

**THE KING'S BENCH  
WINNIPEG CENTRE**

IN THE MATTER OF THE *COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT*, RSC 1985, c  
C-36, as amended

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PLAN OF COMPROMISE OR ARRANGEMENT OF MANITOBA  
CLINIC MEDICAL CORPORATION AND THE MANITOBA CLINIC HOLDING CO. LTD.

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**BRIEF OF LAW OF THE MONITOR  
ALVAREZ & MARSAL CANADA INC.  
DATED APRIL 18, 2023  
DATE OF HEARING : FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2023 AT 9:00A.M.  
KROFT, J.**

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## **I. DOCUMENTS AND AUTHORITIES RELIED ON**

### **Documents to be relied on:**

1. the Amended and Restated Initial Order signed December 2, 2022 (the “**ARIO**”);
2. the Affidavit of Keith McConnell sworn November 28, 2022 (the “**McConnell Affidavit**”);
3. the Pre-Filing Report of Alvarez & Marsal Canada Inc. dated November 29, 2022 (the “**Pre-Filing Report**”);
4. the First Report of the Monitor dated January 20, 2023 (the “**First Report**”);
5. Notice of Motion dated April 17, 2023;
6. the Second Report of the Monitor dated April 18, 2023 (the “**Second Report**”);
7. the Confidential Supplement to the Second Report (the “**Second Confidential Supplement**”);
8. the draft Sale Investment Solicitation Process (“**SISP**”) appended to the draft order filed with this application (the “**SISP Approval Order**”);
9. Affidavit of Service of Alecia Iwanchuk sworn April 17, 2023;
10. Affidavit of Service of Craig Frith sworn April 18, 2023; and
11. such further and other documentation as counsel may advise and this Honourable Court may permit.

**Cases, statutory provisions and authorities to be relied on:**

**TABS**

- A. *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 (the “*CCAA*”), s. 11 and 36;
- B. *CCM Master Qualified Fund Ltd. v blutip Power Technologies Ltd.*, 2012 ONSC 1750;
- C. *Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. Re.*, 2016 BCSC 107;
- D. *Sherman Estate v Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25;
- E. *Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.*, 2021 ONSC 4347; and
- F. *Re Polar Window of Canada Ltd. et al.*, MBKB File No. CI 23-01-39360 (April 5, 2023).

**II. INTRODUCTION**

1. Over the past four months, the Monitor<sup>1</sup> has worked with Management to restructure Medco's operations. This work was completed with a view to ensuring that Medco could emerge from the *CCAA* Proceedings as a viable entity, and ultimately implement the SISP for the Companies in the event that it was determined that this objective could be achieved. The restructuring work to date has focused on instituting a number of cost-saving initiatives, creating a new Overhead Model, and developing a retention strategy for the Remaining Physicians (collectively, the “**Initial Restructuring Activities**”).

**Second Report at paras 14-21, 28-29 and 71-74**

2. Having successfully completed the Initial Restructuring Activities, the Monitor, in consultation with the Companies and the Lender, is of the view that it is now appropriate and in the best interests of the Companies and their stakeholders to implement a SISP to solicit interest in an investment in the Companies or a sale of some or all of their assets, the outcome of which will determine the next steps in this *CCAA* Proceeding.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise defined, capitalized terms will have the meanings given to them in the Pre-Filing Report, the First Report, the Second Report, the Monitor's notice of motion, and the SISP Approval Order.

3. Against this backdrop, this Brief of Law will discuss the applicable law and evidence with respect to the form of SISP Approval Order sought by the Monitor. As discussed in more detail below:

- (a) paragraph 21(h) of the ARIO authorizes and empowers the Monitor to develop and execute a SISP;
- (b) the SISP presented for approval on this application was developed with the input of the Companies and the Lender, each of whom support its approval;
- (c) the SISP clearly identifies the
  - (i) procedural requirements with which bidders must comply to successfully conclude a transaction;
  - (ii) deadlines for receiving bids;
  - (iii) procedure for approving the successful bid(s); and
  - (iv) ability of the Monitor or any other interested party to apply to the Court to resolve any disagreement regarding the interpretation or application of the SISP Procedures or the responsibilities of any Person in respect of the same;
- (d) the Monitor has taken steps to minimize the intrusion on the open-Court principle by only redacting the amount of the Marketing Agent's commissions from the Monitor's contract with the Marketing Agent (the "**Exclusive Authority to Sell**").

4. The approval of the SISP and the sealing of the Second Confidential Supplement are appropriate because, in the Monitor's respectful submission, the legal tests set out in *CCM Master Qualified Fund v blutip Power Technologies* and *Sherman Estate v Donovan*, respectively, are satisfied based on the evidence before the Court.

### **III. FACTS**

5. The relevant facts are set out in the Pre-Filing Report, the First Report, the Second Report, and the Second Confidential Supplement, as well as the McConnell Affidavit.

6. For the sake of economy, the facts will not be summarized here, but instead referred to, where appropriate, in the discussion below.

#### IV. ISSUES

7. This Brief of Law addresses the following issues:

- (a) Should the SISP, including the Monitor's engagement of the Marketing Agent, be approved?
- (b) Should the Second Confidential Supplement be sealed?
- (c) Should the Monitor and Marketing Agents' liability be limited with respect to their respective mandates under the SISP?

#### V. DISCUSSION

##### A. The SISP and retention of the Marketing Agent should be approved

8. The Monitor is requesting that the Court approve the SISP Approval Order, as filed. The provisions of the *CCAA* and paragraph 21(h) of the ARIO allow the Monitor to develop and execute a proposed sales process for the Companies' assets, subject to obtaining Court approval.

9. On an application to approve a sales and marketing process in the context of an insolvency proceeding, the Court considers:

- (a) the fairness, transparency, and integrity of the proposed process;
- (b) the commercial efficacy of the proposed process in light of the specific circumstances facing the court officer; and
- (c) whether the sales process will optimize the chances, in the particular circumstances, of securing the best possible price for the assets up for sale.

(collectively, the "**CCM Factors**")

*CCM Master Qualified Fund Ltd. v blutip Power Technologies Ltd.,*  
2012 ONSC 1750 at para 6 [TAB B] [CCM]

10. *CCM* involved the approval of a proposed sales process in a receivership, as opposed to a *CCAA* proceeding; however, cases such as *Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. Re* have since

confirmed that the *CCM* Factors also apply when a Court is being asked to approve a sales process in a *CCAA* proceeding.

***Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. Re.,  
2016 BCSC 107 at paras 20-21 [TAB C]***

11. The Monitor is of the view that the SISP (including the engagement of the Marketing Agent) satisfies the *CCM* Factors for the reasons discussed below.

**(i) *The SISP is fair, transparent, and has integrity***

12. The SISP is fair and transparent because it was developed in consultation with the major stakeholders: the Companies themselves and the party with the largest financial interest in these proceedings, namely, the Lender. Furthermore, the SISP requires the Monitor and the Marketing Agent to advertise the sale opportunity in various ways in order to ensure that the public is aware of the opportunity and can participate in the process.

**Second Report at para 36**

13. In the Monitor's view, the SISP has integrity because: (i) it provides for a comprehensive procedure and timelines for submitting bids; and (ii) any Person (as defined in Schedule "A" to the SISP) may apply to this Court for direction in the event a disagreement arises or clarification is required with respect to the SISP.

**Second Report at para 33  
SISP Approval Order at para 9**

**(ii) *The SISP is commercially efficacious***

14. The Marketing Agent will assist the Monitor in marketing and selling the assets and investment opportunity under the SISP. The Marketing Agent is a reputable entity which has experience marketing assets of the type referenced in the SISP Approval Order in a commercially efficient manner. Finally, the SISP provides for a six-week marketing process which, in the

Monitor's experience, is a sufficient amount of time to expose the Companies and their assets to market.

**Second Report at paras 23-27 and 52**

**(iii) *The sales process will optimize the realization of the assets***

15. The SISP has been crafted to optimize the realization of the Companies' assets. The SISP provides for a robust, multi-phased marketing and sales process that affords the Monitor the flexibility to conclude a transaction for the Companies or their assets in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the bids that are received.

**Second Report at paras 30-47**

16. For the foregoing reasons, the Monitor respectfully requests that this Court approve the SISP, as drafted.

**B. The Second Confidential Supplement should be sealed**

17. The legal test that the Court must apply in determining whether to grant a sealing order was revisited by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Sherman Estate v Donovan* [*Sherman Estate*] where it held that, in order to rebut the general open-Court presumption, an applicant must establish that:

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

***Sherman Estate v Donovan*,  
2021 SCC 25 at para 38 [TAB D]**

18. Chief Justice Morawetz of the Ontario Superior Court applied the *Sherman Estate* test in *Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.* and held that a sealing order was

warranted where an application was made to seal commercially sensitive information regarding a proposed sales process.

***Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.,  
2021 ONSC 4347 at paras 25 to 26 [TAB E]***

19. In this case, the Monitor is requesting a sealing order with respect to commercially sensitive terms contained in the Exclusive Authority to Sell regarding the Marketing Agent’s commission (the “**Confidential Information**”).

20. The Monitor submits that it has satisfied the test laid out in *Sherman Estate* and that is appropriate to grant the sealing order for the following reasons:

- (a) the Monitor has taken steps to minimize the intrusion on the open-Court principle by only redacting the commercial terms of the Exclusive Authority to Sell and appending it to the Second Report (which is publicly available);
- (b) publicly disclosing the Confidential Information could prejudice the commercial integrity of this sales process if, for example, the Marketing Agent subsequently declines the proposed engagement and a new marketing agent must be engaged;
- (c) it is necessary to seal the Second Confidential Supplement because there is no alternative method by which the Confidential Information can be introduced into evidence before the Court without exposing the Confidential Information to the deleterious effects associated with public exposure;
- (d) any interested party may apply to Court to unseal the Second Confidential Supplement in the event it feels prejudiced by the sealing order; and
- (e) the Courts have accepted that there is a public interest in preserving the integrity of confidential information as it relates to a proposed sales process.

***Ontario Securities Commission v Bridging Finance Inc.,  
2021 ONSC 4347 at paras 25 to 26 [TAB E]***

**C. The Monitor and Marketing Agent’s liability should be limited**

21. The draft SISP Approval Order limits the Monitor and Marketing Agent’s liability with respect to the SISP to instances of gross negligence or willful misconduct. This limitation of

liability is consistent with other sales processes authorized by the Courts in insolvency proceedings, the most recent of which in Manitoba being the Order granted by the Honourable Mr. Justice Bock in *Re Polar Window of Canada Ltd., et al.*

***Re Polar Window of Canada Ltd., et al.,***  
**MBKB File No. CI 23-01-39360 (April 5, 2023) SISP section 6.11(c) [TAB F]**

22. The Monitor submits that it would be appropriate, in the circumstances, to limit its liability and that of the Marketing Agent with respect to the SISP in accordance with the SISP Approval Order.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

23. For the reasons stated in this Brief of Law, the Monitor respectfully requests that the requested relief be granted in the form of the SISP Approval Order filed.

ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 18<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023.

**McDOUGALL GAULEY LLP**

Per: 

\_\_\_\_\_  
For Ian Sutherland, K.C., counsel to the applicant,  
Alvarez & Marsal Canada Inc.



CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

**Companies' Creditors  
Arrangement Act**

**Loi sur les arrangements avec  
les créanciers des compagnies**

R.S.C., 1985, c. C-36

L.R.C. (1985), ch. C-36

Current to March 20, 2023

À jour au 20 mars 2023

Last amended on November 1, 2019

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R.S.C., 1985, c. C-36

L.R.C., 1985, ch. C-36

## An Act to facilitate compromises and arrangements between companies and their creditors

## Loi facilitant les transactions et arrangements entre les compagnies et leurs créanciers

### Short Title

### Titre abrégé

#### Short title

**1** This Act may be cited as the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*.

R.S., c. C-25, s. 1.

#### Titre abrégé

**1** *Loi sur les arrangements avec les créanciers des compagnies*.

S.R., ch. C-25, art. 1.

### Interpretation

### Définitions et application

#### Definitions

**2 (1)** In this Act,

**aircraft objects** [Repealed, 2012, c. 31, s. 419]

**bargaining agent** means any trade union that has entered into a collective agreement on behalf of the employees of a company; (*agent négociateur*)

**bond** includes a debenture, debenture stock or other evidences of indebtedness; (*obligation*)

**cash-flow statement**, in respect of a company, means the statement referred to in paragraph 10(2)(a) indicating the company's projected cash flow; (*état de l'évolution de l'encaisse*)

**claim** means any indebtedness, liability or obligation of any kind that would be a claim provable within the meaning of section 2 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*; (*réclamation*)

**collective agreement**, in relation to a debtor company, means a collective agreement within the meaning of the jurisdiction governing collective bargaining between the debtor company and a bargaining agent; (*convention collective*)

#### Définitions

**2 (1)** Les définitions qui suivent s'appliquent à la présente loi.

**accord de transfert de titres pour obtention de crédit** Accord aux termes duquel une compagnie débitrice transfère la propriété d'un bien en vue de garantir le paiement d'une somme ou l'exécution d'une obligation relativement à un contrat financier admissible. (*title transfer credit support agreement*)

**actionnaire** S'agissant d'une compagnie ou d'une fiducie de revenu assujetties à la présente loi, est assimilée à l'actionnaire la personne ayant un intérêt dans cette compagnie ou détenant des parts de cette fiducie. (*shareholder*)

**administrateur** S'agissant d'une compagnie autre qu'une fiducie de revenu, toute personne exerçant les fonctions d'administrateur, indépendamment de son titre, et, s'agissant d'une fiducie de revenu, toute personne exerçant les fonctions de fiduciaire, indépendamment de son titre. (*director*)

**agent négociateur** Syndicat ayant conclu une convention collective pour le compte des employés d'une compagnie. (*bargaining agent*)

**biens aéronautiques** [Abrogée, 2012, ch. 31, art. 419]

meetings of creditors respectively held under sections 4 and 5, or either of those sections, agree to any compromise or arrangement either as proposed or as altered or modified at the meeting or meetings, the compromise or arrangement may be sanctioned by the court and, if so sanctioned, is binding

(a) on all the creditors or the class of creditors, as the case may be, and on any trustee for that class of creditors, whether secured or unsecured, as the case may be, and on the company; and

(b) in the case of a company that has made an authorized assignment or against which a bankruptcy order has been made under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* or is in the course of being wound up under the *Winding-up and Restructuring Act*, on the trustee in bankruptcy or liquidator and contributories of the company.

#### Court may order amendment

(2) If a court sanctions a compromise or arrangement, it may order that the debtor's constating instrument be amended in accordance with the compromise or arrangement to reflect any change that may lawfully be made under federal or provincial law.

#### Restriction — certain Crown claims

(3) Unless Her Majesty agrees otherwise, the court may sanction a compromise or arrangement only if the compromise or arrangement provides for the payment in full to Her Majesty in right of Canada or a province, within six months after court sanction of the compromise or arrangement, of all amounts that were outstanding at the time of the application for an order under section 11 or 11.02 and that are of a kind that could be subject to a demand under

(a) subsection 224(1.2) of the *Income Tax Act*;

(b) any provision of the *Canada Pension Plan* or of the *Employment Insurance Act* that refers to subsection 224(1.2) of the *Income Tax Act* and provides for the collection of a contribution, as defined in the *Canada Pension Plan*, an employee's premium, or employer's premium, as defined in the *Employment Insurance Act*, or a premium under Part VII.1 of that Act, and of any related interest, penalties or other amounts; or

(c) any provision of provincial legislation that has a purpose similar to subsection 224(1.2) of the *Income Tax Act*, or that refers to that subsection, to the extent that it provides for the collection of a sum, and of any

présents et votant soit en personne, soit par fondé de pouvoir à l'assemblée ou aux assemblées de créanciers respectivement tenues au titre des articles 4 et 5, acceptent une transaction ou un arrangement, proposé ou modifié à cette ou ces assemblées, la transaction ou l'arrangement peut être homologué par le tribunal et, le cas échéant, lie :

a) tous les créanciers ou la catégorie de créanciers, selon le cas, et tout fiduciaire pour cette catégorie de créanciers, qu'ils soient garantis ou chirographaires, selon le cas, ainsi que la compagnie;

b) dans le cas d'une compagnie qui a fait une cession autorisée ou à l'encontre de laquelle une ordonnance de faillite a été rendue en vertu de la *Loi sur la faillite et l'insolvabilité* ou qui est en voie de liquidation sous le régime de la *Loi sur les liquidations et les restructurations*, le syndic en matière de faillite ou liquidateur et les contributeurs de la compagnie.

