 25  
Supreme Court of Canada

Sherman Estate v. Donovan

2021 CarswellOnt 8340, 2021 CarswellOnt 8339, 2021 SCC 25, 2021 CSC 25, [2021] 2  
S.C.R. 75, [2021] 2 R.C.S. 75, [2021] S.C.J. No. 25, 331 A.C.W.S. (3d) 489, 458 D.L.R.  
(4th) 361, 66 C.P.C. (8th) 1, 67 E.T.R. (4th) 163, 72 C.R. (7th) 223, EYB 2021-391973

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

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

Heard: October 6, 2020

Judgment: June 11, 2021

Docket: 38695

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

Counsel: Chantelle Cseh, Timothy Youdan, for Appellants

Iris Fischer, Skye A. Sepp, for Respondents

Peter Scrutton, for Intervener, Attorney General of Ontario

Jacqueline Hughes, for Intervener, Attorney General of British Columbia

Ryder Gilliland, for Intervener, Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Ewa Krajewska, for Intervener, Income Security Advocacy Centre

Robert S. Anderson, Q.C., for Interveners, Ad IDEM/Canadian Media Lawyers Association, Postmedia Network Inc., CTV, a Division of Bell Media Inc., Global News, a division of Corus Television Limited Partnership, The Globe and Mail Inc. and Citytv, a division of Rogers Media Inc.

Adam Goldenberg, for Intervener, British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

Khalid Janmohamed, for Interveners, HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, the HIV Legal Network and the Mental Health Legal Committee

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

APPEAL by estate trustees from judgment reported at *Donovan v. Sherman Estate* (2019), 2019 ONCA 376, 2019 CarswellOnt 6867, 47 E.T.R. (4th) 1, 56 C.P.C. (8th) 82 (Ont. C.A.), allowing appeal from judgment imposing sealing orders.

POURVOI formé par les fiduciaires d'une succession à l'encontre d'un jugement publié à *Donovan v. Sherman Estate* (2019), 2019 ONCA 376, 2019 CarswellOnt 6867, 47 E.T.R. (4th) 1, 56 C.P.C. (8th) 82 (Ont. C.A.), ayant accueilli l'appel interjeté à l'encontre d'un jugement imposant une ordonnance de mise sous scellés.

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

## I. Overview

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## II. Background

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

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

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

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

## III. Proceedings Below

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### ***C. Subsequent Proceedings***

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

#### **IV. Submissions**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## V. Analysis

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

30 Court openness is protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and is essential to the proper functioning of our democracy (*Canadian Broadcasting Corp. v. New Brunswick (Attorney General)*[1996] 3 S.C.R. 480, at para. 23; *Vancouver Sun (Re)*2004 SCC 43, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 332, at paras. 23-26). Reporting on court proceedings by a free press is often said to be inseparable from the principle of open justice. "In reporting what has been said and done at a public trial, the media serve as the eyes and ears of a wider public which would be absolutely entitled to attend but for purely practical reasons cannot do so" (*Khuja v. Times Newspapers Ltd*, 2017 UKSC 49, [2019] A.C. 161 (U.K. S.C.), at para. 16, citing *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326, at pp. 1339-40, per Cory J.). Limits on openness in service of other public interests have been recognized, but sparingly and always with an eye to preserving a strong presumption that justice should proceed in public view (*Dagenais v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 835, at p. 878; *R. v. Mentuck*2001 SCC 76, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 442, at paras. 32-39; *Sierra Club*, at para. 56). The test for discretionary limits on court openness is directed at maintaining this presumption while offering sufficient flexibility for courts to protect these other public interests where they arise (*Mentuck*, at para. 33). The parties agree that this is the appropriate framework of analysis for resolving this appeal.

31 The parties and the courts below disagree, however, about how this test applies to the facts of this case and this calls for clarification of certain points of the *Sierra Club* analysis. Most centrally, there is disagreement about how an important interest in the protection of privacy could be recognized such that it would justify limits on openness, and in particular when privacy can be a matter of public concern. The parties bring two settled principles of this Court's jurisprudence to bear in support of their respective positions. First, this Court has often observed that privacy is a fundamental value necessary to the preservation of a

free and democratic society (*Lavigne v. Canada (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages)*, 2002 SCC 53, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 773, at para. 25; *Dagg v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*[1997] 2 S.C.R. 403, at paras. 65-66, per La Forest J. (dissenting but not on this point); *New Brunswick*, at para. 40). Courts have invoked privacy, in some instances, as the basis for an exception to openness under the *Sierra Club* test (see, e.g., *R. v. Henry*2009 BCCA 86, 270 B.C.A.C. 5, at paras. 11 and 17). At the same time, the jurisprudence acknowledges that some degree of privacy loss — resulting in inconvenience, even in upset or embarrassment — is inherent in any court proceeding open to the public (*New Brunswick*, at para. 40). Accordingly, upholding the presumption of openness has meant recognizing that neither individual sensibilities nor mere personal discomfort associated with participating in judicial proceedings are likely to justify the exclusion of the public from court (*Attorney General of Nova Scotia v. MacIntyre*, [1982] 1 S.C.R. 175, at p. 185; *New Brunswick*, at para. 41). Determining the role of privacy in the *Sierra Club* analysis requires reconciling these two ideas, which is the nub of the disagreement between the parties. The right of privacy is not absolute; the open court principle is not without exceptions.

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

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

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

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

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

### A. The Test for Discretionary Limits on Court Openness

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

38 The test for discretionary limits on presumptive court openness has been expressed as a two-step inquiry involving the necessity and proportionality of the proposed order (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53). Upon examination, however, this test rests upon three core prerequisites that a person seeking such a limit must show. Recasting the test around these three prerequisites, without altering its essence, helps to clarify the burden on an applicant seeking an exception to the open court principle. In order to succeed, the person asking a court to exercise discretion in a way that limits the open court presumption must establish that:

- (1) court openness poses a serious risk to an important public interest;
- (2) the order sought is necessary to prevent this serious risk to the identified interest because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and,
- (3) as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects.

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

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

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

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

42 While there is no closed list of important public interests for the purposes of this test, I share Iacobucci J.'s sense, explained in *Sierra Club*, that courts must be "cautious" and "alive to the fundamental importance of the open court rule" even at the earliest stage when they are identifying important public interests (para. 56). Determining what is an important public interest can be done in the abstract at the level of general principles that extend beyond the parties to the particular dispute (para. 55). By contrast, whether that interest is at "serious risk" is a fact-based finding that, for the judge considering the appropriateness of an order, is necessarily made in context. In this sense, the identification of, on the one hand, an important interest and, on the other, the seriousness of the risk to that interest are, theoretically at least, separate and qualitatively distinct operations. An order may therefore be refused simply because a valid important public interest is not at serious risk on the facts of a given case or, conversely, that the identified interests, regardless of whether they are at serious risk, do not have the requisite important public character as a matter of general principle.

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

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

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

### ***B. The Public Importance of Privacy***

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

various settings, and this sheds light on why the narrower aspect of privacy related to the protection of dignity is an important public interest.

47 I respectfully disagree with the manner in which the Court of Appeal disposed of the claim by the Trustees that there is a serious risk to the interest in protecting personal privacy in this case. For the appellate judges, the privacy concerns raised by the Trustees amounted to "[p]ersonal concerns" which cannot, "without more", satisfy the requirement from *Sierra Club* that an important interest be framed as a public interest (para. 10). The Court of Appeal in our case relied, at para. 10, on *H. (M.E.) v. Williams*, 2012 ONCA 35, 108 O.R. (3d) 321, in which it was held that "[p]urely personal interests cannot justify non-publication or sealing orders" (para. 25). Citing as authority judgments of this Court in *MacIntyre* and *Sierra Club*, the court continued by observing that "personal concerns of a litigant, including concerns about the very real emotional distress and embarrassment that can be occasioned to litigants when justice is done in public, will not, standing alone, satisfy the necessity branch of the test" (para. 25). Respectfully stated, the emphasis that the Court of Appeal placed on personal concerns as a means of deciding that the sealing orders failed to meet the necessity requirement in this case and in *Williams* is, I think, mistaken. Personal concerns that relate to aspects of the privacy of an individual who is before the courts can coincide with a public interest in confidentiality.

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

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

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

51 Further, in *Alberta (Information and Privacy Commissioner) v. United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 401* 2013 SCC 62, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 733 ("*UFCW*"), decided in the context of a statute regulating the use of information by organizations, the objective of providing an individual with some control over their information was recognized as "intimately connected to individual autonomy, dignity and privacy, self-evidently significant social values" (para. 24). The importance of privacy, its "quasi-constitutional status" and its role in protecting moral autonomy continues to find expression in our recent jurisprudence (see, e.g., *Lavigne*, at para. 24; *Bragg*, at para. 18, per Abella J., citing *Toronto Star Newspaper Ltd. v. R.*, 2012 ONCJ 27, 289

C.C.C. (3d) 549, at paras. 40-41 and 44; *Douez v. Facebook, Inc.* 2017 SCC 33, [2017] 1 S.C.R. 751, at para. 59). In *Douez*, Karakatsanis, Wagner (as he then was) and Gascon JJ. underscored this same point, adding that "the growth of the Internet, virtually timeless with pervasive reach, has exacerbated the potential harm that may flow from incursions to a person's privacy interests" (para. 59).

52 Privacy as a public interest is underlined by specific aspects of privacy protection present in legislation at the federal and provincial levels (see, e.g., *Privacy Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-21; *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, S.C. 2000, c. 5 ("PIPEDA"); *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31; *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, CQLR, c. C-12, s. 5; *Civil Code of Québec*, arts. 35 to 41).<sup>3</sup> Further, in assessing the constitutionality of a legislative exception to the open court principle, this Court has recognized that the protection of individual privacy can be a pressing and substantial objective (*Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1345, per Cory J.; see also the concurring reasons of Wilson J., at p. 1354, in which "the public interest in protecting the privacy of litigants generally in matrimonial cases against the public interest in an open court process" was explicitly noted). There is also continued support for the social and public importance of individual privacy in the academic literature (see, e.g., A. J. Cockfield, "Protecting the Social Value of Privacy in the Context of State Investigations Using New Technologies" (2007), 40 *U.B.C. L. Rev.* 41, at p. 41; K. Hughes, "A Behavioural Understanding of Privacy and its Implications for Privacy Law" (2012), 75 *Mod. L. Rev.* 806, at p. 823; P. Gewirtz, "Privacy and Speech" (2001), *Sup. Ct. Rev.* 139, at p. 139). It is therefore inappropriate, in my respectful view, to dismiss the public interest in protecting privacy as merely a personal concern. This does not mean, however, that privacy generally is an important public interest in the context of limits on court openness.

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

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

important public interests does not answer the question as to whether aspects of privacy in and of themselves are important public interests and does not diminish the distinctive public character of privacy, considered above.

55 Indeed, the specific harms to privacy occasioned by open courts have not gone unnoticed nor been discounted as merely personal concerns. Courts have exercised their discretion to limit court openness in order to protect personal information from publicity, including to prevent the disclosure of sexual orientation (see, e.g., *Paterson*, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88), HIV status (see, e.g., *A.B. v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)* 2017 FC 629, at para. 9 (CanLII),) and a history of substance abuse and criminality (see, e.g., *R. v. Pickton* 2010 BCSC 1198, at paras. 11 and 20 (CanLII)). This need to reconcile the public interest in privacy with the open court principle has been highlighted by this Court (see, e.g., *Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1353, per Wilson J.). Writing extra-judicially, McLachlin C.J. explained that "[i]f we are serious about peoples' private lives, we must preserve a modicum of privacy. Equally, if we are serious about our justice system, we must have open courts. The question is how to reconcile these dual imperatives in a fair and principled way" ("Courts, Transparency and Public Confidence — To the Better Administration of Justice" (2003), 8 *Deakin L. Rev.* 1, at p. 4). In seeking that reconciliation, the question becomes whether the relevant dimension of privacy amounts to an important public interest that, when seriously at risk, would justify rebutting the strong presumption favouring open courts.