#### Modification des statuts constitutifs

(2) Le tribunal qui homologue une transaction ou un arrangement peut ordonner la modification des statuts constitutifs de la compagnie conformément à ce qui est prévu dans la transaction ou l'arrangement, selon le cas, pourvu que la modification soit légale au regard du droit fédéral ou provincial.

#### Certaines réclamations de la Couronne

(3) Le tribunal ne peut, sans le consentement de Sa Majesté, homologuer la transaction ou l'arrangement qui ne prévoit pas le paiement intégral à Sa Majesté du chef du Canada ou d'une province, dans les six mois suivant l'homologation, de toutes les sommes qui étaient dues lors de la demande d'ordonnance visée aux articles 11 ou 11.02 et qui pourraient, de par leur nature, faire l'objet d'une demande aux termes d'une des dispositions suivantes :

a) le paragraphe 224(1.2) de la *Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu*;

b) toute disposition du *Régime de pensions du Canada* ou de la *Loi sur l'assurance-emploi* qui renvoie au paragraphe 224(1.2) de la *Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu* et qui prévoit la perception d'une cotisation, au sens du *Régime de pensions du Canada*, d'une cotisation ouvrière ou d'une cotisation patronale, au sens de la *Loi sur l'assurance-emploi*, ou d'une cotisation prévue par la partie VII.1 de cette loi ainsi que des intérêts, pénalités ou autres charges afférents;

c) toute disposition législative provinciale dont l'objet est semblable à celui du paragraphe 224(1.2) de la *Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu*, ou qui renvoie à ce paragraphe, et qui prévoit la perception d'une somme,

available to any person specified in the order on any terms or conditions that the court considers appropriate.

R.S., 1985, c. C-36, s. 10; 2005, c. 47, s. 127.

peut être communiqué, aux conditions qu'il estime indiquées, à la personne qu'il nomme.

L.R. (1985), ch. C-36, art. 10; 2005, ch. 47, art. 127.

### General power of court

**11** Despite anything in the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* or the *Winding-up and Restructuring Act*, if an application is made under this Act in respect of a debtor company, the court, on the application of any person interested in the matter, may, subject to the restrictions set out in this Act, on notice to any other person or without notice as it may see fit, make any order that it considers appropriate in the circumstances.

R.S., 1985, c. C-36, s. 11; 1992, c. 27, s. 90; 1996, c. 6, s. 167; 1997, c. 12, s. 124; 2005, c. 47, s. 128.

### Pouvoir général du tribunal

**11** Malgré toute disposition de la *Loi sur la faillite et l'insolvabilité* ou de la *Loi sur les liquidations et les restructurations*, le tribunal peut, dans le cas de toute demande sous le régime de la présente loi à l'égard d'une compagnie débitrice, rendre, sur demande d'un intéressé, mais sous réserve des restrictions prévues par la présente loi et avec ou sans avis, toute ordonnance qu'il estime indiquée.

L.R. (1985), ch. C-36, art. 11; 1992, ch. 27, art. 90; 1996, ch. 6, art. 167; 1997, ch. 12, art. 124; 2005, ch. 47, art. 128.

### Relief reasonably necessary

**11.001** An order made under section 11 at the same time as an order made under subsection 11.02(1) or during the period referred to in an order made under that subsection with respect to an initial application shall be limited to relief that is reasonably necessary for the continued operations of the debtor company in the ordinary course of business during that period.

2019, c. 29, s. 136.

### Redressements normalement nécessaires

**11.001** L'ordonnance rendue au titre de l'article 11 en même temps que l'ordonnance rendue au titre du paragraphe 11.02(1) ou pendant la période visée dans l'ordonnance rendue au titre de ce paragraphe relativement à la demande initiale n'est limitée qu'aux redressements normalement nécessaires à la continuation de l'exploitation de la compagnie débitrice dans le cours ordinaire de ses affaires durant cette période.

2019, ch. 29, art. 136.

### Rights of suppliers

**11.01** No order made under section 11 or 11.02 has the effect of

(a) prohibiting a person from requiring immediate payment for goods, services, use of leased or licensed property or other valuable consideration provided after the order is made; or

(b) requiring the further advance of money or credit.

2005, c. 47, s. 128.

### Droits des fournisseurs

**11.01** L'ordonnance prévue aux articles 11 ou 11.02 ne peut avoir pour effet :

a) d'empêcher une personne d'exiger que soient effectués sans délai les paiements relatifs à la fourniture de marchandises ou de services, à l'utilisation de biens loués ou faisant l'objet d'une licence ou à la fourniture de toute autre contrepartie de valeur qui ont lieu après l'ordonnance;

b) d'exiger le versement de nouvelles avances de fonds ou de nouveaux crédits.

2005, ch. 47, art. 128.

### Stays, etc. — initial application

**11.02 (1)** A court may, on an initial application in respect of a debtor company, make an order on any terms that it may impose, effective for the period that the court considers necessary, which period may not be more than 10 days,

(a) staying, until otherwise ordered by the court, all proceedings taken or that might be taken in respect of the company under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* or the *Winding-up and Restructuring Act*;

### Suspension : demande initiale

**11.02 (1)** Dans le cas d'une demande initiale visant une compagnie débitrice, le tribunal peut, par ordonnance, aux conditions qu'il peut imposer et pour la période maximale de dix jours qu'il estime nécessaire :

a) suspendre, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, toute procédure qui est ou pourrait être intentée contre la compagnie sous le régime de la *Loi sur la faillite et l'insolvabilité* ou de la *Loi sur les liquidations et les restructurations*;

### Restriction on disposition of business assets

**36 (1)** A debtor company in respect of which an order has been made under this Act may not sell or otherwise dispose of assets outside the ordinary course of business unless authorized to do so by a court. Despite any requirement for shareholder approval, including one under federal or provincial law, the court may authorize the sale or disposition even if shareholder approval was not obtained.

### Notice to creditors

**(2)** A company that applies to the court for an authorization is to give notice of the application to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the proposed sale or disposition.

### Factors to be considered

**(3)** In deciding whether to grant the authorization, 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.

### Additional factors — related persons

**(4)** If the proposed sale or disposition is to a person who is related to the company, the court may, after considering the factors referred to in subsection (3), grant the authorization only if it is satisfied that

- (a)** good faith efforts were made to sell or otherwise dispose of the assets to persons who are not related to the company; and
- (b)** the consideration to be received is superior to the consideration that would be received under any other

### Restriction à la disposition d'actifs

**36 (1)** Il est interdit à la compagnie débitrice à l'égard de laquelle une ordonnance a été rendue sous le régime de la présente loi de disposer, notamment par vente, d'actifs hors du cours ordinaire de ses affaires sans l'autorisation du tribunal. Le tribunal peut accorder l'autorisation sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'obtenir l'acquiescement des actionnaires, et ce malgré toute exigence à cet effet, notamment en vertu d'une règle de droit fédérale ou provinciale.

### Avis aux créanciers

**(2)** La compagnie qui demande l'autorisation au tribunal en avise les créanciers garantis qui peuvent vraisemblablement être touchés par le projet de disposition.

### Facteurs à prendre en considération

**(3)** Pour décider s'il accorde l'autorisation, le tribunal prend en considération, entre autres, les facteurs suivants :

- a)** la justification des circonstances ayant mené au projet de disposition;
- b)** l'acquiescement du contrôleur au processus ayant mené au projet de disposition, le cas échéant;
- c)** le dépôt par celui-ci d'un rapport précisant que, à son avis, la disposition sera plus avantageuse pour les créanciers que si elle était faite dans le cadre de la faillite;
- d)** la suffisance des consultations menées auprès des créanciers;
- e)** les effets du projet de disposition sur les droits de tout intéressé, notamment les créanciers;
- f)** le caractère juste et raisonnable de la contrepartie reçue pour les actifs compte tenu de leur valeur marchande.

### Autres facteurs

**(4)** Si la compagnie projette de disposer d'actifs en faveur d'une personne à laquelle elle est liée, le tribunal, après avoir pris ces facteurs en considération, ne peut accorder l'autorisation que s'il est convaincu :

- a)** d'une part, que les efforts voulus ont été faits pour disposer des actifs en faveur d'une personne qui n'est pas liée à la compagnie;
- b)** d'autre part, que la contrepartie offerte pour les actifs est plus avantageuse que celle qui découlerait de

offer made in accordance with the process leading to the proposed sale or disposition.

#### Related persons

(5) For the purpose of subsection (4), a person who is related to the company includes

- (a) a director or officer of the company;
- (b) a person who has or has had, directly or indirectly, control in fact of the company; and
- (c) a person who is related to a person described in paragraph (a) or (b).

#### Assets may be disposed of free and clear

(6) The court may authorize a sale or disposition free and clear of any security, charge or other restriction and, if it does, it shall also order that other assets of the company or the proceeds of the sale or disposition be subject to a security, charge or other restriction in favour of the creditor whose security, charge or other restriction is to be affected by the order.

#### Restriction — employers

(7) The court may grant the authorization only if the court is satisfied that the company can and will make the payments that would have been required under paragraphs 6(5)(a) and (6)(a) if the court had sanctioned the compromise or arrangement.

#### Restriction — intellectual property

(8) If, on the day on which an order is made under this Act in respect of the company, the company is a party to an agreement that grants to another party a right to use intellectual property that is included in a sale or disposition authorized under subsection (6), that sale or disposition 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.

2005, c. 47, s. 131; 2007, c. 36, s. 78; 2017, c. 26, s. 14; 2018, c. 27, s. 269.

toute autre offre reçue dans le cadre du projet de disposition.

#### Personnes liées

(5) Pour l'application du paragraphe (4), les personnes ci-après sont considérées comme liées à la compagnie :

- a) le dirigeant ou l'administrateur de celle-ci;
- b) la personne qui, directement ou indirectement, en a ou en a eu le contrôle de fait;
- c) la personne liée à toute personne visée aux alinéas a) ou b).

#### Autorisation de disposer des actifs en les libérant de restrictions

(6) Le tribunal peut autoriser la disposition d'actifs de la compagnie, purgés de toute charge, sûreté ou autre restriction, et, le cas échéant, est tenu d'assujettir le produit de la disposition ou d'autres de ses actifs à une charge, sûreté ou autre restriction en faveur des créanciers touchés par la purge.

#### Restriction à l'égard des employeurs

(7) Il ne peut autoriser la disposition que s'il est convaincu que la compagnie est en mesure d'effectuer et effectuera les paiements qui auraient été exigés en vertu des alinéas 6(5)a) et (6)a) s'il avait homologué la transaction ou l'arrangement.

#### Restriction à l'égard de la propriété intellectuelle

(8) Si, à la date à laquelle une ordonnance est rendue à son égard sous le régime de la présente loi, la compagnie est partie à un contrat qui autorise une autre partie à utiliser un droit de propriété intellectuelle qui est compris dans la disposition d'actifs autorisée en vertu du paragraphe (6), cette disposition 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.

2005, ch. 47, art. 131; 2007, ch. 36, art. 78; 2017, ch. 26, art. 14; 2018, ch. 27, art. 269.

**CITATION:** CCM Master Qualified Fund v. blutip Power Technologies, 2012 ONSC 1750  
**COURT FILE NO.:** CV-12-9622-00CL  
**DATE:** 20120315

**SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE – ONTARIO**

**COMMERCIAL LIST**

**RE:** CCM Master Qualified Fund, Ltd., Applicant

**AND:**

blutip Power Technologies Ltd., Respondent

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

**COUNSEL:** L. Rogers and C. Burr, for the Receiver, Duff & Phelps Canada Restructuring Inc.

A. Cobb and A. Lockhart, for the Applicant

**HEARD:** March 15, 2012

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

**I. Receiver's motion for directions: sales/auction process & priority of receiver's charges**

[1] By Appointment Order made February 28, 2012, Duff & Phelps Canada Restructuring Inc. ("D&P") was appointed receiver of blutip Power Technologies Ltd. ("Blutip"), a publicly listed technology company based in Mississauga which engages in the research, development and sale of hydrogen generating systems and combustion controls. Blutip employs 10 people and, as the Receiver stressed several times in its materials, the company does not maintain any pension plans.

[2] D&P moves for orders approving (i) a sales process and bidding procedures, including the use of a stalking horse credit bid, (ii) the priority of a Receiver's Charge and Receiver's Borrowings Charge, and (iii) the activities reported in its First Report. Notice of this motion was given to affected persons. No one appeared to oppose the order sought. At the hearing today I granted the requested Bidding Procedures Order; these are my Reasons for so doing.

**II. Background to this motion**

[3] The Applicant, CCM Master Qualified Fund, Ltd. ("CCM"), is the senior secured lender to Blutip. At present Blutip owes CCM approximately \$3.7 million consisting of (i) two

convertible senior secured promissory notes (October 21, 2011: \$2.6 million and December 29, 2011: \$800,000), (ii) \$65,000 advanced last month pursuant to a Receiver's Certificate, and (iii) \$47,500 on account of costs of appointing the Receiver (as per para. 30 of the Appointment Order). Receiver's counsel has opined that the security granted by Blutip in favour of CCM creates a valid and perfected security interest in the company's business and assets.

[4] At the time of the appointment of the Receiver Blutip was in a development phase with no significant sources of revenue and was dependant on external sources of equity and debt funding to operate. As noted by Morawetz J. in his February 28, 2012 endorsement:

In making this determination [to appoint a receiver] I have taken into account that there is no liquidity in the debtor and that it is unable to make payroll and it currently has no board. Stability in the circumstances is required and this can be accomplished by the appointment of a receiver.

[5] As the Receiver reported, it does not have access to sufficient funding to support the company's operations during a lengthy sales process.

### III. Sales process/bidding procedures

#### A. General principles

[6] Although the decision to approve a particular form of sales process is distinct from the approval of a proposed sale, the reasonableness and adequacy of any sales process proposed by a court-appointed receiver must be assessed in light of the factors which a court will take into account when considering the approval of a proposed sale. Those factors were identified by the Court of Appeal in its decision in *Royal Bank v. Soundair*: (i) whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently; (ii) the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained; (iii) whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process; and, (iv) the interests of all parties.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, when reviewing a sales and marketing process proposed by a receiver a court should assess:

- (i) the fairness, transparency and integrity of the proposed process;
- (ii) the commercial efficacy of the proposed process in light of the specific circumstances facing the receiver; and,
- (iii) whether the sales process will optimize the chances, in the particular circumstances, of securing the best possible price for the assets up for sale.

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<sup>1</sup> (1991), 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1 (C.A.).

[7] The use of stalking horse bids to set a baseline for the bidding process, including credit bid stalking horses, has been recognized by Canadian courts as a reasonable and useful element of a sales process. Stalking horse bids have been approved for use in other receivership proceedings,<sup>2</sup> BIA proposals,<sup>3</sup> and CCAA proceedings.<sup>4</sup>

[8] Perhaps the most well-known recent example of the use of a stalking horse credit bid was that employed in the Canwest Publishing Corp. CCAA proceedings where, as part of a sale and investor solicitation process, Canwest's senior lenders put forward a stalking horse credit bid. Ultimately a superior offer was approved by the court. I accept, as an apt description of the considerations which a court should take into account when deciding whether to approve the use of a stalking horse credit bid, the following observations made by one set of commentators on the Canwest CCAA process:

To be effective for such stakeholders, the credit bid had to be put forward in a process that would allow a sufficient opportunity for interested parties to come forward with a superior offer, recognizing that a timetable for the sale of a business in distress is a fast track ride that requires interested parties to move quickly or miss the opportunity. The court has to balance the need to move quickly, to address the real or perceived deterioration of value of the business during a sale process or the limited availability of restructuring financing, with a realistic timetable that encourages and does not chill the auction process.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. The proposed bidding process**

### **B.1 The bid solicitation/auction process**

[9] The bidding process proposed by the Receiver would use a Stalking Horse Offer submitted by CCM to the Receiver, and subsequently amended pursuant to negotiations, as a baseline offer and a qualified bid in an auction process. D&P intends to distribute to prospective purchasers an interest solicitation letter, make available a confidential information memorandum to those who sign a confidentiality agreement, allow due diligence, and provide interested parties with a copy of the Stalking Horse Offer.

[10] Bids filed by the April 16, 2012 deadline which meet certain qualifications stipulated by the Receiver may participate in an auction scheduled for April 20, 2012. One qualification is that the minimum consideration in a bid must be an overbid of \$100,000 as compared to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Re Graceway Canada Co.*, 2011 ONSC 6403, para. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Re Parlay Entertainment Inc.*, 2011 ONSC 3492, para. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Re Brainhunter* (2009), 62 C.B.R. (5<sup>th</sup>) 41 (Ont. S.C.J.), para. 13; *Re White Birch Paper Holding Co.*, 2010 QCCS 4382, para. 3; *Re Nortel Networks Corp.* (2009), 55 C.B.R. (5<sup>th</sup>) 229 (Ont. S.C.J.), para. 2, and (2009), 56 C.B.R. (5<sup>th</sup>) 74 (Ont. S.C.J.); *Re Indalex Ltd.*, 2009 CarswellOnt 4262 (S.C.J.).

<sup>5</sup> Pamela Huff, Linc Rogers, Douglas Bartner and Craig Culbert, "Credit Bidding – Recent Canadian and U.S. Themes", in Janis P. Sarra (ed.), *2010 Annual Review of Insolvency Law* (Toronto: Carswell, 2011), p. 16.

Stalking Horse Offer. The proposed auction process is a standard, multi-round one designed to result in a Successful Bid and a Back-Up Bid. The rounds will be conducted using minimum incremental overbids of \$100,000, subject to reduction at the discretion of the Receiver.

## **B.2 Stalking horse credit bid**

[11] The CCM Stalking Horse Offer, or Agreement, negotiated with the Receiver contemplates the acquisition of substantially all the company's business and assets on an "as is where is" basis. The purchase price is equal to: (i) Assumed Liabilities, as defined in the Stalking Horse Offer, plus (ii) a credit bid of CCM's secured debt outstanding under the two Notes, the Appointment Costs and the advance under the Receiver's Certificate. The purchase price is estimated to be approximately \$3.744 million before the value of Assumed Liabilities which will include the continuation of the employment of employees, if the offer is accepted.

[12] The Receiver reviewed at length, in its Report and in counsel's factum, the calculation of the value of the credit bid. Interest under both Notes was fixed at 15% per annum and was prepaid in full. The Receiver reported that if both Notes were repaid on May 3, 2012, the anticipated closing date, the effective annual rate of interest (taking into account all costs which could be categorized as "interest") would be significantly higher than 15% per annum - 57.6% on the October Note and 97.4% on the December Note. In order that the interest on the Notes considered for purposes of calculating the value of the credit bid complied with the interest rate provisions of the *Criminal Code*, the Receiver informed CCM that the amount of the secured indebtedness under the Notes eligible for the credit bid would have to be \$103,500 less than the face value of the Notes. As explained in detail in paragraphs 32 through to 39 of its factum, the Receiver is of the view that such a reduction would result in a permissible effective annual interest rate under the December Note. The resulting Stalking Horse Agreement reflected such a reduction.

[13] The Stalking Horse Offer does not contain a break-fee, but it does contain a term that in the event the credit bid is not the Successful Bid, then CCM will be entitled to reimbursement of its expenses up to a maximum of \$75,000, or approximately 2% of the value of the estimated purchase price. Such an amount, according to the Receiver, would fall within the range of reasonable break fees and expense reimbursements approved in other cases, which have ranged from 1.8% to 5% of the value of the bid.<sup>6</sup>

## **C. Analysis**

[14] Given the financial circumstances of Blutip and the lack of funding available to the Receiver to support the company's operations during a lengthy sales process, I accept the Receiver's recommendation that a quick sales process is required in order to optimize the

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<sup>6</sup> *Re Parlay Entertainment*, 2011 ONSC 3492, para. 12; *Re White Birch Paper Holding Co.*, 2010 QCCS 4915, paras. 4 to 7; *Re Nortel Networks Corp.* (2009), 56 C.B.R. (5<sup>th</sup>) 74 (Ont. S.C.J.), para. 12.

prospects of securing the best price for the assets. Accordingly, the timeframe proposed by the Receiver for the submission of qualifying bids and the conduct of the auction is reasonable. The marketing, bid solicitation and bidding procedures proposed by the Receiver are likely to result in a fair, transparent and commercially efficacious process in the circumstances.

[15] In light of the reduction in the face value of the Notes required by the Receiver for the purposes of calculating the value of the credit bid and the reasonable amount of the Expense Reimbursement, I approved the Stalking Horse Agreement for the purposes requested by the Receiver. I accept the Receiver's assessment that in the circumstances the terms of the Stalking Horse Offer, including the Expense Reimbursement, will not discourage a third party from submitting an offer superior to the Stalking Horse Offer.

[16] Also, as made clear in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Bidding Procedures Order, the Stalking Horse Agreement is deemed to be a Qualified Bid and is accepted solely for the purposes of CCM's right to participate in the auction. My order did not approve the sale of Blutip's assets on the terms set out in the Stalking Horse Agreement. As the Receiver indicated, the approval of the sale of Blutip's assets, whether to CCM or some other successful bidder, will be the subject of a future motion to this Court. Such an approach is consistent with the practice of this Court.<sup>7</sup>

[17] For those reasons I approved the bidding procedures recommended by the Receiver.

#### **IV. Priority of receiver's charges**

[18] Paragraphs 17 and 20 of the Appointment Order granted some priority for the Receiver's Charge and Receiver's Borrowings Charge. However, as noted by the Receiver in section 3.1 of its First Report, because that hearing was brought on an urgent, *ex parte* basis, priority over existing perfected security interests and statutory encumbrances was not sought at that time. The Receiver now seeks such priority.

[19] As previously noted, the Receiver reported that Blutip does not maintain any pension plans. In section 3.1 of its Report the Receiver identified the persons served with notice of this motion: (i) parties with registered security interests pursuant to the *PPSA*; (ii) those who have commenced legal proceedings against the Company; (iii) those who have asserted claims in respect of intellectual property against the Company; (iv) the Company's landlord, and (v) standard government agencies. Proof of such service was filed with the motion record. No person appeared on the return of the motion to oppose the priority sought by the Receiver for its charges.

[20] Although the Receiver gave notice to affected parties six days in advance of this motion, not seven days as specified in paragraph 31 of the Appointment Order, I was satisfied that

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<sup>7</sup> *Re Indalex Ltd.*, 2009 CarswellOnt 4262 (S.C.J.), para. 7; *Re Graceway Canada Co.*, 2011 ONSC 6403, para. 5; *Re Parlay Entertainment Inc.*, 2011 ONSC 3492, para. 58.

secured creditors who would be materially affected by the order had been given reasonable notice and an opportunity to make representations, as required by section 243(6) of the *BIA*, that abridging the notice period by one day, as permitted by paragraph 31 of the Appointment Order, was appropriate and fair in the circumstances, and I granted the priority charges sought by the Receiver.

[21] I should note that the Appointment Order contains a standard “come-back clause” (para. 31). Recently, in *First Leaside Wealth Management Inc. (Re)*, a proceeding under the *CCAA*, I wrote:

[49] In his recent decision in *Timminco Limited (Re)* (“Timminco I”) Morawetz J. described the commercial reality underpinning requests for Administration and D&O Charges in *CCAA* proceedings:

In my view, in the absence of the court granting the requested super priority and protection, the objectives of the *CCAA* would be frustrated. It is not reasonable to expect that professionals will take the risk of not being paid for their services, and that directors and officers will remain if placed in a compromised position should the Timminco Entities continue *CCAA* proceedings without the requested protection. The outcome of the failure to provide these respective groups with the requested protection would, in my view, result in the overwhelming likelihood that the *CCAA* proceedings would come to an abrupt halt, followed, in all likelihood, by bankruptcy proceedings.

...

[51] In my view, absent an express order to the contrary by the initial order applications judge, the issue of the priorities enjoyed by administration, D&O and DIP lending charges should be finalized at the commencement of a *CCAA* proceeding. Professional services are provided, and DIP funding is advanced, in reliance on super-priorities contained in initial orders. To ensure the integrity, predictability and fairness of the *CCAA* process, certainty must accompany the granting of such super-priority charges. When those important objectives of the *CCAA* process are coupled with the Court of Appeal’s holding that parties affected by such priority orders be given an opportunity to raise any paramountcy issue, it strikes me that a judge hearing an initial order application should directly raise with the parties the issue of the priority of the charges sought, including any possible issue of paramountcy in respect of competing claims on the debtor’s property based on provincial legislation.<sup>8</sup>

[22] In my view those comments regarding the need for certainty about the priority of charges for professional fees or borrowings apply, with equal force, to priority charges sought by a

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<sup>8</sup> 2012 ONSC 1299 (CanLII).

receiver pursuant to section 243(6) of the *BIA*. Certainty regarding the priority of administrative and borrowing charges is required as much in a receivership as in proceedings under the *CCAA* or the proposal provisions of the *BIA*.

[23] In the present case the issues of the priority of the Receiver's Charge and Receiver's Borrowings Charge were deferred from the return of the initial application until notice could be given to affected parties. I have noted that Blutip did not maintain pension plans. I have found that reasonable notice now has been given and no affected person appeared to oppose the granting of the priority charges. Consequently, it is my intention that the Bidding Procedures Order constitutes a final disposition of the issue of the priority of those charges (subject, of course, to any rights to appeal the Bidding Procedures Order). I do not regard the presence of a "come-back clause" in the Appointment Order as leaving the door open a crack for some subsequent challenge to the priorities granted by this order.

**V. Approval of the Receiver's activities**

[24] The activities described by the Receiver in its First Report were reasonable and fell within its mandate, so I approved them.

[25] May I conclude by thanking Receiver's counsel for a most helpful factum.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(original signed by)

D. M. Brown J.

**Date:** March 15, 2012

# IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Citation: *Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. (Re)*,  
2016 BCSC 107

Date: 20160126  
Docket: S1510120  
Registry: Vancouver

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

**And**

**In the Matter of the *Business Corporations Act*,  
S.B.C. 2002, c. 57, as Amended**

**And**

**In the Matter of a Plan of Compromise or Arrangement  
of Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. and the Other  
Petitioners Listed on Schedule "A"**

Before: The Honourable Madam Justice Fitzpatrick

## Reasons for Judgment

Counsel for the Petitioners:

Marc Wasserman  
Mary I.A. Buttery  
Tijana Gavric  
Joshua Hurwitz

Counsel for United Mine Workers of America  
1974 Pension Plan and Trust:

John Sandrelli  
Tevia Jeffries

Counsel for Steering Committee of First Lien  
Creditors of Walter Energy, Inc.:

Matthew Nied

Counsel for Her Majesty the Queen in Right  
of the Province of British Columbia:

Aaron Welch

Counsel for Morgan Stanley Senior Funding,  
Inc.:

Kathryn Esaw

Counsel for KPMG Inc., Monitor:

Peter Reardon  
Wael Rostom  
Caitlin Fell

Counsel for Canada Revenue Agency:

Neva Beckie

Counsel for the United States Steel Workers,  
Local 1-424:

Stephanie Drake

Place and Date of Hearing and Ruling given  
to Parties with Written Reasons to Follow:

Vancouver, B.C.  
January 5, 2016

Place and Date of Written Reasons:

Vancouver, B.C.  
January 26, 2016

**Introduction and Background**

[1] On December 7, 2015, I granted an initial order in favour of the petitioners, pursuant to the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended ("CCAA").

[2] The "Walter Group" is a major exporter of metallurgical coal for the steel industry, with mines and operations in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. The petitioners comprise part of the Canadian arm of the Walter Group and are known as the "Walter Canada Group". The Canadian entities were acquired by the Walter Group only recently in 2011.

[3] The Canadian operations principally include the Brule and Willow Creek coal mines, located near Chetwynd, B.C., and the Wolverine coal mine, near Tumbler Ridge, B.C. The mine operations are conducted through various limited partnerships. The petitioners include the Canadian parent holding company and the general partners of the partnerships. Given the complex corporate structure of the Walter Canada Group, the initial order also included stay provisions relating to the partnerships: *Lehndorff General Partner Ltd. (Re)* (1993), 9 B.L.R. (2d) 275 (Ont. Gen. Div.); *Asset Engineering LP v. Forest & Marine Financial Limited Partnership*, 2009 BCCA 319 at para. 21.

[4] The timing of the Canadian acquisition could not have been worse. Since 2011, the market for metallurgical coal has fallen dramatically. This in turn led to financial difficulties in all three jurisdictions in which the Walter Group operated. The three Canadian mines were placed in care and maintenance between April 2013 and June 2014. The mines remain in this state today, at an estimated annual cost in excess of \$16 million. Similarly, the U.K. mines were idled in 2015. In July 2015, the U.S. companies in the Walter Group filed and sought creditor protection by filing a proceeding under Chapter 11 of the U.S. *Bankruptcy Code*. It is my understanding that the U.S. entities have coal mining operations in Alabama and West Virginia.

[5] From the time of the granting of the initial order, it was apparent that the outcome of the U.S. proceedings would have a substantial impact on the Walter

Canada Group. A sales process completed in the U.S. proceeding is anticipated to result in a transfer of the U.S. assets to a stalking horse bidder sometime early this year. This is significant because the U.S. companies have historically supported the Canadian operations with funding and provided essential management services. This is a relevant factor in terms of the proposed relief, as I will discuss below.

[6] The Walter Canada Group faces various significant contingent liabilities. The various entities are liable under a 2011 credit agreement of approximately \$22.6 million in undrawn letters of credit for post-mining reclamation obligations. Estimated reclamation costs for all three mines exceed this amount. Further obligations potentially arise with respect to the now laid-off employees of the Wolverine mine, who are represented by the United Steelworkers, Local 1-424 (the "Union"). If these employees are not recalled before April 2016, the Wolverine partnership faces an estimated claim of \$11.3 million. As I will discuss below, an even more significant contingent liability has also recently been advanced.

[7] This anticipated "parting of the ways" as between the U.S. and Canadian entities in turn prompted the filing of this proceeding, which is intended to provide the petitioners with time to develop a restructuring plan. The principal goal of that plan, as I will describe below, is to complete a going concern sale of the Canadian operations as soon as possible. Fortunately, as of early December 2015, the Walter Canada Group has slightly in excess of US\$40.5 million in cash resources to fund the restructuring efforts. However, ongoing operating costs remain high and are now compounded by the restructuring costs.

[8] As was appropriate, the petitioners did not seek extensive orders on December 7, 2015, given the lack of service on certain major stakeholders. A stay was granted on that date, together with other ancillary relief. KPMG Inc. was appointed as the monitor (the "Monitor").

[9] The petitioners now seek relief that will set them on a path to a potential restructuring; essentially, an equity and/or debt restructuring or alternatively, a sale and liquidation of their assets. That relief includes approving a sale and solicitation

process and the appointment of further professionals to manage that process and complete other necessary management functions. They also seek a key employee retention plan. Finally, the petitioners seek an extension of the stay to early April 2016.

[10] For obvious reasons, the financial and environmental issues associated with the coal mines loom large in this matter. For that reason, the Walter Canada Group has engaged in discussions with the provincial regulators, being the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines and the B.C. Ministry of the Environment, concerning the environmental issues and the proposed restructuring plan. No issues arise from the regulators' perspective at this time in terms of the relief on this application. Other stakeholders have responded to the application and contributed to the final terms of the relief sought.

[11] The stakeholders appearing on this application are largely supportive of the relief sought, save for two.

[12] Firstly, the United Mine Workers of America 1974 Pension Plan and Trust (the "1974 Pension Plan") opposes certain aspects of the relief sought as to who should be appointed to conduct the sales process.