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

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

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

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

59 The *Toronto Star* is therefore right to say that the privacy of individuals will very often be at some risk in court proceedings. Disputes between and concerning individuals that play out in open court necessarily reveal information that may have otherwise remained out of public view. Indeed, much like the Court of Appeal in this case, courts have explicitly adverted to this concern when concluding that mere inconvenience is insufficient to cross the initial threshold of the test (see, e.g., *3834310 Canada inc. v. Chamberland* 2004 CanLII 4122(Que. C.A.), at para. 30). Saying that any impact on individual privacy is sufficient to establish a serious risk to an important public interest for the purposes of the test for discretionary limits on court openness could

render this initial requirement moot. Many cases would turn on the balancing at the proportionality stage. Such a development would amount to a departure from *Sierra Club*, which is the appropriate framework and one which must be preserved.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

71 Violations of privacy that cause a loss of control over fundamental personal information about oneself are damaging to dignity because they erode one's ability to present aspects of oneself to others in a selective manner (D. Matheson, "Dignity and Selective Self-Presentation", in I. Kerr, V. Steeves and C. Lucock, eds., *Lessons from the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy and Identity in a Networked Society* (2009), 319, at pp. 327-28; L. M. Austin, "Re-reading Westin" (2019), 20 *Theor. Inq. L.* 53, at pp. 66-68; Eltis (2016), at p. 13). Dignity, used in this context, is a social concept that involves presenting core aspects of oneself to others in a considered and controlled manner (see generally Matheson, at pp. 327-28; Austin, at pp. 66-68). Dignity is eroded where individuals lose control over this core identity-giving information about themselves, because a highly sensitive aspect of who they are that they did not consciously decide to share is now available to others and may shape how they are seen in public. This was even alluded to by La Forest J., dissenting but not on this point, in *Dagg*, where he referred to privacy as "[a]n expression of an individual's unique personality or personhood" (para. 65).

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

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

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

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

76 The test for discretionary limits on court openness imposes on the applicant the burden to show that the important public interest is at serious risk. Recognizing that privacy, understood in reference to dignity, is only at serious risk where the information in the court file is sufficiently sensitive erects a threshold consistent with the presumption of openness. This

threshold is fact specific. It addresses the concern, noted above, that personal information can frequently be found in court files and yet finding this sufficient to pass the serious risk threshold in every case would undermine the structure of the test. By requiring the applicant to demonstrate the sensitivity of the information as a necessary condition to the finding of a serious risk to this interest, the scope of the interest is limited to only those cases where the rationale for not revealing core aspects of a person's private life, namely protecting individual dignity, is most actively engaged.

77 There is no need here to provide an exhaustive catalogue of the range of sensitive personal information that, if exposed, could give rise to a serious risk. It is enough to say that courts have demonstrated a willingness to recognize the sensitivity of information related to stigmatized medical conditions (see, e.g., *A.B.*, at para. 9), stigmatized work (see, e.g., *Work Safe Twerk Safe v. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario* 2021 ONSC 1100, at para. 28 (CanLII)), sexual orientation (see, e.g., *Paterson*, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88), and subjection to sexual assault or harassment (see, e.g., *Fedeli v. Brown* 2020 ONSC 994, at para. 9 (CanLII)). I would also note the submission of the intervener the Income Security Advocacy Centre, that detailed information about family structure and work history could in some circumstances constitute sensitive information. The question in every case is whether the information reveals something intimate and personal about the individual, their lifestyle or their experiences.

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

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

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

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

is broader or more easily accessible (see generally Solove, at p. 1152; Ardia, at p. 1393-94; E. Paton-Simpson, "Privacy and the Reasonable Paranoid: The Protection of Privacy in Public Places" (2000), 50 *U.T.L.J.* 305, at p. 346).

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

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

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

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

#### ***D. The Trustees Have Failed to Establish a Serious Risk to an Important Public Interest***

86 As *Sierra Club* made plain, a discretionary order limiting court openness can only be made where there is a serious risk to an important public interest. The arguments on this appeal concerned whether privacy is an important public interest and whether the facts here disclose the existence of serious risks to privacy and safety. While the broad privacy interest invoked by the Trustees cannot be relied on to justify a limit on openness, the narrower concept of privacy understood in relation to dignity is an important public interest for the purposes of the test. I also recognize that a risk to physical safety is an important public interest, a point on which there is no dispute here. Accordingly, the relevant question at the first step is whether there is a serious risk to one or both of these interests. For reasons that follow, the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to either. This alone is sufficient to conclude that the sealing orders should not have been issued.

##### ***(1) The Risk to Privacy Alleged in this Case Is Not Serious***

87 As I have said, the important public interest in privacy must be understood as one tailored to the protection of individual dignity and not the broadly defined interest the Trustees have asked this Court to recognize. In order to establish a serious risk to this interest, the information in the court files about which the Trustees are concerned must be sufficiently sensitive in that it strikes at the biographical core of the affected individuals. If it is not, there is no serious risk that would justify an exception to openness. If it is, the question becomes whether a serious risk is made out in light of the facts of this case.

88 The application judge never explicitly identified a serious risk to the privacy interest he identified but, to the extent he implicitly reached this conclusion, I respectfully do not share his view. His finding was limited to the observation that "[t]he degree of intrusion on that privacy and dignity [i.e., that of the victims and their loved ones] has already been extreme and, I am sure, excruciating" (para. 23). But the intense scrutiny faced by the Shermans up to the time of the application is only part of the equation. As the sealing orders can only protect against the disclosure of the information in these court files relating to probate, the application judge was required to consider the sensitivity of the specific information they contained. He made no such measure. His conclusion about the seriousness of the risk then focused entirely on the risk of physical harm, with no indication that he found that the Trustees met their burden as to the serious risk to the privacy interest. Said very respectfully and with the knowledge that the application judge did not have the benefit of the above framework, the failure to assess the sensitivity of the information constituted a failure to consider a required element of the legal test. This warranted intervention on appeal.

89 Applying the appropriate framework to the facts of this case, I conclude that the risk to the important public interest in the affected individuals' privacy, as I have defined it above in reference to dignity, is not serious. The information the Trustees seek to protect is not highly sensitive and this alone is sufficient to conclude that there is no serious risk to the important public interest in privacy so defined.

90 There is little controversy in this case about the likelihood and extent of dissemination of the information contained in the estate files. There is near certainty that the Toronto Star will publish at least some aspects of the estate files if it is provided access. Given the breadth of the audience of its media organization, and the high-profile nature of the events surrounding the death of the Shermans, I have no difficulty in concluding that the affected individuals would lose control over this information to a significant extent should the files be open.

91 With regard to the sensitivity of the information, however, the information contained in these files does not reveal anything particularly private about the affected individuals. What would be revealed might well cause inconvenience and perhaps embarrassment, but it has not been shown that it would strike at their biographical core in a way that would undermine their control over the expression of their identities. Their privacy would be troubled, to be sure, but the relevant privacy interest bearing on the dignity of the affected persons has not been shown to be at serious risk. At its highest, the information in these files will reveal something about the relationship between the deceased and the affected individuals, in that it may reveal to whom the deceased entrusted the administration of their estates and those who they wished or were deemed to wish to be beneficiaries of their property at death. It may also reveal some basic personal information, such as addresses. Some of the beneficiaries might well, it may fairly be presumed, bear family names other than Sherman. I am mindful that the deaths are being investigated as homicides by the Toronto Police Service. However, even in this context, none of this information provides significant insight into who they are as individuals, nor would it provoke a fundamental change in their ability to control how they are perceived by others. The fact of being linked through estate documents to victims of an unsolved murder is not in itself highly sensitive. It may be the source of discomfort but has not been shown to constitute an affront to dignity in that it does not probe deeply into the biographical core of these individuals. As a result, the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest as required by *Sierra Club*.

92 The fact that some of the affected individuals may be minors is also insufficient to cross the seriousness threshold. While the law recognizes that minors are especially vulnerable to intrusions of privacy (see *Bragg*, at para. 17), the mere fact that information concerns minors does not displace the generally applicable analysis (see, e.g., *Bragg*, at para. 11). Even taking into account the increased vulnerability of minors who may be affected individuals in the probate files, there is no evidence that they would lose control of information about themselves that reveals something close to the core of their identities. Merely associating the beneficiaries or trustees with the Shermans' unexplained deaths is not enough to constitute a serious risk to the identified important public interest in privacy, defined in reference to dignity.

93 Further, while the intense media scrutiny on the family following the deaths suggests that the information would likely be widely disseminated, it is not in itself indicative of the sensitivity of the information contained in the probate files.

94 Showing that the information that would be revealed by court openness is sufficiently sensitive and private such that it goes to the biographical core of the affected individual is a necessary prerequisite to showing a serious risk to the relevant public interest aspect of privacy. The Trustees did not advance any specific reason why the contents of these files are more sensitive than they may seem at first glance. When asserting a privacy risk, it is essential to show not only that information about individuals will escape the control of the person concerned — which will be true in every case — but that this particular information concerns who the individuals are as people in a manner that undermines their dignity. This the Trustees have not done.

95 Therefore, while some of the material in the court files may well be broadly disseminated, the nature of the information has not been shown to give rise to a serious risk to the important public interest in privacy, as appropriately defined in this context in reference to dignity. For that reason alone, I conclude that the Trustees have failed to show a serious risk to this interest.

## ***(2) The Risk to Physical Safety Alleged in this Case is Not Serious***

96 Unlike the privacy interest raised in this case, there was no controversy that there is an important public interest in protecting individuals from physical harm. It is worth underscoring that the application judge correctly treated the protection from physical harm as a distinct important interest from that of the protection of privacy and found that this risk of harm was "foreseeable" and "grave" (paras. 22-24). The issue is whether the Trustees have established a serious risk to this interest for the purpose of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. The application judge observed that it would have been preferable to include objective evidence of the seriousness of the risk from the police service conducting the homicide investigation. He nevertheless concluded there was sufficient proof of risk to the physical safety of the affected individuals to meet the test. The Court of Appeal says that was a misreading of the evidence, and the Toronto Star agrees that the application judge's conclusion as to the existence of a serious risk to safety was mere speculation.

97 At the outset, I note that direct evidence is not necessarily required to establish a serious risk to an important interest. This Court has held that it is possible to identify objectively discernable harm on the basis of logical inferences (*Bragg*, at paras. 15-16). But this process of inferential reasoning is not a licence to engage in impermissible speculation. An inference must still be grounded in objective circumstantial facts that reasonably allow the finding to be made inferentially. Where the inference cannot reasonably be drawn from the circumstances, it amounts to speculation (*R. v. Chanmany* 2016 ONCA 576, 352 O.A.C. 121, at para. 45).

98 As the Trustees correctly argue, it is not just the probability of the feared harm, but also the gravity of the harm itself that is relevant to the assessment of serious risk. Where the feared harm is particularly serious, the probability that this harm materialize need not be shown to be likely, but must still be more than negligible, fanciful or speculative. The question is ultimately whether this record allowed the application judge to objectively discern a serious risk of physical harm.

99 This conclusion was not open to the application judge on this record. There is no dispute that the feared physical harm is grave. I agree with the Toronto Star, however, that the probability of this harm occurring was speculative. The application judge's conclusion as to the seriousness of the risk of physical harm was grounded on what he called "the degree of mystery that persists regarding both the perpetrator and the motives" associated with the deaths of the Shermans and his supposition that this motive might be "transported" to the trustees and beneficiaries (para. 5; see also paras. 19 and 23). The further step in reasoning that the unsealed estate files would lead to the perpetrator's next crime, to be visited upon someone mentioned in the files, is based on speculation, not the available affidavit evidence, and cannot be said to be a proper inference or some kind of objectively discerned harm or risk thereof. If that were the case, the estate files of every victim of an unsolved murder would pass the initial threshold of the test for a sealing order.

100 Further, I recall that what is at issue here is not whether the affected individuals face a safety risk in general, but rather whether they face such a risk as a result of the openness of these court files. In light of the contents of these files, the Trustees had to point to some further reason why the risk posed by this information becoming publicly available was more than negligible.

101 The speculative character of the chain of reasoning leading to the conclusion that a serious risk of physical harm exists in this case is underlined by differences between these facts and those cases relied on by the Trustees. In *X. v. Y.*, 2011 BCSC 943, 21

B.C.L.R. (5th) 410, the risk of physical harm was inferred on the basis that the plaintiff was a police officer who had investigated "cases involving gang violence and dangerous firearms" and wrote sentencing reports for such offenders which identified him by full name (para. 6). In *R. v. Esseghaier*, 2017 ONCA 970, 356 C.C.C. (3d) 455, Watt J.A. considered it "self-evident" that the disclosure of identifiers of an undercover operative working in counter-terrorism would compromise the safety of the operative (para. 41). In both cases, the danger flowed from facts establishing that the applicants were in antagonistic relationships with alleged criminal or terrorist organizations. But in this case, the Trustees asked the application judge to infer not only the fact that harm would befall the affected individuals, but also that a person or persons exist who wish to harm them. To infer all this on the basis of the Shermans' deaths and the association of the affected individuals with the deceased is not reasonably possible on this record. It is not a reasonable inference but, as the Court of Appeal noted, a conclusion resting on speculation.

102 Were the mere assertion of grave physical harm sufficient to show a serious risk to an important interest, there would be no meaningful threshold in the analysis. Instead, the test requires the serious risk asserted to be well grounded in the record or the circumstances of the particular case (*Sierra Club*, at para. 54; *Bragg*, at para. 15). This contributes to maintaining the strong presumption of openness.