[13] The status of the 1974 Pension Plan arises from somewhat unusual circumstances. One of the U.S. entities, Jim Walter Resources, Inc. ("JWR") is a party to a collective bargaining agreement with the 1974 Pension Plan (the "CBA"). In late December 2015, the U.S. bankruptcy court issued a decision that allowed JWR to reject the CBA. The court also ordered that the sale of the U.S. assets would be free and clear of any liabilities under the CBA. As a result, the 1974 Pension Plan has filed a proof of claim in the U.S. proceedings advancing a contingent claim against JWR with respect to a potential "withdrawal liability" under U.S. law of approximately US\$900 million. The U.S. law in question is the *Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974*, 29 USC § 101, as amended, which is commonly referred to as "ERISA".

[14] The 1974 Pension Plan alleges that it is only a matter of time before JWR formally rejects the CBA. In that event, the 1974 Pension Plan contends that *ERISA* provides that all companies under common control with JWR are jointly and severally liable for this withdrawal liability, and that some of the entities in the Walter Canada Group come within this provision.

[15] It is apparent at this time that neither the Walter Canada Group nor the Monitor has had an opportunity to assess the 1974 Pension Plan's contingent claim. No claims process has even been contemplated at this time. Nevertheless, the standing of the 1974 Pension Plan to make submissions on this application is not seriously contested.

[16] Secondly, the Union only opposes an extension of the stay of certain proceedings underway in this court and the Labour Relations Board in relation to some of its employee claims, which it wishes to continue to litigate.

[17] At the conclusion of the hearing, I granted the orders sought by the petitioners, with reasons to follow. Hence, these reasons.

**The Sale and Investment Solicitation Process ("SISP")**

[18] The proposed SISP has been developed by the Walter Canada Group in consultation with the Monitor. By this process, bidders may submit a letter of intent or bid for a restructuring, recapitalization or other form of reorganization of the business and affairs of the Walter Canada Group as a going concern, or a purchase of any or all equity interests held by Walter Energy Canada. Alternatively, any bid may relate to a purchase of all or substantially all, or any portion of the Walter Canada Group assets (including the Brule, Willow Creek and Wolverine mines).

[19] It is intended that the SISP will be led by a chief restructuring officer (the "CRO"), implemented by a financial advisor (both as discussed below) and supervised by the Monitor.

[20] Approvals of SISPs are a common feature in CCAA restructuring proceedings. The Walter Canada Group refers to *CCM Master Qualified Fund v. blutip Power Technologies*, 2012 ONSC 1750. At para. 6, Brown J. (as he then was) stated that in reviewing a proposed sale process, the court should consider:

- (i) the fairness, transparency and integrity of the proposed process;
- (ii) the commercial efficacy of the proposed process in light of the specific circumstances facing the receiver; and,
- (iii) whether the sales process will optimize the chances, in the particular circumstances, of securing the best possible price for the assets up for sale.

[21] Although the court in *CCM Master Qualified Fund* was considering a sales process proposed by a receiver, I agree that these factors are also applicable when assessing the reasonableness of a proposed sales process in a CCAA proceeding: see *PCAS Patient Care Automation Services Inc. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 2840 at paras. 17-19.

[22] In this case, the proposed timelines would see a deadline of March 18 for letters of intent, due diligence thereafter with a bid deadline of May 27 and a target closing date of June 30, 2016. In my view, the timeline is reasonable, particularly with regard to the need to move as quickly as possible to preserve cash resources pending a sale or investment; or, in the worst case scenario, to allow the Walter Canada Group to close the mines permanently. There is sufficient flexibility built into the SISP to allow the person conducting it to amend these deadlines if the circumstances justify it.

[23] The SISP proposed here is consistent with similar sales processes approved in other Canadian insolvency proceedings. In addition, I agree with the Monitor's assessment that the SISP represents the best opportunity for the Walter Canada Group to successfully restructure as a going concern, if such an opportunity should arise.

[24] No stakeholder, including the 1974 Pension Plan, opposed this relief. All concerned recognize the need to monetize, if possible, the assets held by the Walter Canada Group. I conclude that the proposed SISIP is reasonable and it is approved.

**Appointment of Financial Advisor and CRO**

[25] The more contentious issues are who should conduct the SISIP and manage the operations of the Walter Canada Group pending a transaction and what their compensation should be.

[26] The Walter Canada Group seeks the appointment of a financial advisor and CRO to assist with the implementation of the SISIP.

[27] In restructuring proceedings it is not unusual that professionals are engaged to advance the restructuring where the existing management is either unable or unwilling to bring the required expertise to bear. In such circumstances, courts have granted enhanced powers to the monitor; otherwise, the appointment of a CRO and/or financial advisor can be considered.

[28] A consideration of this issue requires some context in terms of the current governance status of the Walter Canada Group. At present, there is only one remaining director, who is based in West Virginia. The petitioners' counsel does not anticipate his long-term involvement in these proceedings and expects he will resign once the U.S. sale completes. Similarly, the petitioners have been largely instructed to date by William Harvey. Mr. Harvey is the executive vice-president and chief financial officer of Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc., one of the petitioners. He lives in Birmingham, Alabama. As with the director, the petitioners' counsel expects him to resign in the near future.

[29] The only other high level employee does reside in British Columbia, but his expertise is more toward operational matters, particularly regarding environmental and regulatory issues.

[30] Accordingly, there is a legitimate risk that the Walter Canada Group ship may become rudderless in the midst of these proceedings and most significantly, in the midst of the very important sales and solicitation process. This risk is exacerbated by the fact that the management support traditionally provided by the U.S. entities will not be provided after the sale of the U.S. assets. Significant work must be done to effect a transition of those shared services in order to allow the Canadian operations to continue running smoothly. It is anticipated that the CRO will play a key role in assisting in this transition of the shared services.

[31] In these circumstances, I am satisfied that professional advisors are not just desirable, but indeed necessary, in order to have a chance for a successful restructuring. Both appointments ensure that the SISP will be implemented by professionals who will enhance the likelihood that it generates maximum value for the Walter Canada Group's stakeholders. In addition, the appointment of a CRO will allow the Canadian operations to continue in an orderly fashion, pending a transaction.

[32] The proposal is to retain PJT Partners LP ("PJT") as a financial advisor and investment banker to implement the SISP. PJT is a natural choice given that it had already been retained in the context of the U.S. proceedings to market the Walter Group's assets, which of course indirectly included the Walter Canada Group's assets. As such, PJT is familiar with the assets in this jurisdiction, knowledge that will no doubt be of great assistance in respect of the SISP.

[33] In addition, the proposal is to retain BlueTree Advisors Inc. as the CRO, by which it would provide the services of William E. Aziz. Mr. Aziz is a well-known figure in the Canadian insolvency community; in particular, he is well known for having provided chief restructuring services in other proceedings (see for example *Mobilicity Group (Re)*, 2013 ONSC 6167 at para. 17). No question arises as to his extensive qualifications to fulfil this role.

[34] The materials as to how Mr. Aziz was selected were somewhat thin, which raised some concerns from the 1974 Pension Plan as to the appropriateness of his

involvement. However, after submissions by the petitioners' counsel, I am satisfied that there was a thorough consideration of potential candidates and their particular qualifications to undertake what will no doubt be a time-consuming and complex assignment. In that regard, I accept the recommendations of the petitioners that Mr. Aziz is the most qualified candidate.

[35] The Monitor was involved in the process by which PJT and BlueTree/Mr. Aziz were selected. It has reviewed both proposals and supports that both PJT and BlueTree are necessary appointments that will result in the Walter Canada Group obtaining the necessary expertise to proceed with its restructuring efforts. In that sense, such appointments fulfill the requirements of being "appropriate", in the sense that that expertise will assist the debtor in achieving the objectives of the CCAA: see s. 11; *ICR Commercial Real Estate (Regina) Ltd. v. Bricore Land Group Ltd.*, 2007 SKQB 121 at para. 19.

[36] The 1974 Pension Plan does not mount any serious argument against the need for such appointments, other than to note that the costs of these retainers will result in a very expensive process going forward. The matter of PJT and the CRO's compensation was the subject of some negative comment by the 1974 Pension Plan. However, the 1974 Pension Plan did not suggest any alternate way of proceeding with the SISP and the operations generally. When pressed by the Court on the subject, the 1974 Pension Plan acknowledged that time was of the essence in implementing the SISP and it did not contend that a further delay was warranted to canvas other options.

[37] PJT is to receive a monthly work fee of US\$100,000, although some savings are achieved since this amount will not be charged until the completion of the U.S. sale. In addition, PJT will receive a capital raising fee based on the different types of financing that might be arranged. Lastly, PJT is entitled to a transaction or success fee, based on the consideration received from any transaction.

[38] At the outset of the application, the proposed compensation for the CRO was similar to that of PJT. The CRO was to obtain a monthly work fee of US\$75,000. In

addition, the CRO was to receive a transaction or success fee based on the consideration received from any transaction. After further consideration by the petitioners and BlueTree, this proposed compensation was subsequently renegotiated so as to limit the success fee to \$1 million upon the happening of a "triggering event" (essentially, a recapitalization, refinancing, acquisition or sale of assets or liabilities).

[39] To secure the success fees of PJT and the CRO, the Walter Canada Group seeks a charge of up to a maximum of \$10 million, with each being secured to a limit of half that amount. Any other fees payable by the Walter Canada Group to PJT and the CRO would be secured by the Administration Charge granted in the initial order.

[40] The jurisdiction to grant charges for such professional fees is found in s. 11.52 of the CCAA:

11.52(1) On notice to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the security or charge, the court may make an order declaring that all or part of the property of a debtor company is subject to a security or charge — in an amount that the court considers appropriate — in respect of the fees and expenses of

- (a) the monitor, including the fees and expenses of any financial, legal or other experts engaged by the monitor in the performance of the monitor's duties;
- (b) any financial, legal or other experts engaged by the company for the purpose of proceedings under this Act; and
- (c) any financial, legal or other experts engaged by any other interested person if the court is satisfied that the security or charge is necessary for their effective participation in proceedings under this Act.

[41] In *U.S. Steel Canada Inc. (Re)*, 2014 ONSC 6145 at para. 22, Justice Wilton-Siegel commented on the necessity of such a charge in a restructuring, as it is usually required to ensure the involvement of these professionals and achieve the best possible outcome for the stakeholders. I concur in that sentiment here, as the involvement of PJT and BlueTree is premised on this charge being granted.

[42] In *Canwest Publishing Inc.*, 2010 ONSC 222 at para. 54, Justice Pepall (as she then was) set out a non-exhaustive list of factors to consider when determining

whether the proposed compensation is appropriate and whether charges should be granted for that compensation:

- (a) the size and complexity of the businesses being restructured;
- (b) the proposed role of the beneficiaries of the charge;
- (c) whether there is an unwarranted duplication of roles;
- (d) whether the quantum of the proposed charge appears to be fair and reasonable;
- (e) the position of the secured creditors likely to be affected by the charge; and
- (f) the position of the Monitor.

[43] I am satisfied that the Walter Canada Group's assets and operations are significantly complex so as to justify both these appointments and the proposed compensation. I have already referred to the significant regulatory and environmental issues that arise. In addition, relevant employment issues are already present. Any transaction relating to these assets and operations will be anything but straightforward.

[44] The factors relating to the proposed role of the professionals and whether there is unwarranted duplication can be addressed at the same time. As conceded by the petitioners' and Monitor's counsel, there will undoubtedly be some duplication with the involvement of the Monitor, PJT and the CRO. However, the issue is whether there is *unwarranted* duplication of effort. I am satisfied that the process has been crafted in a fashion that recognizes the respective roles of these professionals but also allows for a coordinated effort that will assist each of them in achieving their specific goals. Each has a distinct focus and I would expect that their joint enterprise will produce a better result overall.

[45] Any consideration of compensation will inevitably be driven by the particular facts that arise in the proceedings in issue. Even so, I have not been referred to any material that indicates that the proposed compensation and charge in favour of PJT and the CRO are inconsistent with compensation structures and protections approved in other similarly complex insolvency proceedings. In that regard, I accept

the petitioners' submissions that the task ahead justifies both the amount of the fees to be charged and the protections afforded by the charge. In short, I find that the proposed compensation is fair and reasonable in these circumstances.

[46] The secured creditors likely to be affected by the charges for PJT and the CRO's fees have been given notice and do not oppose the relief being sought.

[47] Finally, the Monitor is of the view that the agreed compensation of PJT and the CRO and the charge in their favour are appropriate.

[48] In summary, all circumstances support the relief sought. Accordingly, I conclude that it is appropriate to appoint the CRO and approve the engagement of PJT on the terms sought. In addition, I grant a charge in favour of PJT and the CRO to a maximum of \$10 million to secure their compensation beyond the monthly work fees, subject to the Administration Charge, the Director's Charge and the KERP Charge (as discussed below).

**Key Employee Retention Plan ("KERP")**

[49] The Walter Canada Group also seeks approval of a KERP, for what it describes as a "key" employee needed to maintain the Canadian operations while the SISP is being conducted. In addition, Mr. Harvey states that this employee has specific information which the CRO, PJT and the Monitor will need to draw on during the implementation of the SISP.

[50] The detailed terms of the KERP are contained in a letter attached to Mr. Harvey's affidavit #3 sworn December 31, 2015. In the course of submissions, the Walter Canada Group sought an order to seal this affidavit, on the basis that the affidavit and attached exhibit contained sensitive information, being the identity of the employee and the compensation proposed to be paid to him.

[51] I was satisfied that a sealing order should be granted with respect to this affidavit, based on the potential disclosure of this personal information to the public: see *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41 at

para. 53; *Sahlin v. The Nature Trust of British Columbia*, 2010 BCCA 516 at para. 6. A sealing order was granted on January 5, 2016.

[52] The proposed KERP must be considered in the context of earlier events. This individual was to receive a retention bonus from the U.S. entities; however, this amount is now not likely to be paid. In addition, just prior to the commencement of these proceedings, this person was given a salary increase to reflect his additional responsibilities, including those arising from the loss of support and the shared services from the U.S. entities. This new salary level has not been disclosed to the court or the stakeholders.

[53] The Walter Canada Group has proposed that this employee be paid a retention bonus on the occurrence of a "triggering event", provided he remains an active employee providing management and other services. The defined triggering events are such that the retention bonus is likely to be paid whatever the outcome might be. In addition, to secure the payment of the KERP to this employee, Walter Energy Canada seeks a charge up to the maximum amount of the retention bonus.

[54] The amount of the retention bonus is large. It has been disclosed in the sealed affidavit but has not been disclosed to certain stakeholders, including the 1974 Pension Plan. The Monitor states in its report:

The combination of the salary increase and proposed retention bonus ... were designed to replace the retention bonus previously promised to the KERP Participant by Walter Energy U.S.

[55] I did not understand the submissions of the 1974 Pension Plan to be that the granting of a KERP for this employee was inappropriate. Rather, the concern related to the amount of the retention bonus, which is to be considered in the context of the earlier salary raise. At the end of the day, the 1974 Pension Plan was content to leave a consideration of the level of compensation to the Court, given the sealing of the affidavit.

[56] The authority to approve a KERP is found in the courts' general statutory jurisdiction under s. 11 of the CCAA to grant relief if "appropriate": see *U.S. Steel Canada* at para. 27.

[57] As noted by the court in *Timminco Ltd. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 506 at para. 72, KERPs have been approved in numerous insolvency proceedings, particularly where the retention of certain employees was deemed critical to a successful restructuring.

[58] Factors to be considered by the court in approving a KERP will vary from case to case, but some factors will generally be present. See for example, *Grant Forest Products Inc. (Re)* (2009), 57 C.B.R. (5th) 128 (Ont. S.C.J.); and *U.S. Steel Canada* at paras. 28-33.