103 Again, in other cases, circumstantial facts may allow a court to infer the existence of a serious risk of physical harm. Applicants do not necessarily need to retain experts who will attest to the physical or psychological risk related to the disclosure. But on this record, the bare assertion that such a risk exists fails to meet the threshold necessary to establish a serious risk of physical harm. The application judge's conclusion to the contrary was an error warranting the intervention of the Court of Appeal.

#### ***E. There Would Be Additional Barriers to a Sealing Order on the Basis of the Alleged Risk to Privacy***

104 While not necessary to dispose of the appeal, it bears mention that the Trustees would have faced additional barriers in seeking the sealing orders on the basis of the privacy interest they advanced. I recall that to meet the test for discretionary limits on court openness, a person must show, in addition to a serious risk to an important interest, that the particular order sought is necessary to address the risk and that the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects as a matter of proportionality (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53).

105 Even if the Trustees had succeeded in showing a serious risk to the privacy interest they assert, a publication ban — less constraining on openness than the sealing orders — would have likely been sufficient as a reasonable alternative to prevent this risk. The condition that the order be necessary requires the court to consider whether there are alternatives to the order sought and to restrict the order as much as reasonably possible to prevent the serious risk (*Sierra Club*, at para. 57). An order imposing a publication ban could restrict the dissemination of personal information to only those persons consulting the court record for themselves and prohibit those individuals from spreading the information any further. As I have noted, the likelihood and extent of dissemination may be relevant factors in determining the seriousness of a risk to privacy in this context. While the Toronto Star would be able to consult the files subject to a publication ban, for example, which may assist it in its investigations, it would not be able to publish and thereby broadly disseminate the contents of the files. A publication ban would seem to protect against this latter harm, which has been the focus of the Trustees' argument, while allowing some access to the file, which is not possible under the sealing orders. Therefore, even if a serious risk to the privacy interest had been made out, it would likely not have justified a sealing order, because a less onerous order would have likely been sufficient to mitigate this risk effectively. I hasten to add, however, that a publication ban is not available here since, as noted, the seriousness of the risk to the privacy interest at play has not been made out.

106 Further, the Trustees would have had to show that the benefits of any order necessary to protect from a serious risk to the important public interest outweighed the harmful effects of the order, including the negative impact on the open court principle (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53). In balancing the privacy interests against the open court principle, it is important to consider whether the information the order seeks to protect is peripheral or central to the judicial process (paras. 78 and 86; *Bragg*, at paras. 28-29). There will doubtless be cases where the information that poses a serious risk to privacy, bearing as it does on individual dignity, will be central to the case. But the interest in important and legally relevant information being aired in open court may well overcome any concern for the privacy interests in that same information. This contextual balancing, informed

by the importance of the open court principle, presents a final barrier to those seeking a discretionary limit on court openness for the purposes of privacy protection.

## VI. Conclusion

107 The conclusion that the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest ends the analysis. In such circumstances, the Trustees are not entitled to any discretionary order limiting the open court principle, including the sealing orders they initially obtained. The Court of Appeal rightly concluded that there was no basis for asking for redactions because the Trustees had failed at this stage of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. This is dispositive of the appeal. The decision to set aside the sealing orders rendered by the application judge should be affirmed. Given that I propose to dismiss the appeal on the existing record, I would dismiss the Toronto Star's motion for new evidence as being moot.

108 For the foregoing reasons, I would dismiss the appeal. The Toronto Star requests no costs given the important public issues in dispute. As such, there will be no order as to costs.

*Appeal dismissed.*

*Pourvoi rejeté.*

## Footnotes

- 1 As noted in the title of proceedings, the appellants in this matter have been referred to consistently as the "Estate of Bernard Sherman and Trustees of the Estate and Estate of Honey Sherman and Trustees of the Estate." In these reasons the appellants are referred to throughout as the "Trustees" for convenience.
- 2 The use of "Toronto Star" as a collective term referring to both respondents should not be taken to suggest that only Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. is participating in this appeal. Mr. Donovan is the only respondent to have been a party throughout. Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was a party in first instance, but was removed as a party on consent at the Court of Appeal. By order of Karakatsanis J. dated March 25, 2020, Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was added as a respondent in this Court.
- 3 At the time of writing the House of Commons is considering a bill that would replace part one of *PIPEDA*: Bill C-11, *An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts*, 2nd Sess., 43rd Parl., 2020.

**Tab 6**

2022 ONSC 6354  
Ontario Superior Court of Justice

Just Energy Group Inc. et. al. v. Morgan Stanley Capital Group Inc. et. al.

2022 CarswellOnt 16700, 2022 ONSC 6354, 2022 A.C.W.S. 5355, 6 C.B.R. (7th) 386

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES' CREDITORS  
ARRANGEMENT ACT, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, AS AMENDED**

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PLAN OF COMPROMISE OR ARRANGEMENT OF JUST ENERGY GROUP INC., JUST ENERGY CORP., ONTARIO ENERGY COMMODITIES INC., UNIVERSALE ENERGY CORPORATION, JUST ENERGY FINANCE CANADA ULC, HUDSON ENERGY CANADA CORP., JUST MANAGEMENT CORP., JUST ENERGY FINANCE HOLDING INC., 11929747 CANADA INC., 12175592 CANADA INC., JE SERVICES HOLDCO I INC., JE SERVICES HOLDCO II INC., 8704104 CANADA INC., JUST ENERGY ADVANCED SOLUTIONS CORP., JUST ENERGY (U.S.) CORP., JUST ENERGY ILLINOIS CORP., JUST ENERGY INDIANA CORP., JUST ENERGY MASSACHUSETTS CORP., JUST ENERGY NEW YORK CORP., JUST ENERGY TEXAS I CORP., JUST ENERGY, LLC, JUST ENERGY PENNSYLVANIA CORP., JUST ENERGY MICHIGAN CORP., JUST ENERGY SOLUTIONS INC., HUDSON ENERGY SERVICES LLC, HUDSON ENERGY CORP., INTERACTIVE ENERGY GROUP LLC, HUDSON PARENT HOLDINGS LLC, DRAG MARKETING LLC JUST ENERGY ADVANCED SOLUTIONS LLC, FULCRUM RETAIL ENERGY LLC, FULCRUM RETAIL HOLDINGS LLC, TARA ENERGY, LLC, JUST ENERGY MARKETING CORP., JUST ENERGY CONNECTICUT CORP., JUST ENERGY LIMITED, JUST SOLAR HOLDINGS CORP. and JUST ENERGY (FINANCE) HUNGARY ZRT. (Applicants) and MORGAN STANLEY CAPITAL GROUP INC. (Respondents)

McEwen J.

Heard: November 2, 2022  
Judgment: November 14, 2022  
Docket: CV-21-00658423-00CL

Counsel: Jeremy Dacks, Marc Wasserman, for Just Energy Group  
Tim Pinos, Ryan Jacobs, Alan Merskey, for LVS III SPE XV LP, TOCU XVII LLC, HVS XVI LLC, OC II LVS XIV LP, OC III LFE I LP and CBHT Energy I LLC  
David H. Botter, Sarah Link Schultz, for LVS III SPE XV LP, TOCU XVII LLC, HVS XVI LLC, OC II LVS XIV LP, OC III LFE I LP and CBHT Energy I LLC  
Heather L. Meredith, James D. Gage, for Agent and the Credit Facility Lenders  
Howard A. Gorman, Ryan E. Manns, for Shell Energy North American (Canada) Inc. and Shell Energy North America (U.S.)  
Danielle Glatt, for U.S. Counsel for Fira Donin and Inna Golovan, in their capacity as proposed class representatives in Donin et al. v. Just Energy Group Inc. et al. and Counsel to U.S. Counsel for Trevor Jordev, in his capacity as proposed class representative in Jordev v. Just Energy Solutions Inc.  
David Rosenfeld, James Harnum, for Haidar Omarali in his capacity as Representative Plaintiff in Omarali v. Just Energy  
Robert Kennedy, for BP Energy Company and certain of its affiliates  
Jessica MacKinnon, for Macquarie Energy LLC and Macquarie Energy Canada Ltd.  
Bevan Brooksbank, for Chubb Insurance Co. of Canada  
Alexandra McCawley, for Counsel to Fortis BC Energy Inc.  
Robert I. Thornton, Rebecca Kennedy, Rachel B. Nicholson, Puya Fesharaki, for FTI Consulting Canada Inc., as Monitor  
John F. Higgins, for FTI Consulting Canada Inc., as Monitor  
Ganesh Yadav, for himself  
Mohammad Jaafari, for himself

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

APPLICATION by group of energy companies for approval of reverse vesting order and transaction in bankruptcy proceedings.

**McEwen J.:**

1 The Applicants (collectively the "Just Energy Entities") bring a motion seeking approval of a going-concern sale transaction (the "Transaction") for their business. They seek to implement the Transaction through a proposed draft reverse vesting order (the "RVO") and other related relief.

2 The Just Energy Entities provided the court with two draft orders in furtherance of their position. The first is the RVO for the Transaction. The second is an order (the "Monitor's Order") giving FTI Consulting Canada Inc. (the "Monitor") enhanced powers to implement the RVO and other related relief, including a stay extension, approval of the Monitor's reports and fees and a sealing order.

3 I granted the two orders with reasons to follow. I am now providing those reasons.

## **BACKGROUND**

4 Just Energy Group Inc. ("Just Energy") and its subsidiaries collectively form the Just Energy Entities. Just Energy is primarily a holding company that operates subsidiaries in Canada and the U.S.

5 Just Energy is incorporated under the *Canada Business Corporations Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-44 ("*CBCA*") . It maintains dual headquarters in Ontario and Texas. Just Energy's shares are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange.

6 The Just Energy Entities are a retail energy provider. Their principal line of business consists of purchasing retail energy and natural gas commodities from large energy suppliers and reselling them to residential and commercial customers. The Just Energy Entities service over 950,000 residential and commercial customers across Canada and the U.S. and employ over 1,000 employees.

7 The Just Energy Entities' business is highly regulated. This is because of its nature. The business depends on many licenses, authorizations and permits across multiple jurisdictions in both Canada and the U.S. Without these approvals the Just Energy Entities cannot market or sell energy to its customers.

8 On March 9, 2022, the Just Energy Entities obtained protection under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c.C-36 (the "*CCAA*") pursuant to an Initial Order under the *CCAA*.

9 The Just Energy Entities were forced to file for protection under the *CCAA* after an extreme winter storm in Texas. The February 2021 storm, together with Texas regulators' response to the storm, posed a significant liquidity challenge that precipitated the filing. In or about the time of the filing, the Just Energy Entities held an aggregate book value of approximately CDN \$1.069 billion, with an aggregate book value of liabilities around CDN \$1.28 billion.

10 There is a complicated array of secured creditors. Insofar as the Transaction is concerned, the Pacific Investment Management Company LLC ("PIMCO") manages a number of funds which comprise a portion of the secured creditors and/or the DIP Lenders. These entities constitute the purchaser in the Transaction (the "Purchaser").

11 There are also several other secured creditors, including the Credit Facility Lenders and secured suppliers. They have reached an agreement with the Just Energy Entities and the Purchaser with respect to the Transaction.

12 In September 2021, this court granted a Claims Process Order to establish a process to determine the nature, quantum and validity of the claims against the Just Energy Entities.

13 In May 2022, the Just Energy Entities brought a motion (the "Meetings Order Motion") seeking, amongst other things, authorization to hold a creditors' meeting to vote on their proposed Plan of Compromise and Arrangement.

14 Some unsecured litigation claimants opposed the Meetings Order Motion: primarily, two uncertified U.S. class actions (together the "U.S. Class Actions"), a certified Ontario class action (the "Omarali Class Action") and plaintiffs in four actions brought in Texas by approximately 250 claimants (the "Mass Tort Claims").

15 Following my June 10, 2022 Endorsement, the Plan Sponsor — that consisted of the DIP Lenders, one of their affiliates and other stakeholders — withdrew their support for the proposed Plan of Compromise and Arrangement.

16 Thereafter, the Just Energy Entities, the Plan Sponsor and other supporting stakeholders pivoted to implementing a sales and investment solicitation process (the "SISP") in accordance with the new Support Agreement dated August 4, 2022 (the "SISP Support Agreement"). The SISP included a stalking-horse bid by the Purchaser.

17 On August 18, 2022, I granted an order (the "SISP Approval Order") that, amongst other things, approved the SISP and SISP Support Agreement with modest modifications.

18 The SISP was conducted over a 10-week period. It was conducted in accordance with the SISP Approval Order and was well-publicized. The Just Energy Entities negotiated non-disclosure agreements with potential bidders, facilitated access to the data room for those parties, responded to numerous due diligence requests and offered management presentation meetings. Four written notices of intention to bid ("NOIs") were received. Ultimately, however, no bids were received; therefore, the Transaction was declared the successful bid, subject to court approval.

19 It bears noting that, in addition to the SISP, the business of the Just Energy Entities was broadly and extensively marketed over the past approximately three years. No meaningful proposals were ever received.

20 Also, at the time of the SISP Approval Order, the Just Energy Entities had been negotiating with their key stakeholders for roughly 1.5 years.

21 Further, U.S. Class Actions were involved in the SISP but ultimately did not file a NOI or engage in further discussions with the Just Energy Entities in the SISP.

22 The value that the Purchaser is paying for the Just Energy Entities is approximately U.S. \$444 million plus the assumption of several liabilities, all of which provides recovery for the approximately CDN \$1 billion in secured claims.

23 Last, all equity interests of Just Energy and Just Energy (U.S.) Corp. ("JEUS") that exist prior to the proposed implementation of the RVO will be deemed to be terminated, cancelled or redeemed following the closing. The Purchaser will own all the issued and outstanding shares of JEUS. In turn, JEUS will own all of the issued and outstanding shares of Just Energy and the other acquired entities. The Just Energy Entities will continue to control their own assets, other than the excluded assets, and will remain liable for their respective assumed liabilities.

## THE ISSUES

24 There are two issues on this motion:

- whether the Transaction should be approved, including the RVO and related relief; and
- whether the Monitor should receive the enhanced powers requested in the Monitor's Order with respect to the implementation of the RVO and the related relief, including the stay extension, approval of the Monitor's reports and fees and a sealing order.

25 The secured creditors consent to the relief sought. Neither the U.S. Class Actions, the Omarali Class Action nor the Mass Tort Claims opposed the relief sought. The only opposition comes from Mr. Ganesh Yadav, a shareholder, and Mr. Mohammad

Jaafari, a former employee of Just Energy who is pursuing a claim in the Tokyo District Court of Japan alleging wrongful termination.

26 I will first deal with the issues surrounding the RVO and the Monitor's Order. Thereafter I will outline the two specific claims of Mr. Yadav and Mr. Jaafari and explain why I do not believe their claims affect the relief sought by the Just Energy Entities.

### REVERSE VESTING ORDERS

27 A reverse vesting order generally involves a series of steps, whereby:

- (a) the purchaser becomes the sole shareholder of the debtor company;
- (b) the debtor company retains its assets, including key contracts and permits; and
- (c) the liabilities not assumed by the purchaser are vested out and transferred, together with any excluded assets, into a newly incorporated entity or entities.<sup>1</sup>

The assets and liabilities are vested out in the separate entity or entities (which are referred to in the RVO as "Residual Cos.") which may then be addressed through a bankruptcy or similar process. The reverse vesting order is therefore contrasted with a traditional vesting order in which the assets of a debtor company that the purchaser acquires are vested in the purchaser free and clear of any encumbrances or claims, other than those assumed by the purchaser, as contemplated by [s. 36\(4\) of the CCAA](#). The purchase price stands in place of the assets and is available to satisfy creditor claims, in whole or in part, in accordance with their pre-existing priority.

#### *The Law relating to Reverse Vesting Orders*

28 I begin my analysis with a general review of the law.

29 The jurisdiction to approve a transaction through a reverse vesting order is found in [s. 11 of the CCAA](#). Section 11 gives this court broad powers to make orders that it sees fit, subject to the restrictions set out in the statute. There is no provision in the [CCAA](#) that prohibits a reverse vesting order structure: see [Quest University \(Re\)](#), 2020 BCSC 1883, at para. 157.

30 Some courts have also held that [s. 36 of the CCAA](#) confers jurisdiction. Section 36 contemplates court approval for the sale of a debtor company's assets out of the ordinary course of business: see [Black Rock Metals Inc.](#); [Quest University \(Re\)](#), at para. 40.

31 In any event, it is settled law that courts have jurisdiction to approve a transaction involving a reverse vesting order. Moreover, courts agree that the factors set out in [s. 36\(3\) of the CCAA](#) should also be considered on a motion to approve a sale, including one involving a reverse vesting order. Section 36(3) stipulates that the court is to consider, among other things,

- (a) whether the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition was reasonable in the circumstances;
- (b) whether the monitor approved the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition;
- (c) whether the monitor filed with the court a report stating that in their opinion the sale or disposition would be more beneficial to the creditors than a sale or disposition under a bankruptcy;
- (d) the extent to which the creditors were consulted;
- (e) the effects of the proposed sale or disposition on the creditors and other interested parties; and
- (f) whether the consideration to be received for the assets is reasonable and fair, taking into account their market value.

32 In *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, 2022 ONSC 653, Penny J. held that the s. 36(3) criteria largely correspond to the principles articulated in *Royal Bank of Canada v. Soundair Corp.*, (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (C.A) for the approval of the sale of assets in an insolvency. They are as follows:

- whether sufficient effort has been made to obtain the best price and that the debtor has not acted improvidently;
- the interests of all parties;
- the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers have been obtained; and
- whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

33 Reverse vesting orders are relatively new structures. I agree that reverse vesting orders should not be the "norm" and that a court should carefully consider whether a reverse vesting order is warranted in the circumstances: see *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 38; *Black Rock Metals Inc.*, at para. 99. That said, reverse vesting orders have been deemed appropriate in a number of cases: see *Quest University (Re)*, at para. 168, *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 77 and *Black Rock Metals Inc.*, at para. 114.

34 The aforementioned cases approved reverse vesting orders in circumstances where:

- The debtor operated in a highly-regulated environment in which its existing permits, licenses or other rights were difficult or impossible to reassign to a purchaser.
- The debtor is a party to certain key agreements that would be similarly difficult or impossible to assign to a purchaser.
- Where maintaining the existing legal entities would preserve certain tax attributes that would otherwise be lost in a traditional vesting order transaction.

35 Given the supporting jurisprudence, I will now discuss why the RVO should be granted and why the Transaction should be approved.

***The RVO should be granted***

36 The Just Energy Entities' business, as noted, is highly regulated and depends almost entirely on a substantial number of licenses, authorizations and permits in multiple jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S.

37 As set out in the affidavit of Mr. Michael Carter, the Chief Financial Officer to the Just Energy Entities (at para. 57), the value of the Just Energy Entities' business arises predominantly from the gross margin in their customer contracts. The business is wholly dependent on the Just Energy Entities holding several non-transferable licenses and authorizations that permit their operation in Canada and the U.S. and in their agreements with over 100 public utilities, which allow the Just Energy Entities to provide natural gas and electricity in certain markets to their customers.

38 Currently the Just Energy Entities hold at least:

- Seventeen separate licenses and authorizations in five provinces in Canada which allows them to market natural gas and electricity in the applicable provincial markets, eight of which are non-transferrable and non-assignable, with the remaining nine only assignable with leave of the regulator.
- Five separate import and export orders issued by the Canadian Energy Regulator ("CER"), all of which are non-transferrable and non-assignable.
- Three separate registrations with the Alberta Electricity System Operator (the "AESO") in Alberta and with the Independent Electricity System Operator ("IESO") in Ontario, all of which are either non-transferrable or only assignable with leave.

- Six licenses in Nevada and New Jersey to allow them to market natural gas and/or electricity in the applicable states, all of which are non-transferrable.
- Twenty-five licenses in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia to allow them to market natural gas and/or electricity in the applicable states, all of which may only be transferred with the prior authorization of the applicable regulator in each jurisdiction.
- Eighteen electricity and/or natural gas provider licenses or authorizations in California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New York, where no process for transferring the licenses or authorizations is prescribed in the applicable statutes.
- Five retail electricity provider certifications in Texas which may only be transferred with the authorization of the Public Utility Commission of Texas ("PUCT").
- Three separate export authorizations issued by the Department of Energy ("DOE") in the U.S., all of which may only be transferred with the prior authorization of the DOE's assistant secretary.
- Seven separate market-based authorizations issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") in the U.S. which may only be transferred with the prior authorization of FERC.

39 As further deposed by Mr. Carter, all the provincial, state, market participation, export and import orders, licenses and authorizations held by the Just Energy Entities are either non-transferrable, capable of transfer only with the approval of the applicable regulator, or provide for no clear regulatory process for the transfer of such authorizations.

40 On Mr. Carter's analysis, the RVO would not hamper the existing licenses, authorizations, orders and agreements. As such, he deposes that the RVO structure is the only feasible structure for the Transaction (at para. 59). Any other structure would risk exposing most of the 89 licenses upon which the Just Energy Entities' business is founded. Mr. Carter also deposes (at para. 75) that if a traditional vesting order was granted, the Purchaser would be required to participate in a separate regulatory process in five Canadian provinces, 15 U.S. states and with federal agencies in both Canada and the U.S. to try and obtain transfers of the 89 licenses, authorizations and certifications or the issuance of new licenses, authorizations and certifications. This risk and uncertainty would affect the value of a sale to any other purchaser. For this reason, the benefit of the RVO is clear: it preserves the necessary approvals to conduct business.

41 Additionally, Mr. Carter (at para. 60) deposes that the Just Energy Entities are party to a myriad of hedging transactions. This includes hedge transactions with commodity suppliers to minimize commodity and volume risk, foreign exchange hedge transactions and hedges for renewal energy credits, many of which are fundamental to the Just Energy Entities' ability to effectively operate their business and non-transferrable. Moreover, any U.S. tax attributes resident in the Just Energy Entities would generally be unable to be utilized in the go-forward business where the Transaction structure has a traditional asset sale vesting order.

42 No stakeholder disputes Mr. Carter's evidence. More specifically, no stakeholder disputes the importance of maintaining the 89 current licenses, authorizations and certifications listed above. And, no stakeholder disputes the fact that under a traditional asset sale and approval and vesting order structure, a purchaser would have to apply to the various agencies and regulators for transfers of the aforementioned licenses, etc.

43 I agree with the Just Energy Entities, who are supported by the Monitor. Given the above, the RVO sought is the only way to achieve the preservation of the licenses, authorizations and certifications necessary for the ongoing business operations of the Just Energy Entities. This includes transferring the excluded assets into the two Residual Cos., one in Canada and one in the U.S. as is typically the case in reverse vesting orders.

44 The fact that the Just Energy Entities has been operating for approximately 19 months since the *CCAA* filing is critical. As noted by Penny J. in *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 72, time is not on the side of a debtor company facing financial challenges. I agree.

45 For all the reasons above, I am satisfied that the RVO is appropriate.

46 I now turn to the s. 36(3) factors.

***The Transaction is fair and reasonable***

***The process leading to the proposed sale was reasonable***

47 The Transaction was developed by the Just Energy Entities in consultation with the Monitor and its financial advisor, Mr. Mark Caiger, the Managing Director, Mergers & Acquisitions at BMO Nesbitt Burns Inc., as well as the Purchaser and other secured lenders. As noted, the SISP was approved by this court and thereafter conducted as per the provisions of the SISP Approval Order. As set out in Mr. Carter's affidavit, the SISP was undertaken in accordance with the SISP Approval Order in two stages.

48 The overview of the SISP structure is well described in Mr. Caiger's October 19, 2022 affidavit. Amongst other things, in the first stage, the Just Energy Entities and Mr. Caiger prepared a list of potential bidders, established a data room and published a press release announcing the SISP. Mr. Caiger contacted 41 potential bidders, non-disclosure agreements were negotiated and four NOIs were received.

49 The process then moved into the second stage. The Just Energy Entities prepared a form of transaction agreement that included a form of approval and RVO for completion by bidders as part of receiving submissions of a qualified bid. Three of the four second stage participants eventually indicated that they were not going to proceed. The remaining party did not submit a bid. It advised the Monitor that it saw no value beyond the stalking-horse bid.

50 The Transaction before this court is therefore the only going-concern Transaction available to the Just Energy Entities. I am satisfied in the circumstances that the market was thoroughly canvassed and, as noted, in addition to the SISP, the business of the Just Energy Entities has been marketed broadly and extensively for approximately three years. The U.S. Class Actions previously indicated that they may advance their own restructuring plan for consideration and voting by the Just Energy Entities creditors. During this process, they were allowed full participation but ultimately did not file a NOI or further engage in the SISP process.

***The Monitor has approved the process***

51 As noted, the Monitor approved the process that lead to the Transaction. The Monitor concluded that the RVO is the only efficient means to ensure that all the licenses, authorizations and agreements remain in place. The Monitor is also of the view that any potential prejudice to the individual creditors is far outweighed by the overall benefit of the Transaction. Importantly, the Monitor also believes that the RVO represents the only viable alternative to implement the Transaction for the benefit of the Just Energy Entities' stakeholders.

***The Transaction is more beneficial to the creditors than a sale or disposition in bankruptcy***

52 The Monitor assisted the Just Energy Entities in preparing a liquidation analysis when the Just Energy Entities were pursuing approval of the Plan of Compromise and Arrangement. The analysis has been updated. The Monitor and the Just Energy Entities concluded, on the basis of the updated liquidation analysis, that not only would a liquidation produce no recovery for unsecured creditors, but it would result in a shortfall to secured creditors. This, of course, would be less beneficial than closing the Transaction.