[59] I will discuss those factors and the relevant evidence on this application, as follows:

- a) Is this employee important to the restructuring process?: In its report, the Monitor states that this employee is the most senior remaining executive in the Walter Canada Group, with extensive knowledge of its assets and operations. He was involved in the development of the Wolverine mine and has extensive knowledge of all three mines. He also has strong relationships in the communities in which the mines are located, with the Group's suppliers and with the regulatory authorities. In that sense, this person's expertise will enhance the efforts of the other professionals to be involved, including PJT, the CRO and the Monitor: *U.S. Steel* at para. 28;
- b) Does the employee have specialized knowledge that cannot be easily replaced?: I accept that the background and expertise of this employee is such that it would be virtually impossible to replace him if he left the employ of the Walter Canada Group: *U.S. Steel* at para. 29;
- c) Will the employee consider other employment options if the KERP is not approved?: There is no evidence here on this point, but I presume

that the KERP is more a prophylactic measure, rather than a reactionary one. In any event, this is but one factor and I would adopt the comments of Justice Newbould in *Grant Forest Products* at paras. 13-15, that a “potential” loss of this person’s employment is a factor to be considered;

- d) Was the KERP developed through a consultative process involving the Monitor and other professionals?: The Monitor has reviewed the proposed KERP, but does not appear to have been involved in the process. Mr. Harvey confirms the business decision of the Walter Canada Group to raise this employee’s salary and propose the KERP. The business judgment of the board and management is entitled to some deference in these circumstances: *Grant Forest Products* at para. 18; *U.S. Steel Canada* at para. 31; and
- e) Does the Monitor support the KERP and a charge?: The answer to this question is a resounding “yes”. As to the amount, the Monitor notes that the amount of the retention bonus is at the “high end” of other KERP amounts of which it is aware. However, the Monitor supports the KERP amount even in light of the earlier salary increase and after considering the value and type of assets under this person’s supervision and the critical nature of his involvement in the restructuring. As this Court’s officer, the views of the Monitor are also entitled to considerable deference by this Court: *U.S. Steel* at para. 32.

[60] In summary, the petitioners’ counsel described the involvement of this individual in the CCAA restructuring process as “essential” or “critical”. These sentiments are echoed by the Monitor, who supports the proposed KERP and charge to secure it. The Monitor’s report states that this individual’s ongoing employment will be “highly beneficial” to the Walter Canada Group’s restructuring efforts, and that this employee is “critical” to the care and maintenance operations at

the mines, the transitioning of the shared services from the U.S. and finally, assisting with efforts under the SISP.

[61] What I take from these submissions is that a loss of this person's expertise either now or during the course of the CCAA process would be extremely detrimental to the chances of a successful restructuring. In my view, it is more than evident that there is serious risk to the stakeholders if this person does not remain engaged in the process. Such a result would be directly opposed to the objectives of the CCAA. I find that such relief is appropriate and therefore, the KERP and charge to secure the KERP are approved.

**Cash Collateralization / Intercompany Charge**

[62] Pursuant to the initial order, the Walter Canada Group was authorized and directed to cash collateralize all letters of credit secured by the 2011 credit agreement within 15 days of any demand to do so from the administrative agent, Morgan Stanley Senior Funding Inc. ("Morgan Stanley"). This order was made on the basis of representations by the Monitor's counsel that it had obtained a legal opinion that the security held by Morgan Stanley was valid and enforceable against the Walter Canada Group.

[63] On December 9, 2015, Morgan Stanley demanded the cash collateralization of approximately \$22.6 million of undrawn letters of credit. On December 21, 2015, Morgan Stanley requested that the Walter Canada Group enter into a cash collateral agreement (the "Cash Collateral Agreement") to formalize these arrangements.

[64] The Walter Canada Group seeks the approval of the Cash Collateral Agreement, which provides for the establishment of a bank account containing the cash collateral and confirms Morgan Stanley's pre-filing first-ranking security interest in the cash in the bank account. The cash collateralization is intended to relate to letters of credit issued on behalf of Brule Coal Partnership, Walter Canadian Coal Partnership, Wolverine Coal Partnership and Willow Creek Coal Partnership. However, only the Brule Coal Partnership has sufficient cash to collateralize all these letters of credit.

[65] Accordingly, the Walter Canada Group seeks an intercompany charge in favour of Brule Coal Partnership, and any member of the Walter Canada Group, to the extent that a member of the Walter Canada Group makes any payment or incurs or discharges any obligation on behalf of any other member of the Walter Canada Group in respect of obligations under the letters of credit. The intercompany charge is proposed to rank behind all of the other court-ordered charges granted in these proceedings, including the charges for PJT and the CRO and the KERP.

[66] No objection is raised in respect of this relief. The Monitor is of the view that the intercompany charge is appropriate.

[67] In my view, this relief is simply a formalization of the earlier authorization regarding the trusting up of these contingent obligations. On that basis, I approve the Cash Collateral Agreement. I also approve the intercompany charge in favour of the Brule Coal Partnership, on the basis that it is necessary to preserve the *status quo* as between the various members of the Walter Canada Group who will potentially benefit from the use of this Partnership's funds. Such a charge will, as stated by the Monitor, protect the interests of creditors as against the individual entities within the Walter Canada Group.

### **Stay Extension**

[68] In order to implement the SISP, and further its restructuring efforts in general, the Walter Canada Group is seeking an extension of the stay and other relief granted in the initial order until April 5, 2016.

[69] Section 11.02(2) and (3) of the CCAA authorizes the court to make an order extending a stay of proceedings granted in the initial application. In this case, the evidence, together with the conclusions of the Monitor, support that an extension is appropriate and that the petitioners are acting in good faith and with due diligence. No stakeholder has suggested otherwise.

[70] As noted above, it is anticipated that the Walter Canada Group will have sufficient liquidity to continue operating throughout the requested stay period.

[71] Further, as the Phase 1 deadline in the SISP is March 18 2016, an extension of the stay until April 5, 2016 will provide sufficient time for PJT to solicit, and the CRO (in consultation with the Monitor and PJT) to consider, any letters of intent. At that time, the process may continue to Phase 2 of the SISP, if the CRO, in consultation with the Monitor and PJT, deems it advisable. In any event, at the time of the next court date, there will be a formal update to the court and the stakeholders on the progress under the SISP.

[72] The only issue relating to the extension of the stay arises from the submissions of the Union, who represents the employees at the Wolverine mine owned and operated by the Wolverine Coal Partnership ("Wolverine LP"). The Union wishes to continue with certain outstanding legal proceedings outstanding against Wolverine LP, as follows:

- a) In June 2015, the B.C. Labour Relations Board (the "Board") found that Wolverine LP was in breach of s. 54 of the *Labour Relations Code*, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 224 (the "Code"). The Board ordered Wolverine LP to pay \$771,378.70 into trust by way of remedy. This was estimated to be the amount of damages owed by Wolverine LP, but the Union took the position that further amounts are owed. In any event, this amount was paid and is currently held in trust;
- b) In November 2015, Wolverine LP filed a proceeding in this court seeking a judicial review of the Board's decision on the s. 54 issue. As a result, the final determination of the damages arising from the Code breach has not yet occurred and may never occur if Wolverine LP succeeds in its judicial review; and
- c) Following layoffs in April 2014, the Union claimed that a "northern allowance" was payable by Wolverine LP to the employees, including those on layoff. This claim was rejected at arbitration, and upheld on review at the Board. In February 2015, the Union filed a proceeding in this court seeking a judicial review of the Board's decision.

[73] The Union's counsel has referred me to my earlier decision in *Yukon Zinc Corporation (Re)*, 2015 BCSC 1961. There, I summarized the principles that govern applications by a creditor to lift the stay of proceedings to litigate claims:

[26] There is also no controversy concerning the principles which govern applications by creditors under the CCAA to lift the stay of proceedings to litigate claims in other courts or forums, other than by the procedures in place in the restructuring proceedings:

- a) the lifting of the stay is discretionary: *Canwest Global Communications Corp.*, 2011 ONSC 2215, at paras. 19, 27;
- b) there are no statutory guidelines and the applicant faces a "very heavy onus" in making such an application: *Canwest Global Communications Corp. (Re)* (2009), 61 C.B.R. (5th) 200, at para. 32, 183 A.C.W.S. (3d) (Ont. S.C.J.) ("*Canwest* (2009)"), as applied in *Azure Dynamics Corporation (Re)*, 2012 BCSC 781, at para. 5 and 505396 *B.C. Ltd. (Re)*, 2013 BCSC 1580, at para. 19;
- c) there are no set circumstances where a stay will or will not be lifted, although examples of situations where the courts have lifted stay orders are set out in *Canwest* (2009) at para. 33;
- d) relevant factors will include the status of the CCAA proceedings and what impact the lifting of the stay will have on the proceedings. The court may consider whether there are sound reasons for doing so consistent with the objectives of the CCAA, including a consideration of the relative prejudice to parties and, where relevant, the merits of the proposed action: *Canwest* (2009) at para. 32;
- e) particularly where the issue is one which is engaged by a claims process in place, it must be remembered that one of the objectives of the CCAA is to promote a streamlined process to determine claims that reduces expense and delay; and
- f) as an overarching consideration, the court must consider whether it is in the interests of justice to lift the stay: *Canwest* (2009); *Azure Dynamics* at para. 28.

[74] I concluded that the Union had not met the "heavy onus" on it to justify the lifting of the stay to allow these various proceedings to continue. My specific reasons are:

- a) The Union argues that the materials are essentially already assembled and that these judicial reviews can be scheduled for short chambers matters. As such, the Union argues that there is "minimal prejudice" to Wolverine LP. While this may be so, proceeding with these matters will

inevitably detract both managerial and legal focus from the primary task at hand, namely to implement the SISP, and as such, potentially interfere with the restructuring efforts;

- b) The Union argues that any purchaser of Wolverine LP's mine will inherit outstanding employee obligations pursuant to the *Code*. Accordingly, the Union argues that it will be more attractive to a buyer for the mine to have all outstanding employee claims resolved. Again, while this may come to pass, such an argument presupposes an outcome that is anything less than clear at this time. Such a rationale is clearly premature;
- c) The Union argues that it is unable to distribute the \$771,378.70 to its members until Wolverine LP's judicial review is addressed. Frankly, I see this delay as the only real prejudice to the Union members. However, on the other hand, one might argue that the Union members are in a favourable position with these monies being held in trust as opposed to being unsecured creditors of Wolverine. In any event, the Union's claim to these monies has not yet been determined and arises from a dispute that dates back to April 2014. Therefore, there is no settled liability that would allow such payment to be made; and
- d) The Union claims that these matters must be determined "in any event" and that they should be determined "sooner rather than later". However, the outcome of the SISP may significantly affect what recovery any creditor may hope to achieve in this restructuring. In the happy circumstance where there will be monies to distribute, I expect that a claims process will be implemented to determine valid claims, not only in respect of the Union's claims, but all creditors.

[75] In summary, there is nothing to elevate the Union's claims such that it is imperative that they be determined now. There is nothing to justify the distraction and expense of proceeding with these actions to the detriment of the restructuring

efforts. If it should come to pass that monies will be distributed to creditors, such as the Union, then I expect that the usual claims process will be implemented to decide the validity of those claims.

[76] In the meantime, if it becomes necessary to determine the validity of these claims quickly (such as to clarify potential successor claims for a purchaser), the Union will be at liberty to renew its application to lift the stay for that purpose.

[77] Accordingly, I grant an extension of the stay of proceedings and other ancillary relief until April 5, 2016.

“Fitzpatrick J.”



**SUPREME COURT OF CANADA**

**CITATION:** Sherman Estate v.  
Donovan, 2021 SCC 25

**APPEAL HEARD:**  
October 6, 2020  
**JUDGMENT RENDERED:**  
June 11, 2021  
**DOCKET:** 38695

**BETWEEN:**

**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

**CORAM:** Wagner C.J. and Moldaver, Karakatsanis, Brown, Rowe, Martin and Kasirer JJ.

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

(paras. 1 to 108)

**NOTE:** This document is subject to editorial revision before its reproduction in final form in the *Canada Supreme Court Reports*.

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SHERMAN ESTATE v. DONOVAN

**Estate of Bernard Sherman and Trustees of the Estate and  
Estate of Honey Sherman and Trustees of the Estate**

*Appellants*

v.

**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*

**Indexed as: Sherman Estate v. Donovan**

**2021 SCC 25**

File No.: 38695.

2020: October 6; 2021: June 11.

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

ON APPEAL FROM THE COURT OF APPEAL FOR ONTARIO

*Courts — Open court principle — Sealing orders — Discretionary limits on court openness — Important public interest — Privacy — Dignity — Physical safety — Unexplained deaths of prominent couple generating intense public scrutiny and prompting trustees of estates to apply for sealing of probate files — Whether privacy and physical safety concerns advanced by estate trustees amount to important public interests at such serious risk to justify issuance of sealing orders.*

A prominent couple was found dead in their home. Their deaths had no apparent explanation and generated intense public interest. To this day, the identity and motive of those responsible remain unknown, and the deaths are being investigated as homicides. The estate trustees sought to stem the intense press scrutiny prompted by the events by seeking sealing orders of the probate files. Initially granted, the sealing orders were challenged by a journalist who had reported on the couple's deaths, and by the newspaper for which he wrote. The application judge sealed the probate files, concluding that the harmful effects of the sealing orders were substantially outweighed by the salutary effects on privacy and physical safety interests. The Court of Appeal unanimously allowed the appeal and lifted the sealing orders. It concluded that the privacy interest advanced lacked a public interest quality, and that there was no evidence of a real risk to anyone's physical safety.

*Held:* The appeal should be dismissed.

The estate trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest under the test for discretionary limits on court openness. As such, the sealing orders should not have been issued. Open courts can be a source of inconvenience and embarrassment, but this discomfort is not, as a general matter, enough to overturn the strong presumption of openness. That said, 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 and a court can make an exception to the open court principle if it is at serious risk. In this case, the risks to privacy and physical safety cannot be said to be sufficiently serious.

Court proceedings are presumptively open to the public. Court openness is protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and is essential to the proper functioning of Canadian democracy. Reporting on court proceedings by a free press is often said to be inseparable from the principle of open justice. The open court principle is engaged by all judicial proceedings, whatever their nature. 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 engaging the fundamental rationale for openness — discouraging mischief and ensuring confidence in the administration of justice through transparency — such that the strong presumption of openness applies.

The test for discretionary limits on court openness is directed at maintaining the presumption while offering sufficient flexibility for courts to protect other public interests where they arise. 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.

The recognized scope of what interests might justify a discretionary exception to open courts has broadened over time and now extends generally to important public interests. The breadth of this category 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. While there is no closed list of important public interests, courts must be cautious and alive to the fundamental importance of the open court rule when they are identifying them. 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. By contrast, whether that interest is at serious risk is a fact-based finding that is necessarily made in context. The identification of an important interest and the seriousness of the risk to that interest are thus theoretically separate and qualitatively distinct operations.

Privacy has been championed as a fundamental consideration in a free society, and its public importance has been recognized in various settings. Though an individual's privacy will be pre-eminently important to that individual, the protection of privacy is also in the interest of society as a whole. Privacy therefore cannot be rejected as a mere personal concern: some personal concerns relating to privacy overlap with public interests.

However, cast too broadly, the recognition of a public interest in privacy could threaten the strong presumption of openness. The privacy of individuals will be at risk in many court proceedings. Furthermore, privacy is a complex and contextual concept, making it difficult for courts to measure. Recognizing an important interest in privacy generally would accordingly be unworkable.

Instead, the public character of the privacy interest involves protecting individuals from the threat to their dignity. Dignity in this sense involves the right to present core aspects of oneself to others in a considered and controlled manner; it is an expression of an individual's unique personality or personhood. This interest is consistent with the Court's emphasis on the importance of privacy, but is tailored to preserve the strong presumption of openness.

Privacy as predicated on dignity will be at serious risk in limited circumstances. 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. Dignity will be at serious risk only

where the information that would be disseminated as a result of court openness is sufficiently sensitive or private such that openness can be shown to meaningfully strike at the individual's biographical core in a manner that threatens their integrity. The question is whether the information reveals something intimate and personal about the individual, their lifestyle or their experiences.

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. The seriousness of the risk may be affected by the extent to which information is disseminated and already in the public domain, and the probability of the dissemination actually occurring. The burden is on the applicant to show that privacy, understood in reference to dignity, is at serious risk; this erects a fact-specific threshold consistent with the presumption of openness.

There is also an important public interest in protecting individuals from physical harm, but a discretionary order limiting court openness can only be made where there is a serious risk to this important public interest. Direct evidence is not necessarily required to establish a serious risk to an important public interest, as objectively discernable harm may be identified on the basis of logical inferences. But this process of inferential reasoning is not a licence to engage in impermissible speculation. 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. Mere assertions of grave physical harm are therefore insufficient.

In addition to a serious risk to an important interest, it must be shown 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. 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.

In the present case, the risk to the important public interest in privacy, defined in reference to dignity, is not serious. The information contained in the probate files does not reveal anything particularly private or highly sensitive. It has not been shown that it would strike at the biographical core of the affected individuals in a way that would undermine their control over the expression of their identities. Furthermore, the record does not show a serious risk of physical harm. The estate 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 deaths and the association of the affected individuals with the deceased is not a reasonable inference but is speculation.

Even if the estate trustees had succeeded in showing a serious risk to privacy, a publication ban — less constraining on openness than the sealing orders — would have likely been sufficient as a reasonable alternative to prevent this risk. As a

final barrier, the estate 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.

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By Kasirer J.

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*Workers, Local 401*, 2013 SCC 62, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 733; *Toronto Star Newspaper Ltd. v. Ontario*, 2012 ONCJ 27, 289 C.C.C. (3d) 549; *Douez v. Facebook, Inc.*, 2017 SCC 33, [2017] 1 S.C.R. 751; *R. v. Paterson* (1998), 102 B.C.A.C. 200; *S. v. Lamontagne*, 2020 QCCA 663; *Himel v. Greenberg*, 2010 ONSC 2325, 93 R.F.L. (6th) 357; *A.B. v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2017 FC 629; *R. v. Pickton*, 2010 BCSC 1198; *Lac d'Amiante du Québec Ltée v. 2858-0702 Québec Inc.*, 2001 SCC 51, [2001] 2 S.C.R. 743; *3834310 Canada inc. v. Chamberland*, 2004 CanLII 4122; *R. v. Spencer*, 2014 SCC 43, [2014] 2 S.C.R. 212; *Coltsfoot Publishing Ltd. v. Foster-Jacques*, 2012 NSCA 83, 320 N.S.R. (2d) 166; *Goulet v. Transamerica Life Insurance Co. of Canada*, 2002 SCC 21, [2002] 1 S.C.R. 719; *Godbout v. Longueuil (Ville de)*, [1995] R.J.Q. 2561, aff'd [1997] 3 S.C.R. 844; *A. v. B.*, 1990 CanLII 3132; *R. v. Plant*, [1993] 3 S.C.R. 281; *R. v. Tessling*, 2004 SCC 67, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 432; *R. v. Cole*, 2012 SCC 53, [2012] 3 S.C.R. 34; *Work Safe Twerk Safe v. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario*, 2021 ONSC 1100; *Fedeli v. Brown*, 2020 ONSC 994; *R. v. Marakah*, 2017 SCC 59, [2017] 2 S.C.R. 608; *R. v. Quesnelle*, 2014 SCC 46, [2014] 2 S.C.R. 390; *R. v. Mabior*, 2012 SCC 47, [2012] 2 S.C.R. 584; *R. v. Chanmany*, 2016 ONCA 576, 352 O.A.C. 121; *X. v. Y.*, 2011 BCSC 943, 21 B.C.L.R. (5th) 410; *R. v. Esseghaier*, 2017 ONCA 970, 356 C.C.C. (3d) 455.

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APPEAL from a judgment of the Ontario Court of Appeal (Doherty, Rouleau and Hourigan JJ.A.), 2019 ONCA 376, 47 E.T.R. (4th) 1, [2019] O.J. No. 2373 (QL), 2019 CarswellOnt 6867 (WL Can.), setting aside a decision of Dunphy J., 2018 ONSC 4706, 417 C.R.R. (2d) 321, 41 E.T.R. (4th) 126, 28 C.P.C. (8th) 102, [2018] O.J. No. 4121 (QL), 2018 CarswellOnt 13017 (WL Can.). Appeal dismissed.

*Chantelle Cseh and Timothy Youdan*, for the appellants.

*Iris Fischer and Skye A. Sepp*, for the respondents.

*Peter Scrutton*, for the intervener the Attorney General of Ontario.

*Jacqueline Hughes*, for the intervener the Attorney General of British Columbia.

*Ryder Gilliland*, for the intervener the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

*Ewa Krajewska*, for the intervener the Income Security Advocacy Centre.

*Robert S. Anderson, Q.C.*, for the 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 the intervener the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association.

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

The judgment of the Court was delivered by

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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 Limited*, [2017] UKSC 49, [2019] A.C. 161, at para. 16, citing *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326, at pp. 1326-39, per Cory J.). Limits on openness in service of other public interests have been recognized, but sparingly and always with an eye to preserving a strong presumption that justice should proceed in public view (*Dagenais v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 835, at p. 878; *R. v. Mentuck*, 2001 SCC 76, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 442, at paras. 32-39; *Sierra Club*, at para. 56). The test for discretionary limits on court openness is directed at maintaining this presumption while offering sufficient flexibility for courts to protect these other public interests where they arise (*Mentuck*, at para. 33). The parties agree that this is the appropriate framework of analysis for resolving this appeal.

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

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

[32] For the reasons that follow, I disagree with the Trustees that the ostensibly unbounded privacy interest they invoke qualifies as an important public interest within the meaning of *Sierra Club*. Their broad claim fails to focus on the elements of privacy that are deserving of public protection in the open court context. That is not to say, however, that privacy can never ground an exceptional measure such as the sealing

orders sought in this case. While the mere embarrassment caused by the dissemination of personal information through the open court process does not rise to the level justifying a limit on court openness, circumstances do exist where an aspect of a person's private life has a plain public interest dimension.

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

[34] This public interest in privacy appropriately focuses the analysis on the impact of the dissemination of sensitive personal information, rather than the mere fact of this dissemination, which is frequently risked in court proceedings and is necessary in a system that privileges court openness. It is a high bar — higher and more precise

than the sweeping privacy interest relied upon here by the Trustees. This public interest will only be seriously at risk where the information in question strikes at what is sometimes said to be the core identity of the individual concerned: information so sensitive that its dissemination could be an affront to dignity that the public would not tolerate, even in service of open proceedings.

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

[36] In the present case, the information in the court files was not of this highly sensitive character that it could be said to strike at the core identity of the affected persons; the Trustees have failed to show how the lifting of the sealing orders engages the dignity of the affected individuals. I am therefore not convinced that the intrusion on their privacy raises a serious risk to an important public interest as required by *Sierra Club*. Moreover, as I shall endeavour to explain, there was no serious risk of

physical harm to the affected individuals by lifting the sealing orders. Accordingly, this is not an appropriate case in which to make sealing orders, or any order limiting access to these court files. In the circumstances, the admissibility of the Toronto Star's new evidence is moot. I propose to dismiss the appeal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

understanding of the administration of justice” (para. 22). The centrality of this principle to the court system underlies the strong presumption — albeit one that is rebuttable — in favour of court openness (para. 40; *Mentuck*, at para. 39).

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

[41] The recognized scope of what interests might justify a discretionary exception to open courts has broadened over time. In *Dagenais*, Lamer C.J. spoke of a requisite risk to the “fairness of the trial” (p. 878). In *Mentuck*, Iacobucci J. extended this to a risk affecting the “proper administration of justice” (para. 32). Finally, in *Sierra Club*, Iacobucci J., again writing for a unanimous Court, restated the test to capture any serious risk to an “important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation” (para. 53). He simultaneously clarified that the important interest must be expressed as a public interest. For example, on the facts of that case, a harm to a particular business interest would not have been sufficient, but the “general commercial interest of preserving confidential information” was an important interest because of its public character (para. 55). This is consistent with the fact that this test

was developed in reference to the *Oakes* jurisprudence that focuses on the “pressing and substantial” objective of legislation of general application (*Oakes*, at pp. 138-39; see also *Mentuck*, at para. 31). The term “important interest” therefore captures a broad array of public objectives.

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

[43] The test laid out in *Sierra Club* continues to be an appropriate guide for judicial discretion in cases like this one. The breadth of the category of “important interest” transcends the interests of the parties to the dispute and provides significant

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

[44] Finally, I recall that the open court principle is engaged by all judicial proceedings, whatever their nature (*MacIntyre* at pp. 185-86; *Vancouver Sun*, at para. 31). To the extent the Trustees suggested, in their arguments about the negative effects of the sealing orders, that probate in Ontario does not engage the open court principle or that the openness of these proceedings has no public value, I disagree. The certificates the Trustees sought from the court are issued under the seal of that court, thereby bearing the imprimatur of the court’s authority. The court’s decision, even if rendered in a non-contentious setting, will have an impact on third parties, for example

by establishing the testamentary paper that constitutes a valid will (see *Otis v. Otis* (2004), 7 E.T.R. (3d) 221 (Ont. S.C.), at paras. 23-24). Contrary to what the Trustees argue, the matters in a probate file are not quintessentially private or fundamentally administrative. Obtaining a certificate of appointment of estate trustee in Ontario is a court proceeding and the fundamental rationale for openness — discouraging mischief and ensuring confidence in the administration of justice through transparency — applies to probate proceedings and thus to the transfer of property under court authority and other matters affected by that court action.

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

B. *The Public Importance of Privacy*

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

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

necessity requirement in this case and in *Williams* is, I think, mistaken. Personal concerns that relate to aspects of the privacy of an individual who is before the courts can coincide with a public interest in confidentiality.

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

pre-eminently important to that individual. But this Court has also long recognized that the protection of privacy is, in a variety of settings, in the interest of society as a whole.

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

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

[51] Further, in *Alberta (Information and Privacy Commissioner) v. United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 401*, 2013 SCC 62, [2013] 3 S.C.R. 733

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

[52] Privacy as a public interest is underlined by specific aspects of privacy protection present in legislation at the federal and provincial levels (see, e.g., *Privacy Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. P-21; *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, S.C. 2000, c. 5 (“*PIPEDA*”); *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. F.31; *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, CQLR, c. C-12, s. 5; *Civil Code of Québec*, arts. 35 to 41).<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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

(*Edmonton Journal*, at p. 1345, per Cory J.; see also the concurring reasons of Wilson J., at p. 1354, in which “the public interest in protecting the privacy of litigants generally in matrimonial cases against the public interest in an open court process” was explicitly noted). There is also continued support for the social and public importance of individual privacy in the academic literature (see, e.g., A. J. Cockfield, “Protecting the Social Value of Privacy in the Context of State Investigations Using New Technologies” (2007), 40 *U.B.C. L. Rev.* 41, at p. 41; K. Hughes, “A Behavioural Understanding of Privacy and its Implications for Privacy Law” (2012), 75 *Modern L. Rev.* 806, at p. 823; P. Gewirtz, “Privacy and Speech” (2001), *Sup. Ct. Rev.* 139, at p. 139). It is therefore inappropriate, in my respectful view, to dismiss the public interest in protecting privacy as merely a personal concern. This does not mean, however, that privacy generally is an important public interest in the context of limits on court openness.

[53] The fact that the case before the application judge concerned individuals who were advancing their own privacy interests, which were undeniably important to them as individuals, does not mean that there is no public interest at stake. In *F.N. (Re)*, this was the personal interest that young offenders had in remaining anonymous in court proceedings as a means of encouraging their personal rehabilitation (para. 11). All of society had a stake, according to Binnie J., in the young person’s personal prospect for rehabilitation. This same idea from *F.N. (Re)* was cited in support of finding the interest in *Sierra Club* to be a public interest. That interest, rooted first in an agreement of personal concern to the contracting parties involved, was a private matter that evinced,

alongside its personal interest to the parties, a “public interest in confidentiality” (*Sierra Club*, at para. 55). Similarly, while the Trustees have a personal interest in preserving their privacy, this does not mean that the public has no stake in this same interest because — as this Court has made clear — it is related to moral autonomy and dignity which are pressing and substantial concerns.

[54] In this appeal, the *Toronto Star* suggests that legitimate privacy concerns would be effectively protected by a discretionary order where there is “something more” to elevate them beyond personal concerns and sensibilities (*R.F.*, at para. 73). The Income Security Advocacy Centre, by way of example, submits that privacy serves the public interests of preventing harm and of ensuring individuals are not dissuaded from accessing the courts. I agree that these concepts are related, but in my view care must be taken not to conflate the public importance of privacy with that of other interests; aspects of privacy, such as dignity, may constitute important public interests in and of themselves. A risk to personal privacy may be tied to a risk to psychological harm, as it was in *Bragg* (para. 14; see also J. Rossiter, *Law of Publication Bans, Private Hearings and Sealing Orders* (loose-leaf), s. 2.4.1). But concerns for privacy may not always coincide with a desire to avoid psychological harm, and may focus instead, for example, on protecting one’s professional standing (see, e.g., *R. v. Paterson* (1998), 102 B.C.A.C. 200, at paras. 76, 78 and 87-88). Similarly, there may be circumstances where the prospect of surrendering the personal information necessary to pursue a legal claim may deter an individual from bringing that claim (see *S. v. Lamontagne*, 2020 QCCA 663, at paras. 34-35 (CanLII)). In the same way, the prospect

of surrendering sensitive commercial information would have impaired the conduct of the party's defence in *Sierra Club* (at para. 71), or could pressure an individual into settling a dispute prematurely (K. Eltis, *Courts, Litigants and the Digital Age* (2nd ed. 2016), at p. 86). But this does not necessarily mean that a public interest in privacy is wholly subsumed by such concerns. I note, for example, that access to justice concerns do not apply where the privacy interest to be protected is that of a third party to the litigation, such as a witness, whose access to the courts is not at stake and who has no choice available to terminate the litigation and avoid any privacy impacts (see, e.g., *Himel v. Greenberg*, 2010 ONSC 2325, 93 R.F.L. (6th) 357, at para. 58; see also Rossiter, s. 2.4.2(2)). In any event, the recognition of these related and valid important public interests does not answer the question as to whether aspects of privacy in and of themselves are important public interests and does not diminish the distinctive public character of privacy, considered above.

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

p. 1353, per Wilson J.). Writing extra-judicially, McLachlin C.J. explained that “[i]f we are serious about peoples’ private lives, we must preserve a modicum of privacy. Equally, if we are serious about our justice system, we must have open courts. The question is how to reconcile these dual imperatives in a fair and principled way” (“Courts, Transparency and Public Confidence: To the Better Administration of Justice” (2003), 8 *Deakin L. Rev.* 1, at p. 4). In seeking that reconciliation, the question becomes whether the relevant dimension of privacy amounts to an important public interest that, when seriously at risk, would justify rebutting the strong presumption favouring open courts.

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

[56] While the public importance of privacy has clearly been recognized by this Court in various settings, caution is required in deploying this concept in the test for discretionary limits on court openness. It is a matter of settled law that open court proceedings by their nature can be a source of discomfort and embarrassment and these intrusions on privacy are generally seen as of insufficient importance to overcome the presumption of openness. The *Toronto Star* has raised the concern that recognizing privacy as an important public interest will lower the burden for applicants because the privacy of litigants will, in some respects, always be at risk in court proceedings. I agree that the requirement to show a serious risk to an important interest is a key threshold component of the analysis that must be preserved in order to protect the open court principle. The recognition of a public interest in privacy could threaten the strong

presumption of openness if privacy is cast too broadly without a view to its public character.

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

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

and covertness the exception — that the right to privacy, however defined, in some measure gives way to the open court ideal. I share the view that the open court principle presumes that this limit on the right to privacy is justified.

[59] The Toronto Star is therefore right to say that the privacy of individuals will very often be at some risk in court proceedings. Disputes between and concerning individuals that play out in open court necessarily reveal information that may have otherwise remained out of public view. Indeed, much like the Court of Appeal in this case, courts have explicitly adverted to this concern when concluding that mere inconvenience is insufficient to cross the initial threshold of the test (see, e.g., 3834310 *Canada inc. v. 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 untailed reference to either privacy, harm or access to justice, was given pride of place. Indeed, it is that narrow aspect of privacy considered to be a fundamental right that courts had fixed upon before the enactment of art. 12 *C.C.P.* — [TRANSLATION] “what is part of one’s personal life, in short, what constitutes a minimum personal sphere” (*Godbout*, at p. 2569, per Baudouin J.A.; see also *A. v. B.*, 1990 CanLII 3132 (Que. C.A.), at para. 20, per Rothman J.A.).