***The creditors were consulted***

53 As noted in this endorsement, extensive consultation was undertaken both with the secured creditors, the U.S. Class Actions, the Omarali Class Action and the Mass Tort Claims. There is no suggestion in the record that any creditors were ignored or overlooked.

*The effect of the Transaction on creditors and other interested parties*

54 I am of the belief that the RVO is the only viable option for a going-concern exit from the *CCAA* proceedings.

55 No other offers have been obtained, not only during the SISP but also in the past three years when the Just Energy Entities' business was being broadly and extensively marketed. No other plan or proposal has been put forward.

56 The Transaction, in my view, provides a number of positive benefits, including:

- preserving the going-concern value of the business for the benefit of stakeholders;
- maintaining the Just Energy Entities' relationships with the majority of its commodity suppliers, vendors, trade creditors and other counter-parties;
- providing for the continued operation of the Just Energy Entities across Canada and the U.S.;
- continuing to supply uninterrupted energy to the Just Energy Entities approximately 950,000 customers;
- preserving the ongoing employment of most of the more than 1,000 employees of the Just Energy Entities;
- maintaining the aforementioned regulatory and licensing relationships across Canada and the U.S.;
- satisfying or assuming in full all secured claims and priority payables;
- preserving U.S. tax attributes and tax pools; and
- permitting the Just Energy Entities to exit these proceedings with a significantly deleveraged balance sheet and a U.S. \$250 million new credit facility bringing an end to the *CCAA* proceedings aside from the limited matters related to the Residual Cos.

57 As discussed, the Transaction does not provide any recovery for unsecured creditors or shareholders. I accept the submissions of the Just Energy Entities, however, that this is not a result of the RVO structure. Rather, this reflects the fact that the Just Energy Entities' value, as tested through the market through the SISP and through previous marketing attempts over three years, is not high enough to generate value for the unsecured creditors and shareholders. This was also the situation in *Black Rock Metals Inc.* (see paras. 109, 120). I agree with the comments in *Black Rock Metals Inc.* wherein Chief Justice Paquette stated that the unsecured creditors and shareholders are therefore not in a worse position with the reverse vesting order than they would have been under a traditional asset sale. Either way, they have no economic interest because the purchase price would not generate any value for the unsecured creditors and shareholders.

58 There is no other viable option being presented to this court. Further, it bears noting that the shareholders' interests amount to claims in equity. As noted in *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 64, shareholders have no economic interest in an insolvent enterprise and therefore they are not entitled to a vote in any plan. The portion of the order requested relating to the cancellation of the existing shares is, therefore, justified in the circumstances.

59 The consideration to be received for the assets is fair and reasonable. The Just Energy Entities' business was extensively marketed both prior to and during the *CCAA*. There have been no offers, except that put forth by the Purchaser. Therefore, I accept that the consideration is fair and reasonable.

60 While it is unfortunate that there is no recovery for unsecured creditors or shareholders, this is a function of the market. In this regard, it is noteworthy that PIMCO holds over U.S. \$250 million in unsecured debt that it will not recover.

61 There is also evidence above that the purchaser is paying more than the Just Energy Entities would be worth in a bankruptcy. Furthermore, the Monitor is satisfied that the consideration is fair in the circumstances.

### ***Other considerations***

62 Based on the foregoing analysis of the s. 36(3) provisions, I am also satisfied that the criteria set out above in *Soundair* have been met: there has been a sufficient effort to obtain the best price; the debtor has not acted imprudently; the interests of the parties have been properly considered; the process has been carried out with efficacy and integrity; and there is no unfairness in the circumstances.

63 The Transaction will provide for a fair and reasonable resolution of the Just Energy Entities' insolvency and obtain the best value for its assets. In sum, employment is preserved for most employees and energy will continued to be provided for approximately 950,000 customers.

### ***Related relief***

64 With respect to the shareholdings in the Just Energy Entities, it is reasonable to cancel the existing shares and issue new common shares to the Purchaser via JEUS. Similar approaches have been used in other reverse vesting order transactions: see *Black Rock Metals Inc.*, at para. 122; *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at paras. 59-64. Since the existing shareholders have no economic interest in the company, there is no entitlement to recovery unless all creditors are paid in full: *Canwest Global Communications Corp. (Re)*, 2010 ONSC 4209, 70 C.B.R. (5th) 1.

65 The *CBCA* provides that the share conditions of a *CBCA* corporation under *CCAA* protection can be changed by articles of reorganization. Section 191(1) of the *CBCA* recognizes that a "reorganization" includes a court order made under any Act of Parliament that affects the rights among the corporation, its shareholders and other creditors (see s. 191(1)(c)). This includes the *CCAA*: see *Canwest*, at para. 34; *Black Rock Metals Inc.*, at para. 122; *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 61 (dealing with the equivalent provision of Ontario's *Business Corporations Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.16. (*OBCA*)).

66 Pursuant to ss. 173, 176(1)(b) and 191(2) of the *CBCA*, courts have accepted that, under a *CCAA* proceeding, they can approve the cancellation of outstanding shares as part of a corporate reorganization that gives effect to a *CCAA* restructuring transaction and that the shareholders are not entitled to vote: see *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at para. 62; *Black Rock Metals Inc.*, at para. 122; *Canwest*, at para. 34.

67 There are also a number of other orders requested in the RVO that I have approved. I will briefly deal with the noteworthy ones below, as follows:

- It is appropriate that the RVO provides that all former employees of the Just Energy Entities be transferred to the Canadian Residual Cos. This will assist these former employees in relation to their entitlements under the *Wage Earner Protection Program Act*, S.C. 2005, c.47, s.1. Similar relief was granted in *Quest University (Re)*, which also involved a reverse vesting order.
- The releases sought are proportional in scope and consistent with releases granted in other similar *CCAA* proceedings. I have analyzed the factors set out by Penny J. in *Harte Gold Corp. (Re)*, at paras. 81-86. As in that case, the releases are rationally connected to the purposes of the restructuring; the releasees contributed to the restructuring; the releases are not overly broad; the releases will enhance the certainty and finality of the Transaction; the releases benefit the Just Energy Entities, its creditors and other stakeholders by reducing the potential for the released parties to seek indemnification; and all creditors on the service list were made aware of the releases sought and the nature and effect of the release.
- The specific relief in the RVO concerning the ongoing litigation with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas Inc. ("ERCOT") is fair and reasonable. The wording was negotiated with ERCOT and preserves the Just Energy Entities' and ERCOT's rights in the ongoing litigation between them as set out para. 11.
- Similarly, the paragraphs of the RVO concerning the Omarali Class Action are fair and reasonable and have been negotiated with the Omarali Class Action solicitors and are not prejudicial to the insurers noted therein.

- All remaining ancillary relief is fair and reasonable. I have simply touched upon the most significant ancillary relief above.

## THE MONITOR'S ORDER

68 As outlined, I granted the Monitor's Order.

69 First, it is necessary that the Monitor carry on in order to implement the steps required with respect to the Residual Cos. in Canada and the U.S. and to implement the provisions of the RVO.

70 Second, the stay extension to January 31, 2023 is also necessary given the steps that must be undertaken.

71 I have reviewed the activities of the Monitor's reports and fees and they are fair and reasonable.

72 Last, I agree that a sealing order should be issued with respect to confidential Exhibit "F" of Mr. Caiger's affidavit. Exhibit "F" is comprised of the four NOIs received by the Just Energy Entities. The NOIs contain confidential, commercially sensitive information regarding the identities of the four participants and their respective corporate, operational and financial information disclosed in support of the requirement of each NOI. Additionally, the NOIs contain confidential and commercially sensitive information regarding the scope and subject matter of each proposed bid. Dissemination of this information at this time, would pose a legitimate risk to the commercial interests of the SISP participants and the Just Energy Entities and their stakeholders should the Transaction fail to close. Thus, the public's interest in maintaining the confidentiality of this commercially sensitive information creates an important commercial interest. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the test set out in *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522, at para. 53, as recast in *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25, 458 D.L.R. (4th) 361, at para. 38, has been met. The sealing order is being made on an interim basis pending further order of the court.

## CLAIMS OF BP ENERGY COMPANY

73 At the request of the Just Energy Entities and the BP Energy Company, I will now turn to agreed-upon terms as between the Just Energy Entities and the BP Energy Company.

74 The Just Energy Entities and BP Energy Company and certain of its affiliates (collectively "BP") and the Just Energy Entities have reached an agreement, which is not opposed by any other stakeholders, that BP, being beneficiaries of the Priority Commodity/ISO Charge in these proceedings, are not opposing this motion on the basis that the New Intercreditor Agreement will be on terms consistent with those set forth in the term sheet included in Exhibit "I" to the Affidavit of Mr. Carter sworn August 4, 2022 (the "ICA Term Sheet").

75 To the extent that the terms of the New Intercreditor Agreement are inconsistent with the ICA Term Sheet or contain material changes to the current Intercreditor Agreement that are not specifically set forth in the ICA Term Sheet, BP is reserving its rights to return to this Court to (a) oppose the future release of the Priority Commodity/ISO Charge contemplated by the Reverse Vesting Order and (b) take such action as it reasonably deems necessary to assure its future extensions and credit and accommodations are terminated.

76 I have reviewed this agreement with counsel and find it to be fair and reasonable in the circumstances of the Transaction.

## THE OPPOSING STAKEHOLDERS

77 As noted, two stakeholders raised objections to the orders sought by the Just Energy Entities. I will deal with each in turn.

### *Ganesh Yadav*

78 Mr. Yadav is a shareholder.

79 Mr. Yadav did not file any affidavit evidence or any other evidence in a proper form. Rather, he filed what he described as a "motion record" in which he attached various documents relating to the Just Energy Entities' financial performances and outlined his objections.

80 Essentially, he submits that the Just Energy Entities have significant liquidity, far in excess of the stalking-horse bid and the calculations performed by the Just Energy Entities and the Monitor. He primarily submits that the Just Energy Entities have significant future equity in its hedges, that energy prices are increasing and that the hedges are placed at very attractive prices. To support this argument, he relies upon the Just Energy Entities' 2022 annual report describing the derivative instruments. Mr. Yadav stresses that there are significant cash flows and that the future value of the Just Energy Entities is very promising.

81 The difficulty with Mr. Yadav's submissions, however, is the fact that there is no evidentiary basis for these submissions other than a loose connection of documents that, in and of themselves, do not support his argument.

82 More importantly, the Just Energy Entities' business was marketed for over three years and was widely canvassed during the SISF. During this entire time period there has not been a single offer in excess of the stalking-horse offer. Further, Mr. Yadav's submissions concerning value run contrary to the Just Energy Entities and the Monitor's valuation of the company and are unsupported by any other stakeholder.

83 Based on the foregoing, there is no cogent evidence in the record to support Mr. Yadav's submissions, nor has he adduced proper evidence to this court by way of affidavit or expert's report.

84 As a shareholder, he has an equity claim for which there is no recovery in the Transaction.

#### ***Mohammad Jaafari***

85 Mr. Jaafari also did not file any affidavit evidence at this motion. He, too, simply provided a number of documents.<sup>2</sup>

86 Mr. Jaafari is a former Director and Representative Director of Just Energy Japan Kabushiki Kaisha ("JEJKK"), a former subsidiary of Just Energy. JEJKK operated the Just Energy Entities' businesses in Japan.

87 Mr. Jaafari was terminated from his position in August 2018, allegedly for cause.

88 In November 2018, he commenced litigation in the Tokyo District Court against Just Energy and JEJKK.

89 In April 2020, the Just Energy Entities sold their Japanese business. Mr. Jaafari submitted a Proof of Claim in the [CCAA](#) proceeding that was disallowed by the Monitor.

90 Mr. Jaafari apparently has continued his litigation in Tokyo. As noted above, although there is no affidavit evidence, the documentation that he has filed with this court includes apparent endorsements by the Tokyo District Court which, if accurate, accept that Mr. Jaafari was an employee of Just Energy.

91 Mr. Jaafari submits that as part of the RVO, I should order that money be paid in trust until the litigation in Tokyo is resolved. As I understand it, he is seeking a payment of approximately CDN \$2 million.

92 The Just Energy Entities submit that Mr. Jaafari's ongoing litigation is in violation of the Initial Order and that he was never an employee of Just Energy. Counsel also advises that they recently heard from their former Japanese counsel (although there is no evidence to support this) that Mr. Jaafari's action against Just Energy was dismissed.

93 In any event, the Just Energy Entities submit that, at best, Mr. Jaafari has an unsecured claim that is incapable of recovery since unsecured creditors are receiving no money as a result of the Transaction. Therefore, even if he is successful, there is no recovery.