[68] The “preservation of the dignity of the persons involved” is now consecrated as the archetypal public order interest in art. 12 *C.C.P.* It is the exemplar of the *Sierra Club* important public interest in confidentiality that stands as justification for an exception to openness (S. Rochette and J.-F. Côté, “Article 12”, in L. Chamberland, ed., *Le grand collectif: Code de procédure civile — Commentaires et annotations* (5th ed. 2020), vol. 1, at p. 102; D. Ferland and B. Emery, *Précis de procédure civile du Québec* (6th ed. 2020), vol. 1, at para. 1-111). Dignity gives concrete expression to this public order interest because all of society has a stake in its

preservation, notwithstanding its personal connections to the individuals concerned. This codification of *Sierra Club*'s notion of important public interest highlights the superordinate importance of human dignity and the appropriateness of limiting court openness on this basis as against an overbroad understanding of privacy that might be otherwise unsuitable to the open court context.

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

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

[71] Violations of privacy that cause a loss of control over fundamental personal information about oneself are damaging to dignity because they erode one's ability to present aspects of oneself to others in a selective manner (D. Matheson, "Dignity and Selective Self-Presentation", in I. Kerr, V. Steeves and C. Lucock, eds., *Lessons from*

*the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy and Identity in a Networked Society* (2009), 319, at pp. 327-28; L. M. Austin, “Re-reading Westin” (2019), 20 *Theor. Inq. L.* 53, at pp. 66-68; Eltis (2016), at p. 13). Dignity, used in this context, is a social concept that involves presenting core aspects of oneself to others in a considered and controlled manner (see generally Matheson, at pp. 327-28; Austin, at pp. 66-68). Dignity is eroded where individuals lose control over this core identity-giving information about themselves, because a highly sensitive aspect of who they are that they did not consciously decide to share is now available to others and may shape how they are seen in public. This was even alluded to by La Forest J., dissenting but not on this point, in *Dagg*, where he referred to privacy as “[a]n expression of an individual’s unique personality or personhood” (para. 65).

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

other core elements of individual well-being, including individual dignity. This parallel helps to understand dignity as a more limited dimension of privacy relevant as an important public interest in the open court context.

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

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

[75] If the interest is ultimately about safeguarding a person's dignity, that interest will be undermined when the information reveals something sensitive about them as an individual, as opposed to generic information that reveals little if anything about who they are as a person. Therefore the information that will be revealed by court openness must consist of intimate or personal details about an individual — what this

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

[76] The test for discretionary limits on court openness imposes on the applicant the burden to show that the important public interest is at serious risk. Recognizing that privacy, understood in reference to dignity, is only at serious risk where the information in the court file is sufficiently sensitive erects a threshold consistent with the presumption of openness. This threshold is fact specific. It addresses the concern, noted above, that personal information can frequently be found in court files and yet finding this sufficient to pass the serious risk threshold in every case would undermine the

structure of the test. By requiring the applicant to demonstrate the sensitivity of the information as a necessary condition to the finding of a serious risk to this interest, the scope of the interest is limited to only those cases where the rationale for not revealing core aspects of a person's private life, namely protecting individual dignity, is most actively engaged.

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

[78] I pause here to note that I refer to cases on s. 8 of the *Charter* above for the limited purpose of providing insight into types of information that are more or less personal and therefore deserving of public protection. If the impact on dignity as a

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

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

[80] I note that the seriousness of the risk may be affected by the extent to which information would be disseminated without an exception to the open court principle. If the applicant raises a risk that the personal information will come to be known by a large segment of the public in the absence of an order, this is a plainly more serious

risk than if the result will be that a handful of people become aware of the same information, all else being equal. In the past, the requirement that one be physically present to acquire information in open court or from a court record meant that information was, to some extent, protected because it was “practically obscure” (D. S. Ardia, “Privacy and Court Records: Online Access and the Loss of Practical Obscurity” (2017), 4 *U. Ill. L. Rev.* 1385, at p. 1396). However, today, courts should be sensitive to the information technology context, which has increased the ease with which information can be communicated and cross-referenced (see Bailey and Burkell, at pp. 169-70; Ardia, at pp. 1450-51). In this context, it may well be difficult for courts to be sure that information will not be broadly disseminated in the absence of an order.

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

further harm to the privacy interest by additional dissemination, particularly if the feared dissemination of highly sensitive information is broader or more easily accessible (see generally Solove, at p. 1152; Ardia, at p. 1393-94; E. Paton-Simpson, “Privacy and the Reasonable Paranoid: The Protection of Privacy in Public Places” (2000), 50 *U.T.L.J.* 305, at p. 346).

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

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

[84] Finally, and as discussed above, individual sensitivities alone, even if they can be notionally associated with “privacy”, are generally insufficient to justify a

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

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

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

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

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

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

to openness. If it is, the question becomes whether a serious risk is made out in light of the facts of this case.

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

[89] Applying the appropriate framework to the facts of this case, I conclude that the risk to the important public interest in the affected individuals’ privacy, as I have defined it above in reference to dignity, is not serious. The information the

Trustees seek to protect is not highly sensitive and this alone is sufficient to conclude that there is no serious risk to the important public interest in privacy so defined.

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

[91] With regard to the sensitivity of the information, however, the information contained in these files does not reveal anything particularly private about the affected individuals. What would be revealed might well cause inconvenience and perhaps embarrassment, but it has not been shown that it would strike at their biographical core in a way that would undermine their control over the expression of their identities. Their privacy would be troubled, to be sure, but the relevant privacy interest bearing on the dignity of the affected persons has not been shown to be at serious risk. At its highest, the information in these files will reveal something about the relationship between the deceased and the affected individuals, in that it may reveal to whom the deceased entrusted the administration of their estates and those who they wished or were deemed to wish to be beneficiaries of their property at death. It may also reveal some basic personal information, such as addresses. Some of the beneficiaries might

well, it may fairly be presumed, bear family names other than Sherman. I am mindful that the deaths are being investigated as homicides by the Toronto Police Service. However, even in this context, none of this information provides significant insight into who they are as individuals, nor would it provoke a fundamental change in their ability to control how they are perceived by others. The fact of being linked through estate documents to victims of an unsolved murder is not in itself highly sensitive. It may be the source of discomfort but has not been shown to constitute an affront to dignity in that it does not probe deeply into the biographical core of these individuals. As a result, the Trustees have failed to establish a serious risk to an important public interest as required by *Sierra Club*.

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

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

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

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

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

[96] Unlike the privacy interest raised in this case, there was no controversy that there is an important public interest in protecting individuals from physical harm. It is

worth underscoring that the application judge correctly treated the protection from physical harm as a distinct important interest from that of the protection of privacy and found that this risk of harm was “foreseeable” and “grave” (paras. 22-24). The issue is whether the Trustees have established a serious risk to this interest for the purpose of the test for discretionary limits on court openness. The application judge observed that it would have been preferable to include objective evidence of the seriousness of the risk from the police service conducting the homicide investigation. He nevertheless concluded there was sufficient proof of risk to the physical safety of the affected individuals to meet the test. The Court of Appeal says that was a misreading of the evidence, and the Toronto Star agrees that the application judge’s conclusion as to the existence of a serious risk to safety was mere speculation.

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

[98] As the Trustees correctly argue, it is not just the probability of the feared harm, but also the gravity of the harm itself that is relevant to the assessment of serious

risk. Where the feared harm is particularly serious, the probability that this harm materialize need not be shown to be likely, but must still be more than negligible, fanciful or speculative. The question is ultimately whether this record allowed the application judge to objectively discern a serious risk of physical harm.

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

[100] Further, I recall that what is at issue here is not whether the affected individuals face a safety risk in general, but rather whether they face such a risk as a result of the openness of these court files. In light of the contents of these files, the

Trustees had to point to some further reason why the risk posed by this information becoming publicly available was more than negligible.

[101] The speculative character of the chain of reasoning leading to the conclusion that a serious risk of physical harm exists in this case is underlined by differences between these facts and those cases relied on by the Trustees. In *X. v. Y.*, 2011 BCSC 943, 21 B.C.L.R. (5th) 410, the risk of physical harm was inferred on the basis that the plaintiff was a police officer who had investigated “cases involving gang violence and dangerous firearms” and wrote sentencing reports for such offenders which identified him by full name (para. 6). In *R. v. Esseghaier*, 2017 ONCA 970, 356 C.C.C. (3d) 455, Watt J.A. considered it “self-evident” that the disclosure of identifiers of an undercover operative working in counter-terrorism would compromise the safety of the operative (para. 41). In both cases, the danger flowed from facts establishing that the applicants were in antagonistic relationships with alleged criminal or terrorist organizations. But in this case, the Trustees asked the application judge to infer not only the fact that harm would befall the affected individuals, but also that a person or persons exist who wish to harm them. To infer all this on the basis of the Shermans’ deaths and the association of the affected individuals with the deceased is not reasonably possible on this record. It is not a reasonable inference but, as the Court of Appeal noted, a conclusion resting on speculation.

[102] Were the mere assertion of grave physical harm sufficient to show a serious risk to an important interest, there would be no meaningful threshold in the analysis.

Instead, the test requires the serious risk asserted to be well grounded in the record or the circumstances of the particular case (*Sierra Club*, at para. 54; *Bragg*, at para. 15). This contributes to maintaining the strong presumption of openness.

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

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

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

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

[106] Further, the Trustees would have had to show that the benefits of any order necessary to protect from a serious risk to the important public interest outweighed the

harmful effects of the order, including the negative impact on the open court principle (*Sierra Club*, at para. 53). In balancing the privacy interests against the open court principle, it is important to consider whether the information the order seeks to protect is peripheral or central to the judicial process (paras. 78 and 86; *Bragg*, at paras. 28-29). There will doubtless be cases where the information that poses a serious risk to privacy, bearing as it does on individual dignity, will be central to the case. But the interest in important and legally relevant information being aired in open court may well overcome any concern for the privacy interests in that same information. This contextual balancing, informed by the importance of the open court principle, presents a final barrier to those seeking a discretionary limit on court openness for the purposes of privacy protection.

## VI. Conclusion

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

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

*Appeal dismissed.*

*Solicitors for the appellants: Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg, Toronto.*

*Solicitors for the respondents: Blake, Cassels & Graydon, Toronto.*

*Solicitor for the intervener the Attorney General of Ontario: Attorney General of Ontario, Toronto.*

*Solicitor for the intervener the Attorney General of British Columbia: Attorney General of British Columbia, Vancouver.*

*Solicitors for the intervener the Canadian Civil Liberties Association: DMG Advocates, Toronto.*

*Solicitors for the intervener the Income Security Advocacy Centre: Borden Ladner Gervais, Toronto.*

*Solicitors for the 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.: Farris, Vancouver.*

*Solicitors for the intervener the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association: McCarthy Tétrault, Toronto.*

*Solicitors for the interveners the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, the HIV Legal Network and the Mental Health Legal Committee: HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, Toronto.*

**CITATION:** Ontario Securities Commission v. Bridging Finance Inc., 2021 ONSC 4347  
**COURT FILE NO.:** CV-21-00661458-00CL  
**DATE:** 2021-06-22

**SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE - ONTARIO**

**RE: 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

**BEFORE:** Chief Justice G.B. Morawetz

**COUNSEL:** *John Finnigan, Grant Moffat and Adam Driedger*, for the Receiver

*Carlo Rossi and Adam Gotfried*, for the Ontario Securities Commission

*Lawrence Thacker*, for Natasha Sharpe

*David Bish*, for The Coco Group, 2693600 Ontario Inc., Rocky Coco and Jenny Coco

*Marc Wasserman and Justine Erickson*, for BlackRock Financial Management, Inc.

*Kyla Mahar*, for RC Morris Capital Management Ltd. and RCM NGB Holdings Limited

*Alex MacFarlane, James MacLellan and Charlotte Chien*, for Zurich Insurance Company Ltd

*Natasha MacParland*, for Willoughby Asset Management Inc.

*Steven Weisz and Shaun Parsons*, for the University of Minnesota Foundation

*Steve Graff*, for Investors in various Bridging Funds

*Melissa MacKewn*, for David Sharpe

*Fraser Dickson*, for a former employee of Bridging Finance Inc.

*Caitlin Fell, Sharon Kour, Pat Corney and Andy Kent*, for the Ad-Hoc Group of Retail Investors

*David Ullmann*, for the Respondents, Thomas Canning (Maidstone) Limited, William Thomas, Robert Thomas, and 2190330 Ontario Ltd.

**HEARD:** June 16, 2021

### **AMENDED ENDORSEMENT**

[1] This endorsement addresses the motion brought by PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. (“PwC”), receiver of each of the Respondents (the “Receiver”) for an order requesting, among other things, approval of the Key Employee Retention Plan (“KERP”) and the KERP Charge; approving the formation, composition, and mandate of the Limited Partner Advisory Committees; tolling the applicable limitation periods in respect of any Misrepresentation Rights until the Tolling Termination Date; approving the Receiver’s recommended course of action in connection with partial repayment of amounts owing under a credit facility made available by certain of the Respondents as described in Confidential Appendix “B” to the Third Report of the Receiver, dated June 9, 2021 (the “Third Report”); sealing Confidential Appendix “A” and Confidential Appendix “B” to the Third Report until further Order of the Court; and approval of the Third Report.

[2] This endorsement also addresses the motion brought by a group of retail investors in the Bridging Funds (the “Ad Hoc Group of Retail Investors”) for an order appointing Weisz, Fell, Kour LLP (“WFK”) as representative counsel (“Representative Counsel”) for all retail investors holding units of the Bridging Funds, excluding investment advisors and institutional investors (the “Retail Investors”).

[3] Capitalized terms not expressly defined herein are as defined in the Third Report.

[4] The factual background is set out in the Third Report.

[5] The Receiver is in the process of developing and implementing a strategy to maximize value for all stakeholders. This strategy will include a review of the consolidated portfolio of loans held by all of the Bridging Funds. There will also have to be a reconciliation of inter-fund accounts and review of inter-fund cash allocations.

[6] The objective of all stakeholders should be aligned with respect to the development and implementation of a strategy to maximize the value of the loan portfolio.

[7] However, the alignment of interests may very well be different when it comes to the reconciliation of inter-fund accounts and the review of inter-fund cash allocations. The Third

Report indicates that investors participated through the purchase of units of the Bridging Funds. The Bridging Funds marketed to investors include five limited partnership fund offerings, three RSP fund offerings and two investment trust fund offerings.

[8] It is premature to comment on how the assets realized from the loan portfolio will be divided among the funds, but it is conceivable that there will be disputes between the various funds with respect to asset allocation.

[9] It is against this background that the motions have to be considered.

[10] Certain relief sought by the Receiver was not opposed.

[11] The Receiver is of the view that in order to incentivize certain eligible employees to remain as employees of Bridging Finance Inc. (“BFI”) during the course of these proceedings, a KERP should be approved, together with a related charge on the property of the Respondents in the maximum amount of \$366,000 (the “KERP Charge”) as security for payments under the KERP, which will rank subordinate to the Receiver’s Charge, the Receiver’s Borrowing Charge and each Intercompany Charge, but in priority to all other security interests.

[12] As set out in Confidential Appendix “A” to the Third Report, the Receiver has allocated among Eligible Employees approximately \$266,000 of the requested KERP Payments. The remaining \$100,000 may be allocated among Eligible Employees or additional key Employees provided they meet certain criteria set out in the Bridging KERP.

[13] Courts have frequently recognized the utility and importance of KERPs in restructuring proceedings and have approved KERPs in numerous debtor-in-possession proceedings under both the *Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act* (the “CCAA”) and receivership proceedings pursuant to the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* (the “BIA”) and the *Courts of Justice Act* (the “CJA”).

[14] The CCAA, the BIA and the CJA, as well as the *Securities Act* are silent with respect to the approval of KERPs and the granting of a charge to secure a KERP. Counsel to the Receiver submits that as such, the approval of a KERP and a KERP Charge are matters within the discretion of the court, grounded in the court’s inherent and/or statutory jurisdiction to make any orders it sees fit. (See, for example: *Aralez Pharmaceuticals Inc., (Re)*, 2018 ONSC 6980; *Cinram International Inc., (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 3767 and *Grant Forest Products Inc., (Re)*, [2009] O.J. No. 3344.)

[15] The factual and legal basis for the granting of the KERP is set out in the Receiver’s factum at paragraphs 5 – 14.