94 The Monitor, in support of the Just Energy Entities' submissions, confirms that there is no recovery for Mr. Jaafari even if he is successful. The Monitor further submits that a payment into court or into some sort of trust would constitute a preference, which is inappropriate where other unsecured creditors are not receiving any money as a result of the Transaction.

95 Based on the incomplete record in front of me, there is no meaningful way to determine the status and legitimacy of Mr. Jaafari's claim for wrongful dismissal.

96 In any event, I accept the submissions of the Just Energy Entities, supported by the Monitor, that Mr. Jaafari's claim constitutes an unsecured claim for which there will be no recovery in the circumstances of this case.

97 As the Monitor points out, Just Energy no longer has any assets or operations in Japan and no longer owns JEJJKK. The stay of proceedings does not extend to JEJJKK, which is now owned by another corporation. The Monitor submits that Mr. Jaafari is free to pursue such claims in Japan without the involvement of the Just Energy Entities. To allow Mr. Jaafari's claim to continue against the Just Energy Entities in Japan would require the Just Energy Entities to incur expenses, perhaps make a payment into court or into trust and would deplete the Just Energy Entities' estate to the detriment of the other stakeholders with no foreseeable benefits to Mr. Jaafari.

98 I therefore accept the Monitor's submission that this court order that Mr. Jaafari's claim can be addressed by the Just Energy Entities, in consultation with the Monitor, in accordance with the terms of the Claims Procedure Order. I am specifically not making an order that any money be paid into court or into a trust account.

## CONCLUSION

99 For the reasons above, the RVO and the Monitor's Order should be approved. A reverse vesting order is permitted pursuant to the above provisions of the *CCAA*. Given the nature of the Just Energy Entities' business, the RVO structure is necessary and appropriate to preserve the going-concern value of the business. The Transaction is the only viable transaction that has emerged in the 19 months since the *CCAA* filing. It is currently the only option for a going-concern exit from the *CCAA* proceedings. The Transaction is the product of months of negotiations between the Just Energy Entities' key stakeholders as well as a robust court-approved SISF.

100 Overall, the Transaction provides tangible benefits to the Just Energy Entities and their stakeholders. The fact that the Transaction provides no recovery for the general unsecured creditors or shareholders is a function of the market, not the RVO structure.

## DISPOSITION

101 For the reasons above, I grant both the RVO and the Monitor's Order.

*Application granted.*

## Footnotes

1 *Arrangement relatif à Black Rock Metals Inc.*, 2022 QCCS 2828, at para. 85, leave to appeal to QCCA refused, 2022 QCCA 1073.

2 Mr. Jaafari continued to improperly send documents directly to me, after I signed the two orders, which I have not considered in preparing these reasons.

**Tab 7**

2023 ONSC 4203

Ontario Superior Court of Justice

Ontario Securities Commission v. Bridging Finance Inc.

2023 CarswellOnt 11304, 2023 ONSC 4203

**ONTARIO SECURITIES COMMISSION (Applicant) and BRIDGING FINANCE INC., BRIDGING INCOME FUND LP, BRIDGING MID-MARKET DEBT FUND LP, SB FUND GP INC., BRIDGING FINANCE GP INC., BRIDGING INCOME RSP FUND, BRIDGING MID-MARKET DEBT RSP FUND, BRIDGING PRIVATE DEBT INSTITUTIONAL LP, BRIDGING REAL ESTATE LENDING FUND LP, BRIDGING SMA 1 LP, BRIDGING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND LP, BRIDGING MJ GP INC., BRIDGING INDIGENOUS IMPACT FUND, BRIDGING FERN ALTERNATIVE CREDIT FUND, BRIDGING SMA 2 LP, BRIDGING SMA 2 GP INC., and BRIDGING PRIVATE DEBT INSTITUTIONAL RSP FUND (Respondents)**

Geoffrey B. Morawetz C.J. Ont. S.C.J.

Heard: July 17, 2023

Judgment: July 17, 2023

Docket: CV-21-006611458-00CL

Counsel: John L. Finnigan, Grant Moffat, Adam Driedger, for Receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc.  
David Ullman, for Thomas Canning (Maidstone) Limited, William Thomas, Robert Thomas & 2190330 Ontario Ltd.  
Robert Staley, Mike Shakra — Unitholder Representative Counsel

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Contracts; Corporate and Commercial; Securities

MOTION by receiver to approve transaction, for sealing order and other relief.

***Geoffrey B. Morawetz C.J. Ont. S.C.J.:***

1 The Receiver brings this motion seeking the following orders:

(a) authorizing and directing the Receiver to enter into the AMI SPA and take such steps as are necessary to carry out the AMI Transaction and vesting all of the Receiver's right, title, and interest in the GFAC Shares held by Bridging in and to the Purchaser thereof on closing of the AMI Transaction free and clear of all encumbrances (the "Approval and Vesting Order");

(b) authorizing and directing the Receiver, on behalf of BIF, as the sole equity holder of Bottom Line, to enter into the Bottom Line APA and take such steps as are necessary to carry out the Bottom Line Transaction (the "Bottom Line Order");

(c) sealing from the public record until the closing of the AMI Transaction the unredacted copy of the AMI SPA, to be filed as Confidential Appendix "A" to the Seventeenth Report (the "AMI Sealing Order");

(d) sealing from the public record until closing of the Bottom Line Transaction the unredacted copy of the Bottom Line APA, to be filed as Confidential Appendix "B" to the Seventeenth Report; provided that Schedule 6.3(a) of the Bottom Line APA shall remain sealed until further order of the Court (the "Bottom Line Sealing Order" and together with the AMI Sealing Order, the "Sealing Orders"); and

(e) approving the Sixteenth Report of the Receiver dated April 25, 2023, the Supplement to the Sixteenth Report of the Receiver dated May 4, 2023, and the Seventeenth Report of the Receiver dated July 10, 2023, and the activities, decisions and conduct of the Receiver as set out therein.

2 The capitalized terms not expressly defined herein are defined, and have the meanings set forth, in the Seventeenth Report of the Receiver dated July 10, 2023 (the "Seventeenth Report").

3 There was no opposition to the requested relief. Unitholder Representative Counsel supported the position of the Receiver.

## **FACTS**

4 The facts relevant to this motion are set more fully out at paragraphs 83 to 148 of the Seventeenth Report.

### ***AMI Transaction***

5 AtlantiCann Medical Inc. ("AMI") is a federally licensed cannabis producer based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. AMI is 100% owned by Growforce AC Holdings Inc. ("GFAC"), a privately held corporation. GFAC is a holding company that was incorporated for the sole purpose of holding the shares of AMI. The issued and outstanding shares of GFAC (collectively, the "GFAC Shares") are held as follows:

(a) 10.05% by Halef Group Holdings Limited;

(b) 0.5% by Tim Nolan; and

(c) 89.45% collectively by or on behalf of BIF, MMF, BIIF, and SMA 2 (collectively, the "Applicable Bridging Funds").

6 In addition to holding 89.45% of the shares of GFAC, Bridging is a secured creditor of AMI and GFAC. AMI and GFAC have each guaranteed the indebtedness of a Borrower to Bridging and Bridging continues to hold security over all of the assets of AMI and GFAC in respect of such guarantees.

7 There have been four unsuccessful separate marketing efforts conducted in respect of AMI and GFAC (and/or the interest of Bridging and MJar in AMI and GFAC).

8 In early 2023, GFAC and the Receiver received various inquiries regarding the opportunity to purchase the AMI business. 15103154 Canada Inc. (the "AMI Purchaser") submitted a LOI to AMI on March 21, 2023 to purchase 100% of the shares of AMI from GFAC. After preliminary negotiations with AMI and GFAC, the Purchaser submitted a revised LOI on April 27, 2023 and, following further negotiations, it was recommended by the special committee of the board of directors to the shareholders of GFAC and accepted following consultation with the Receiver.

9 On June 23, 2023, the Receiver (on behalf of Bridging), the Halef Group, and Tim Nolan and the Purchaser entered into a share purchase agreement (the "SPA") for the purchase of 100% of the GFAC Shares (the "AMI Transaction").

10 The SPA has been redacted to preserve the confidentiality of the Purchase Price payable by the Purchaser and other applicable monetary amounts or percentages that reveal the economic terms of the SPA. The Receiver seeks a sealing order in respect of the unredacted SPA, which is time limited to the period up to and including the Closing Date (after which it is contemplated that the unredacted SPA will no longer be sealed and will form part of the public record).

11 The SPA sets out the terms and conditions pursuant to which the Purchaser will acquire 100% of the GFAC Shares from the Vendors.

12 The Receiver is satisfied, in its business judgment, that the AMI Transaction represents the highest and best value in the circumstances for the GFAC Shares and is superior to any alternatives, including a liquidation of the assets of AMI.

The Receiver consulted with Unitholder Representative Counsel on the AMI Transaction and potential alternatives. Unitholder Representative Counsel supports the AMI Transaction.

### ***Bottom Line Transaction***

13 Pittsburg Bottom Line, LLC ("Bottom Line") is a Borrower that provides railroad infrastructure services in the Southwestern and Midwestern United States. Bottom Line is an affiliate of Allied, another Bridging Borrower. BIF is the senior secured creditor and sole equity holder of each of Allied and Bottom Line. There have been two separate marketing efforts conducted by the Receiver in respect of Bottom Line. The first effort proved to be unsuccessful.

14 The deadline for submission of LOIs was February 28, 2023. The Receiver received multiple offers by the bid deadline. The Receiver ultimately identified Martinus North America, Inc. or an affiliate thereof (the "Martinus") as the successful bidder. Bottom Line and Martinus executed a non-binding LOI on March 13, 2023 (the "Martinus LOI"), which contemplated the sale by Bottom Line of substantially all of its assets to Martinus (or an affiliate) subject to, among other things, completion of due diligence and negotiation of definitive documentation.

15 The Receiver is satisfied that the Bottom Line APA represents the highest and best offer for the Bottom Line assets and business at this time.

16 The assets being sold pursuant to the Bottom Line APA are the property of Bottom Line and not Bridging (and therefore do not constitute "Property" over which the Receiver has been appointed). In that regard, there are two key implications that impact the nature of the relief being sought by the Receiver:

- (a) first, the Court does not have jurisdiction to vest title to the Bottom Line assets in and to Martinus; and
- (b) second, the Appointment Orders do not require the Receiver to obtain Court approval prior to a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bridging selling its own assets, which do not constitute Property. Paragraph 2(k) of the Appointment Orders only requires the Receiver to obtain Court approval prior to selling Property for an amount greater than \$250,000.

17 However, given that the Bottom Line assets are directly tied to the value of the equity interest in Bottom Line held by BIF and the loans made by BIF to Bottom Line (all of which constitute Property), the Receiver is seeking the Court approval to enter into and carry out the terms of the Bottom Line APA. The Receiver consulted with Unitholder Representative Counsel on the Bottom Line Transaction. Unitholder Representative Counsel supports the Bottom Line Transaction.

### **ISSUES**

18 The issues on this motion are whether the Court should:

- (a) approve the AMI Transaction and grant the proposed Approval and Vesting Order;
- (b) authorize and direct the Receiver, on behalf of BIF, as the sole equity holder of Bottom Line, to enter into the Bottom Line APA and carry out the Bottom Line Transaction; and
- (c) grant the proposed Sealing Orders in respect of Confidential Appendices "A" and "B" to the Seventeenth Report.

### ***Approval and Vesting Order for AMI Transaction***

19 It is well-established that where a Court is asked to approve a transaction and grant a sale approval and vesting order in the context of a receivership, the Court should consider the following principles delineated by the Court of Appeal for Ontario in *Royal Bank of Canada v. Soundair Corp.* 1991 CanLII 2727ONCA (collectively, the "Soundair Principles"):

- (a) whether the party made a sufficient effort to obtain the best price and to not act improvidently;
- (b) the interests of all parties;

(c) the efficacy and integrity of the process by which the party obtained offers; and

(d) whether the working out of the process was unfair.

20 Absent clear evidence that a proposed sale is improvident or that there was unfairness in the process, a Court is to grant deference to the recommendation of the Receiver to sell a respondent's assets. Only in "exceptional circumstances" will a Court intervene and proceed contrary to the recommendation of its officer, the Receiver.

21 Having reviewed the record and hearing submissions, I am satisfied that the Soundair Principles have been adhered to and that the Approval and Vesting Order should be granted for the following reasons:

(a) In my view, sufficient effort was made to obtain the best price. As noted above, four separate marketing processes were conducted. The consideration that will be received by Bridging under the AMI Transaction is superior to any other offers received as well as the liquidation value of AMI's assets. The Receiver is of the view that conducting a fresh marketing process for AMI would not be a productive use of Bridging's resources. Further, closing the AMI Transaction eliminates the risk that Bridging's investment in AMI, as well as its security position as a secured creditor of AMI, may deteriorate in value.

(b) Further, the interests of all parties have been served. The AMI Transaction represents the best possible outcome in the circumstances for all parties with an economic interest in AMI. The AMI Transaction also provides for the continuation of the AMI business, thus preserving jobs for a number of employees in Nova Scotia as well as value for customers, suppliers, and other parties with whom AMI transacts.

(c) In my view, the sale processes were run with integrity and there was no unfairness. The Receiver is satisfied, in its business judgment, that each sale process described above in respect of GFAC and AMI was conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

#### ***Approval Regarding Bottom Line Transaction***

22 The Receiver seeks an order authorizing and directing the Receiver, on behalf of BIF, as the sole equity holder of Bottom Line, to enter into the Bottom Line APA and carry out the Bottom Line Transaction. On that basis, the Receiver has considered the application of the Soundair Principles to the Bottom Line Transaction.

23 I am satisfied that the Soundair Principles have been adhered to and therefore the Bottom Line Order should be granted for the following reasons:

(a) In my view, sufficient effort was made to obtain the best price. The Receiver is satisfied, in its business judgment, that the Bottom Line Transaction represents the highest and best value for the assets of Bottom Line in the circumstances. It will also eliminate the ongoing requirement of Bridging to fund the Bottom Line business. The consideration that will be received by Bridging under the Bottom Line Transaction is superior to the liquidation value of Bottom Line's assets. The Receiver is of the view that conducting a fresh marketing process for Bottom Line would not be a productive use of Bridging's resources.

(b) Further, the interests of all parties have been served. The Bottom Line Transaction maximizes value for all parties with an economic interest in Bottom Line.

(c) In my view, the sale processes were run with integrity and there was no unfairness. The Receiver is satisfied, in its business judgment, that each sale process described above in respect of Bottom Line was conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

(d) There are no exceptional circumstances that would lead this Court to proceed contrary to the recommendation of the Receiver. The Receiver consulted with Representative Counsel on the Bottom Line Transaction and potential alternatives. Representative Counsel supports the Bottom Line Transaction.

### *Sealing Orders*

24 The Receiver seeks a sealing order in respect of Confidential Appendix "A" and Confidential Appendix "B" to the Seventeenth Report.

25 Confidential Appendix "A" contains the unredacted AMI SPA. The redacted version of the AMI SPA redacted the purchase price and other applicable monetary amounts or percentages that reveal the economic terms of the AMI Transaction (the "AMI Economic Terms"). The Receiver only seeks to seal the AMI Economic Terms until the closing of the AMI Transaction.

26 Confidential Appendix "B" contains the unredacted Bottom Line APA. The redacted version of the Bottom Line APA redacted the monetary components of the purchase price (the "Bottom Line Economic Terms"), the list of customer and/or supplier contracts to be assumed by Martinus contained at Schedule 1.5 thereto (the "Third Party Contracts"), and the names and salaries of the employees of Bottom Line to be assumed by Martinus contained at Schedule 6.3(a) thereto (the "Employee Information"). The Receiver only seeks to seal the Bottom Line Economic Terms and the Third Party Contracts until the closing of the Bottom Line Transaction. The Receiver seeks to seal the Employee Information until further order of the Court.

27 The applicable test for granting a sealing order, as set out by the Supreme Court in *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25 at para. 28, is that the person asking a 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.

28 The Receiver submits that the request for a sealing order in respect of the AMI Economic Terms, the Bottom Line Economic Terms, the Third Party Contracts, and the Employee Information satisfies the *Sherman Estate* test for the reasons set out below.

29 The key economic terms of a transaction are routinely sealed until closing on the basis that there is a broader public interest in maintaining the confidentiality of such information. See, for example, *U.S. Steel Canada Inc. et al. v. The United Steel Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union et al* 2023 ONSC 2579 at para 54; and *American General Life Insurance Company et al. v. Victoria Avenue North Holdings Inc. et al.*, 2023 ONSC 3322 at para 30.

30 In the Receiver's view, disclosure of the AMI Economic Terms and the Bottom Line Economic Terms (together, the "Economic Terms") would prejudice recoveries for Bridging's stakeholders in the event that the applicable transactions do not close because the disclosure of such terms would effectively create a ceiling on the amount that a new purchaser would be prepared to pay for the applicable assets or shares.

31 The Receiver submits that there are no alternatives to sealing the Economic Terms. In terms of proportionality, given that the Sealing Orders in respect of the Economic Terms are time limited to the pre-closing period, the Receiver submits that the limitation on the open court principle is both minimal and justified. The broader public interest in maintaining the confidentiality of economic terms pre-closing and maximizing recoveries for the Bridging stakeholders outweighs the minimal limitation on the open court principle in these circumstances.

32 The Third Party Contracts are the contracts between Bottom Line and third parties that will be assumed by Martinus on closing. The redacted Schedule 1.5 in the Bottom Line APA, which contains the Third Party Contracts, sets out the name of each contract and the parties thereto. None of the parties involved in the Third Party Contracts are parties to this proceeding.

33 Disclosing the Third Party Contracts could facilitate efforts by Bottom Line's competitors to market goods or services to those customers or suppliers, to the detriment of Bottom Line. Similar to the Economic Terms, disclosure of the Third Party Contracts could therefore prejudice recoveries for Bridging's stakeholders in the event that the Bottom Line Transaction does not close.

34 Counsel to the Receiver submits that there are no alternatives to sealing the Third Party Contracts. In terms of proportionality, similar to the Economic Terms, given that the Sealing Order in respect of the Third Party Contracts is time limited to the pre-closing period, the Receiver submits that the limitation on the open court principle is minimal in these circumstances and is outweighed by the broader public interest in maximizing recoveries for the Bridging stakeholders.

35 The Employee Information contains the specific names and salaries (or hourly wages) of each employee of Bottom Line that is to be assumed by Martinus on closing. None of the applicable employees are parties to this proceeding.

36 Employee names and salaries have been sealed in similar circumstances by the Court in this proceeding *Ontario Securities Commission v. Bridging Finance Inc* 2021 ONSC 4347 [Bridging] at paras 25-27, as well as other cases that were also decided after the Supreme Court released its decision in *Sherman Estate* . (See: *Just Energy Group Inc. et al* 2021 ONSC 7630 [Just Energy ] at paras 26-29; and *PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. v. MJardin Group, Inc* 2022 ONSC 3603 [MJardin] at paras 13-21.) The overarching principle from these cases is that there is an important public interest in protecting sensitive and personal compensation information of non-party employees that justifies a sealing order in certain circumstances. See for example: *Canwest Global Communications Corp., Re*, [2009] OJ No 4286 (QL) at para 52; *Bridging*; *Just Energy* ; and *MJardin*.

37 The Receiver submits that the foregoing principles should apply equally to the Employee Information in this case. The Receiver is of the view that the named employees have a reasonable expectation that their names and salaries (or hourly wages for the non-salaried employees) will be kept private, particularly in a proceeding that is entirely unrelated to their employment. Disclosure of the Employee Information may offend applicable privacy legislation or may otherwise give rise to claims against Bottom Line or Bridging by the employees.

38 The Receiver is of the view that no party will be prejudiced in sealing the Employee Information and the benefits of granting the sealing order outweigh any limited impact on the open court principle. There are no reasonable alternatives in the circumstances.

39 In the other cases referenced herein in which similar employee information was sealed, the applicable sealing order was to remain in effect pending further order of the Court. The Receiver similarly requests that the Employee Information remain sealed in this case until further order of the Court.

40 Having reviewed the submissions of the Receiver, and having considered the test set out in *Sherman Estate* , I am satisfied that, in these circumstances, it is appropriate to grant the sealing orders requested by the Receiver.

### ***Approval of Reports and Activities***

41 Finally, the Receiver requests approval of its Sixteenth Report, the Supplement to the Sixteenth Report and the Seventeenth Report.

42 The Receiver reports that no adverse comments have been received in respect of the reports.

43 I am satisfied that these Reports should be approved.

**DISPOSITION**

44 The motion is granted and the Orders reflecting the foregoing have been signed.

*Motion granted.*

---

**End of Document**

Copyright © Thomson Reuters Canada Limited or its licensors (excluding individual court documents). All rights reserved.

**Tab 8**

~~THE QUEEN'S KING'S BENCH~~

Winnipeg Centre  
WINNIPEG CENTRE

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

~~THE HONOURABLE  
JUSTICE IN THE  
MATTER OF;~~

~~WEEKDAY, THE #  
DAY OF MONTH, 20YR~~  
THE APPOINTMENT OF A  
RECEIVER PURSUANT TO SECTION 243 OF THE  
BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT, R.S.C. 1985,  
C. B-3 AS AMENDED, AND SECTION 55 OF THE  
COURT OF KING'S BENCH ACT, C.C.S.M. C. C280.

- Deleted Cells
- Formatted Table
- Formatted: Justified, Indent: Left: -0.07", Space Before: 0 pt
- Formatted: Justified, Indent: Left: -0.07", Space Before: 0 pt

~~BETWEEN:~~

**PLAINTIFF**

Plaintiff<sup>†</sup>

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Not Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

BETWEEN:

BANK OF MONTREAL,

Applicant.

~~- and -~~

GENESUS INC., CAN-AM GENETICS INC., and DEFENDANT

Defendant

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

GENESUS GENETICS INC.,

Respondents.

SALE APPROVAL AND VESTING ORDER  
(Oakville Property)

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

<sup>†</sup>-A receivership or other proceeding that might lead to an Approval and Vesting Order may be commenced either by action or by application. This model Order is drafted on the basis that the receivership proceeding was commenced by way of an action.

**MLT AIKINS LLP**  
Barristers and Solicitors  
30th Floor – 360 Main Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3G 4G1

**J.J. BURNELL / ANJALI SANDHU**  
Phone: (204) 957-4663 / (204) 957-4760  
Fax: (204) 957-0840

File No. 0128056.00004

**THE KING'S BENCH**  
**WINNIPEG CENTRE**

THE HONOURABLE  
MR. JUSTICE CHARTIER

)  
)  
)

THURSDAY, THE 11<sup>TH</sup>  
DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2025

IN THE MATTER OF:      THE APPOINTMENT OF A RECEIVER PURSUANT TO  
SECTION 243 OF THE BANKRUPTCY AND  
INSOLVENCY ACT, R.S.C. 1985, C. B-3 AS AMENDED,  
AND SECTION 55 OF THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH  
ACT, C.C.S.M. C. C280

BETWEEN:

**BANK OF MONTREAL**

- and -

**GENESUS INC., CAN-AM GENETICS INC.**  
**and GENESUS GENETICS INC.,**

**SALE APPROVAL AND VESTING ORDER**

Applicant.

Respondents.

THIS MOTION, made by ~~[RECEIVER'S NAME]~~ BDO Canada Limited, in its capacity  
as the Court-appointed receiver and manager (the "Receiver") of all of the ~~undertaking,~~  
~~property, and assets of [DEBTOR] (, undertakings, and properties (collectively, the~~

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt

~~Debtor~~Property”) of 10014640 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Genesis Inc.) (“Genesis”), 3940480 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Can-Am Genetics Inc.) (“Can-Am”), and Genesis Genetics Inc. (“GGI”, and together with Genesis and Can-Am, the “Companies”) for an order, *inter alia*, approving the sale transaction (the “Oakville Transaction”) contemplated by an agreement of purchase and sale (the “Oakville Sale Agreement”) between the Receiver and ~~[NAME OF PURCHASER]~~ (the “Purchaser”) 10243437 Manitoba Ltd. (“437 MB Ltd.”) dated ~~[DATE]~~September 5, 2025, and appended to the Confidential Supplement to the Seventh Report of the Receiver dated ~~[DATE]~~(the “September 8, 2025 as Appendix “B” and in a redacted form to the Seventh Report”), of the Receiver dated September 8, 2025 (the “Seventh Report”) as Appendix “A”, and vesting in 437 MB Ltd. the ~~Purchaser~~ ~~the Debtor’s~~ Companies’ right, title and interest in and to the assets described in the Oakville Sale Agreement (the “Oakville Purchased Assets.”) was heard this day at \_\_\_\_\_, the Law Courts Building, 408 York Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Not Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

~~ON READING the Report~~ First Report of the Receiver dated July 2, 2024, the Second Report of the Receiver dated July 24, 2024, the Third Report of the Receiver dated October 2, 2024, the Fourth Report of the Receiver dated January 22, 2025, the Fifth Report of the Receiver dated June 4, 2025, the Sixth Report of the Receiver dated September 5, 2025, the Seventh Report and each of the respective confidential supplements thereto and on hearing the submissions of counsel for the Receiver, counsel for the Bank of Montreal, counsel for Farm Credit Canada, [NAMES OF OTHER PARTIES APPEARING], no one appearing for any other person on the ~~service list~~ Service List, although properly served as appears from the affidavit of ~~[NAME]~~ Brittany Chapdelaine, sworn [DATE], filed:<sup>2</sup>

Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Not Bold  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt

1. THIS COURT ORDERS that the time for service of the Notice of Motion is hereby abridged and validated so that this Motion is properly returnable today and hereby dispenses of further service thereof.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Highlight  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Highlight  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Heading 3

4.2. THIS COURT ORDERS AND DECLARES that the Oakville Transaction is hereby approved,<sup>3</sup> and the execution of the Oakville Sale Agreement by the Receiver<sup>4</sup> is hereby authorized and approved, with such minor amendments as the Receiver may deem necessary. The Receiver is hereby authorized and directed to take such additional steps and execute such additional documents as may be necessary or desirable for the completion of the Oakville Transaction and for the conveyance of the Oakville Purchased Assets to the Purchaser 437 MB Ltd.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt

2.3. THIS COURT ORDERS AND DECLARES that upon the delivery of a Receiver's certificate to the Purchaser 437 MB Ltd., substantially in the form attached as **Schedule "A"**, hereto (the "**Receiver's Certificate**"), all of the ~~Debtor's~~ Receiver's and the

Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold  
Formatted: Font: 12 pt

<sup>2</sup>This model order assumes that the time for service does not need to be abridged. The motion seeking a vesting order should be served on all persons having an economic interest in the Purchased Assets, unless circumstances warrant a different approach. Counsel should consider attaching the affidavit of service to this Order.

<sup>3</sup>In some cases, notably where this Order may be relied upon for proceedings in the United States, a finding that the Transaction is commercially reasonable and in the best interests of the Debtor and its stakeholders may be necessary. Evidence should be filed to support such a finding, which finding may then be included in the Court's endorsement.

<sup>4</sup>In some cases, the Debtor will be the vendor under the Sale Agreement, or otherwise actively involved in the Transaction. In those cases, care should be taken to ensure that this Order authorizes either or both of the Debtor and the Receiver to execute and deliver documents, and take other steps.

Companies, right, title and interest in and to the Oakville Purchased Assets described in the Oakville Sale Agreement [and listed on ~~Schedule B~~ **Schedule "B"** hereto]<sup>5</sup>, shall vest absolutely in ~~the Purchaser, 437 MB Ltd.~~, free and clear of and from any and all security interests (whether contractual, statutory, or otherwise), hypothecs, mortgages, trusts or deemed trusts (whether contractual, statutory, or otherwise), liens, executions, levies, charges, or other financial or monetary claims, whether or not they have attached or been perfected, registered or filed and whether secured, unsecured or otherwise (collectively, the **"Claims"**)<sup>6</sup>, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing: (i) any encumbrances or charges created by the Order of the Honourable Justice [NAME] dated [DATE]; Chartier pronounced June 11, 2024; (ii) all charges, security interests or claims evidenced by registrations pursuant to *The Personal Property Security Act* (Manitoba) or any other personal property registry system; and (iii) those Claims listed on **Schedule "C"** hereto (all of which are collectively referred to as the **"Encumbrances"**, which term shall not include the permitted encumbrances, easements and restrictive covenants listed on **Schedule "D"** hereto) and, for greater certainty, this Court orders that all of the Encumbrances affecting or relating to the Oakville Purchased Assets are hereby expunged and discharged as against the Oakville Purchased Assets.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt  
 Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

**3.4.** THIS COURT ORDERS that upon the registration in the \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>Portage la Prairie Land Titles Office (~~\_\_\_\_\_ LTO~~ ("**PLTO**") of a Transmission in the form prescribed by *The Real Property Act* (Manitoba) duly executed by ~~the Purchaser, 437 MB Ltd.~~ and accompanied by a certified true copy of this Order, title to the real property identified in Schedule "B" hereto (the **"Real Property"**) shall vest in ~~the Purchaser~~ 437 MB Ltd. subject to all instruments registered on title at that time, other than those described in **Schedule "C"** and the District Registrar is hereby directed to issue title accordingly.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

<sup>5</sup> To allow this Order to be free standing (and not require reference to the Court record and/or the Sale Agreement), it may be preferable that the Purchased Assets be specifically described in a Schedule.

<sup>6</sup> The "Claims" being vested out may, in some cases, include ownership claims, where ownership is disputed and the dispute is brought to the attention of the Court. Such ownership claims would, in that case, still continue as against the net proceeds from the sale of the claimed asset. Similarly, other rights, titles or interests could also be vested out, if the Court is advised what rights are being affected, and the appropriate persons are served. It is the Subcommittee's view that a non-specific vesting out of "rights, titles and interests" is vague and therefore undesirable.

<sup>7</sup> Insert applicable Land Titles Office.

<sup>8</sup> Elect the language appropriate to the land registry system.

4.5. THIS COURT ORDERS that this Order shall be accepted by the District Registrar notwithstanding that the appeal period in respect of this Order has not elapsed, which appeal period is expressly waived.<sup>9</sup>

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

5.6. THIS COURT ORDERS that for the purposes of determining the nature and priority of Claims, the net proceeds<sup>10</sup> from the sale of the Oakville Purchased Assets shall stand in the place and stead of the Oakville Purchased Assets, and that from and after the delivery of the Receiver's Certificate all Claims and Encumbrances shall attach to the net proceeds from the sale of the Oakville Purchased Assets with the same priority as they had with respect to the Oakville Purchased Assets immediately prior to the sale,<sup>11</sup> as if the Oakville Purchased Assets had not been sold and remained in the possession or control of the person having that possession or control immediately prior to the sale.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

6.7. THIS COURT ORDERS AND DIRECTS the Receiver to file with the Court a copy of the Receiver's Certificate, forthwith after delivery thereof.

~~7. THIS COURT ORDERS that, pursuant to clause 7(3)(c) of the Canada Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, the Receiver is authorized and permitted to disclose and transfer to the Purchaser all human resources and payroll information in the Company's records pertaining to the Debtor's past and current employees, including personal information of those employees listed on Schedule "•" to the Sale Agreement. The Purchaser shall maintain and protect the privacy of such information and shall be entitled to use the personal information provided to it in a manner which is in all material respects identical to the prior use of such information by the Debtor.~~

<sup>9</sup> On October 20, 2004 the Registrar General of the Property Registry of Manitoba issued a Directive which changed its previous practice and indicated that it would no longer accept a Vesting Order for registration until the applicable appeal period had expired subject to a number of exceptions including the Court ordering the Vesting Order to be immediately filed. Counsel should consider whether it is appropriate in the circumstances to seek inclusion of a paragraph along these lines.

<sup>10</sup> The Report should identify the disposition costs and any other costs which should be paid from the gross sale proceeds, to arrive at "net proceeds".

<sup>11</sup> This provision crystallizes the date as of which the Claims will be determined. If a sale occurs early in the insolvency process, or potentially secured claimants may not have had the time or the ability to register or perfect proper claims prior to the sale, this provision may not be appropriate, and should be amended to remove this crystallization concept.

8. THIS COURT ORDERS that, notwithstanding:

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

- (a) the pendency of these proceedings;
- (b) any applications for a bankruptcy order now or hereafter issued pursuant to the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* (Canada) in respect of the ~~Debtor~~Companies, or any of them, and any bankruptcy order issued pursuant to any such applications; and
- (c) any assignment in bankruptcy made in respect of the ~~Debtor~~Companies, or any of them;

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

the vesting of the ~~Oakville~~ Purchased Assets in ~~the Purchaser~~ 437 MB Ltd, pursuant to this Order shall be binding on any trustee in bankruptcy that may be appointed in respect of the ~~Debtor~~Companies', or any of them, and shall not be void or voidable by creditors of the ~~Debtor~~Companies, nor shall it constitute nor be deemed to be a fraudulent preference, assignment, fraudulent conveyance, transfer at undervalue, or other reviewable transaction under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* (Canada) or any other applicable federal or provincial legislation, nor shall it constitute oppressive or unfairly prejudicial conduct or action other than in good faith pursuant to any applicable federal or provincial legislation.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

9. THIS COURT HEREBY REQUESTS the aid and recognition of any court, tribunal, regulatory or administrative body having jurisdiction in Canada or in the United States to give effect to this Order and to assist the Receiver and its agents in carrying out the terms of this Order. All courts, tribunals, regulatory and administrative bodies are hereby respectfully requested to make such orders and to provide such assistance to the Receiver, as an officer of this Court, as may be necessary or desirable to give effect to this Order or to assist the Receiver and its agents in carrying out the terms of this Order.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chartier, J.

I, ANJALI SANDHU, OF THE FIRM OF MLT AIKINS LLP HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I  
HAVE RECEIVED THE CONSENTS AS TO FORM OF THE FOLLOWING PARTIES:



AS DIRECTED BY THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE CHARTIER

Schedule A – Form of Receiver’s Certificate

Court, File No. CI 24-01-45056

THE QUEEN’S KING’S BENCH

WINNIPEG CENTRE

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt

BETWEEN:

PLAINTIFF

Plaintiff

BETWEEN:

BANK OF MONTREAL,

- and -

DEFENDANT

Applicant,

Defendant

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

GENESUS INC., CAN-AM GENETICS INC. and  
GENESUS GENETICS INC.,

Respondents.

RECEIVER’S CERTIFICATE

- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt

RECITALS

A. Pursuant to an Order of the Honourable ~~[NAME OF JUDGE]~~ Mr. Justice Chartier of the Manitoba Court of ~~Queen’s King’s~~ Bench (the “**Court**”) dated ~~[DATE OF ORDER]~~, ~~[NAME OF RECEIVER]~~ pronounced June 11, 2024, BDO Canada Ltd. was appointed as the receiver (the “**Receiver**”) of the undertaking, property and assets of ~~[DEBTOR]~~ (10014640 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Genesus Inc.) (“Genesus”), 3940480 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Can-Am Genetics Inc.) (“Can-Am”), and Genesus Genetics Inc. (“GGI”, and together with Genesus and Can-Am, the “Debtor Companies”)).



4. This Certificate was delivered by the Receiver at \_\_\_\_\_ [TIME] on \_\_\_\_\_ [DATE].

~~[NAME OF RECEIVER]~~, BDO CANADA LIMITED,  
in its capacity as Receiver of the undertaking, property and assets of ~~[DEBTOR]~~, 1001464 0 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Genesus Inc.), 3940480 Manitoba Inc. (formerly Can-Am Genetics Inc.), and Genesus Genetics Inc., and not in its personal capacity

Per:

Name:

Title:

- Deleted Cells
- Deleted Cells
- Formatted: Space After: 0 pt
- Formatted Table
- Formatted: Default Paragraph Font, Font: 12 pt, Not Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, Bold
- Formatted: Default Paragraph Font, Font: 12 pt, Not Bold
- Formatted: Default Paragraph Font, Font: 12 pt, Not Bold
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Deleted Cells
- Deleted Cells
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States), Condensed by 0.2 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States)
- Formatted: Left, Space Before: 6.8 pt, No widow/orphan control, Don't adjust space between Latin and Asian text, Don't adjust space between Asian text and numbers
- Deleted Cells
- Deleted Cells
- Deleted Cells
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States), Condensed by 0.2 pt
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States)
- Formatted: Default Paragraph Font, Font: 12 pt, English (United States)
- Formatted: Left, No widow/orphan control, Don't adjust space between Latin and Asian text, Don't adjust space between Asian text and numbers
- Formatted ...
- Formatted ...
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States)
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt, English (United States)
- Formatted ...
- Formatted ...
- Formatted: Font: 12 pt
- Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

**Schedule B – Purchased Assets**

**Schedule B – The Real Property**

**Registered Owner:** 10014640 Manitoba Inc.

**Title No.:** 3332496/3

**Legal Description:**

Parcel 1: Lot 4 and the NLY 50 Feet Perp of Lot 5 Block 1  
Plan 226 PLTO in NW 1/4 18-11-4 WPM;

and

Parcel 2: Lots 3 and 5 Block 1 Plan 226 PLTO, EXC Firstly:  
out of Lot 5 the NLY 50 feet Perp  
and Secondly: All mines and Minerals vested in the Crown (Manitoba) by the *Real Property Act* in NW  
1/4 18-11-4 WPM

**Schedule C – Claims to be deleted and expunged from title to Real Property**

- [Mortgage No. 1230862/3 to Bank of Montreal in the amount of \\$8,000,000.00](#)
- [Certificate of Judgment No. 1232076/3](#)
- [Certificate of Judgment No. 1232212/3](#)
- [Notice of Appt. Of A Receiver/Mgr No. 1238082/3](#)
- [Caveat No. 1238118/3](#)

**Schedule D – Permitted Encumbrances, Easements and Restrictive Covenants  
related to the Real Property**

**(unaffected by the Vesting Order)**

- None.

Formatted: Font: 12 pt