[16] The Receiver recommends that the court exercise its discretion to approve the Bridging KERP and grant the KERP Charge.

[17] I accept this recommendation. The KERP and the KERP Charge are approved.

[18] The Receiver also seeks an order tolling the statutory limitation periods applicable to any “Misrepresentation Rights”, as defined at paragraph 16 of the factum, until the stay of proceedings imposed against the Respondents and the Property pursuant to the Appointment Orders is terminated.

[19] The factual and legal basis for granting such relief is set out at paragraphs 16 – 22 of the factum.

[20] The Receiver recommends that the proposed Tolling Order be granted.

[21] I accept this recommendation. The Tolling Order is granted.

[22] The Receiver also recommends that its proposed course of action, as described in Confidential Appendix “B” to the Third Report in connection with a partial repayment of amounts owing under a Credit Facility made available to a borrower by certain of the Respondents should be approved. Having reviewed Confidential Appendix “B” to the Third Report, I am satisfied that the Receiver’s recommended course of action should be approved.

[23] The considerations involved in the granting of a sealing order must take into account the recent Supreme Court decision in *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25 at paras. 37 – 38, where Kasirer J. wrote that:

[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 redaction order – properly be ordered. This test applies to all discretionary limits on court openness, subject only to valid legislative enactments (*Toronto Star Newspaper Ltd. v. Ontario*, 2005, SCC 41, [2005] 2 S.C.R. 188, at paras. 7 and 22).

[24] Having reviewed the Confidential Appendices, I am satisfied that the three prerequisites have been satisfied. There is a public interest in ensuring the integrity of the Sales Process and any arbitration. There is no reasonable alternative measure to preserve the integrity of the Sales Process and any arbitration. Finally, as a matter of proportionality, I am satisfied that the benefits of the order outweigh its negative effects. As such, the Sealing Order should be granted, pending further order of the court.

[25] Confidential Appendix “A” contains the Bridging KERP, which contains confidential and personal information with respect to the compensation of each Eligible Employee.

[26] Confidential Appendix “B” contains the Receiver’s recommended course of action in connection with the proposed transaction. The terms of the proposed transactions are confidential and the Receiver submits the disclosure of such confidential commercially sensitive information at this time would undermine its efforts to maximize value for stakeholders.

[27] I am satisfied that no stakeholders will be materially prejudiced by sealing the Confidential Appendices and that the salutary effects of granting the Sealing Order outweigh any deleterious effects. As such, I am satisfied that the sealing order should be granted, pending further order of the court.

[28] In its Notice of Motion, the Receiver requested approval of payments to RC Morris. The request for such approval was deferred.

[29] The Receiver also requested approval of its activities as set out in the draft order. There was no opposition to this request which is granted.

[30] The balance of this endorsement addresses the Receiver’s request for approval of limited partner advisory committees and the motion of the Ad Hoc Group of Retail Investors.

[31] The Receiver seeks court approval of the following two Limited Partner Advisory Committees:

- (a) a limited partner advisory committee comprised of Unitholders representing Unitholders in the Bridging Funds generally (the “LPAC”); and
- (b) a limited partner advisory committee comprised of Unitholders representing Unitholders in the Bridging Indigenous Impact Fund (the “BIIF LPAC”).

(the LPAC and the BIIF LPAC are referred to as the “Committees”).

[32] The Receiver states that the primary functions of the Committees, will be to, among other things:

- (a) provide the Receiver with a confidential forum to obtain input and feedback on behalf of Unitholders in the Bridging Funds regarding actions or decisions of the Receiver, as considered appropriate by the Receiver; and
- (b) provide such other input and assistance to the Receiver regarding matters involving Bridging as the Receiver may reasonably request from time to time.

[33] The Receiver contends that the Committees will provide an efficient and cost-effective means for Unitholders to provide direct input to the Receiver but will not have any decision-making authority with respect to any of the Respondents or the Property. The proposed Committee Members represent a diverse cross-section of both retail and institutional Unitholders and each Committee Member will be bound by a confidentiality agreement satisfactory to the Receiver.

[34] Mr. Graff states that he represents 15 different investors in various Bridging Funds with over \$400MM of claims, and he does not oppose the relief requested by the Receiver. He points out that his clients have received regular and effective communications from the Receiver.

[35] The appointment of the Committees is challenged by the Ad Hoc Group of Retail Investors. The Ad Hoc Group of Retail Investors are of the view that it is more appropriate to appoint WFK as Representative Counsel for all Retail Investors holding units of the Bridging Funds, excluding investment advisors and institutional investors.

[36] In its factum, counsel points out that the Retail Investors are concerned about recovery of their investments and the protection of their rights and are most concerned about fairness. There are over 25,000 Retail Investors who will bear the brunt of any shortfall. Counsel submits that this receivership was not commenced with the Retail Investors in mind and makes reference to an OSC publicly made statement that, "as a regulatory body, we do not normally recover money for investors."

[37] Counsel submits that the receivership proceeding lacks meaningful input from the Retail Investors. Counsel also submits that it is not clear from the materials filed by the Receiver as to what role the Committees will perform, since the Receiver has not described what matters it proposes to consult with the Committees. Further, counsel raises concerns that the Committees will be dominated by investment advisors and institutional or professional investors, and this presents the appearance of conflicts.

[38] The gist of the submissions put forward by counsel is that the Retail Investors require representation by counsel whose sole focus and loyalty is to them. The appointment of Representative Counsel will also generally improve the efficiency of the receivership; communication with Retail Investors will be streamlined and a multiplicity of legal retainers avoided.

[39] I have concluded that the relief requested by the Receiver for the appointment of the LPACs should be granted – albeit with certain time limitations.

[40] As noted above, the Receiver is currently involved in the development and implementation of a strategy to maximize value for all stakeholders. A strategic review of the portfolio is in process and the Receiver is not in a position to confirm valuations for certain funds.

[41] It seems to me that the Committees will be in a position to provide the Receiver with meaningful input and feedback on behalf of Unitholders regarding actions or decisions of the Receiver. At this time the focus is on maximizing realizations for the benefit of Unitholders and the Committees may very well be in a position to provide meaningful assistance to the Receiver.

[42] I also note that although the OSC may have made a statement to the effect that “as a regulatory body, we do not normally recover money for investors”, it is necessary to take into account that the Receiver was appointed pursuant to the provisions of section 129 of the *Securities Act* in a particular section 129(2) which provides:

129 [2] No order shall be made under subsection (1) unless the court is satisfied that,

(a) the appointment of a receiver, receiver and manager, trustee or liquidator of all or any part of the property of the person or company **is in the best interests of the creditors** of the person or company or of persons or companies any of whose property is in the possession or under the control of the person or company or the security holders of our subscribers to the person or company; or

(b) it is appropriate for the due administration of Ontario securities law.

(Emphasis added)

[43] I am also satisfied that the Receiver will take into account the best interests of all Unitholders.

[44] Counsel to the Ad Hoc Group of Retail Investors also questioned the proposed mandate of the Committees. At this point in time, the focus of the Committees is to provide input to the Receiver in connection with a strategic review of the portfolio in an effort to maximize value for all stakeholders. This review take some time but should not be extended for an unlimited time. For this reason, it seems to me that the appointment of the Committees should be time-limited to 60 days, subject to extension by court order. It is my expectation that at the end of 60 days, the Receiver should be in a position to report to the court on the portfolio review and also to provide information with respect to the reconciliation of inter-fund accounts.

[45] Accordingly, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to approve the Committees as requested by the Receiver, on the terms set out in the proposed order, with the proviso that the appointment of the Committees is time-limited to 60 days, subject to extension by court order.

[46] With respect to the appointment of Representative Counsel, I am satisfied that the court has jurisdiction to appoint representative counsel under section 101 of the CJA, together with Rules 10.01 and 12.07 of the *Rules of Civil Procedure*.

[47] The issue is whether the appointment of Representative Counsel should be entertained at this time, or whether it is more appropriate to defer consideration of this issue until such time as the Receiver is in a position to report to the court on the portfolio review and also to provide information with respect to the reconciliation of interfund accounts. I have concluded that it is appropriate to defer consideration of this issue for the following reasons.

[48] First, the focus at the present time should be on the portfolio review and developing a strategy to maximize value for all stakeholders.

[49] Second, when the Receiver reports on this issue and provides information with respect to the reconciliation of interfund accounts, it may become clearer as to the role that Representative Counsel can play. It could very well be that the entitlement or potential entitlement of Unitholders in the various funds will differ, which could in turn require the appointment of different Representative Counsel for different funds. In my view, the potential role of Representative Counsel should focus on allocation issues as opposed to realization issues.

[50] The relief requested by the Ad Hoc Group of Retina Investors is dismissed, with leave to reassess the requested relief in 60 days.

[51] The appointment of Representative Counsel can be revisited at the time that the Receiver makes its report in 60 days.

[52] An order shall issue to reflect the foregoing.



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Chief Justice G.B. Morawetz

**Date:** June 22, 2021

File No. CI 23-01-39360

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

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 POLAR WINDOW OF CANADA LTD., ACCURATE DORWIN (2020) INC., GLASS 8 INC., NATIONAL INTERIORS (2021) INC., 12986647 CANADA LTD. o/a ALLSCO WINDOWS & DOORS, 12986591 CANADA LTD. o/a ALWEATHER WINDOWS & DOORS, POLAR HOLDING LTD., 10064720 MANITOBA LTD. AND 12986914 CANADA LTD.

(the "Applicants")

APPLICATION UNDER: *THE COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT*, R.S.C., c. C-36, AS AMENDED

Certified copy of

**TRUE COPY**

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ORDER

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**J.J. BURNELL / ANJALI SANDHU**  
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Facsimile: (204) 957-0840

**File No. 0037903.00035**

Box No. 3



Toronto-Dominion Bank (“TD”), counsel for Oscar Bidco, Inc., counsel for Chandos Construction and counsel for Kawneer Company Canada Ltd., no one else appearing although duly served as appears from the Affidavit of Service of Lila Alnadi sworn April 4, 2023,

1. THIS COURT ORDERS that the time for service of the Notice of Motion and the supporting materials is hereby abridged and validated so that this Motion is properly returnable today and hereby dispenses with further service thereof.
2. THIS COURT ORDERS that all capitalized terms not otherwise defined herein have the definitions ascribed to them in the Amended and Restated Initial Order (the “**Amended and Restated Initial Order**”) pronounced in this proceeding on February 14, 2023.

*SISP and SISP Procedures*

3. THIS COURT ORDERS that the sale and investment solicitation process in respect of the Applicants (the “**SISP**”) and its implementation in accordance with the Sale and Investment Solicitation Procedures (the “**SISP Procedures**”), as attached hereto as **Schedule “1”**, is hereby approved.
4. THIS COURT ORDERS that each of the Applicants and the Monitor are hereby authorized and empowered to implement the SISP and perform each of their respective obligations under the SISP in accordance with the SISP Procedures.

*DIP Loan and DIP Charge Amendment*

5. THIS COURT ORDERS that the execution of the Amended Interim Facility Loan Agreement dated April 5, 2023 (the "**Amended Loan Agreement**") by the Applicants attached as **Exhibit "2"** to the Affidavit of Stephen Segal sworn April 3, 2023 is hereby authorized and approved and the Applicants are hereby authorized and empowered to borrow up to an additional \$1,150,000.00 (\$2,350,000.00 in aggregate) pursuant to the Amended Loan Agreement, and paragraph 34 of the Amended and Restated Initial Order is amended accordingly.

6. THIS COURT ORDERS that the Amended and Restated Initial Order is amended such that all references to the "Commitment Letter" shall refer to the Commitment Letter, as amended by the Amended Loan Agreement.

7. THIS COURT ORDERS that the DIP Lender's Charge shall secure all indebtedness, interest, fees, costs, liabilities and/or obligations owing to TD under and pursuant to the Commitment Letter, as amended by the Amended Loan Agreement.

*Stay Period*

8. THIS COURT ORDERS that the Stay Period is hereby extended until and including July 28, 2023.

*Monitor's Activities*

9. THIS COURT ORDERS that the First Report and the activities and actions of the Monitor as described therein are hereby approved.

*Fee Approval*

10. THIS COURT ORDERS that the fees and disbursements of counsel for the Applicants for the period of January 4, 2023 to March 15, 2023, the fees and disbursements of the Monitor for the period of January 18, 2023 to March 26, 2023 and the fees and disbursements of counsel for the Monitor for the period of January 26, 2023 to March 26, 2023 are hereby approved.

*Funds Entitlement*

11. THIS COURT ORDERS that a hearing date (the "**Hearing**") may be set in the CCAA proceedings to determine the priority and entitlement of TD:

- a. over liens registered or liens that have been submitted to a land titles office for registration, or solely served, or to funds or other security which may, at a later date, be paid into court or into trust to vacate or discharge a lien ("**Liens**"), in respect of any government lands or projects in Manitoba and Alberta ("**Projects**") for work, services and/or supplies provided ("**Work**") in respect of any project to which any of the Applicants are a contracting party, including, but not limited to, all contracts with general contractors and sub/sub-contractors and suppliers ("**Applicant Project**");
- b. to security given or funds deposited with a court for the purposes of vacating or discharging a lien or a claim for a lien ("**Court Lien Discharge Funds**") in respect of Projects for Work in respect of any Applicant Project;

- c. to funds held in trust for the purposes of vacating or discharging a lien or a claim for a lien ("**Trust Lien Discharge Funds**") in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project; or
- d. to statutory trust funds ("**Statutory Trust Funds**", along with Liens, Court Lien Discharge Funds and Trust Lien Discharge Funds, "**Funds**") in accordance with the provincial lien legislation in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project.

12. THIS COURT ORDERS that the Applicants shall as soon as possible serve this Order, which shall include the notice of claim form attached as **Schedule "2"** ("**Notice of Claim Form**"), on the Service List, and any owners, general contractors and lien claimants and statutory trust fund claimants not on the Service List in respect of which liens have either been filed to the Applicants' knowledge or the Applicants have been advised that liens will be filed with respect to projects to which any of the Applicants are a contracting party.

13. THIS COURT ORDERS that any person (other than TD) who:
- a. Claims an interest in, or entitlement to, Liens, in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project;
  - b. Claims an interest in, or entitlement to, Court Lien Discharge Funds in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project;
  - c. Claims an interest in, or entitlement to, Trust Lien Discharge Funds in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project; or

- d. Claims an interest in, or entitlement to, Statutory Trust Funds in accordance with the provincial lien legislation in respect of Projects for Work in respect of an Applicant Project,

(together the "**Interested Parties**")

shall provide to the Monitor one or more completed Notice of Claim Forms by no later than April 17, 2023 ("**Claims Notice Date**").

14. THIS COURT ORDERS that TD may, but is not required to, file a notice of motion regarding the determination of the priority and entitlement of TD to some or all of the Funds ("**TD Priority Motion**"). Any such notice of motion filed by TD must be served by TD on the Applicants, the Monitor and Interested Parties having submitted a Notice of Claim Form by the Claims Notice Date ("**Lien Notice Parties**").

15. THIS COURT ORDERS that TD shall have leave to file and serve an amended notice of motion to the TD Priority Motion by the date TD would be required to file materials under paragraph 16(d) herein, without further order of the Court.

16. THIS COURT ORDERS that in the event TD files and serves the TD Priority Motion, the following shall apply:

- a) The Lien Notice Parties shall within fourteen (14) days of TD filing and serving the TD Priority Motion thereon, file with this Court and serve on the Applicants, the Monitor and TD the affidavit materials they intend to rely upon to establish entitlement to some or all of the Funds, and those who fail to do so shall forever be barred from thereafter claiming any entitlement to the Funds (the "**Lien Claims**

**Bar Date**"). For certainty, nothing in this Order shall bar any party from claiming entitlement to liens where liens have not been submitted for registration or served in respect of government lands as of the Lien Claims Bar Date;

- b) The Applicants shall within thirty (30) days of the Lien Claims Bar Date, file with this Court and serve on the Monitor, TD and the Lien Notice Parties an affidavit setting out all evidence in their possession or knowledge with respect to the Funds and including any reply evidence to any evidence submitted by the Lien Notice Parties;
- c) any cross-examinations on affidavits filed by the Lien Notice Parties and by the Applicants shall occur within fourteen (14) days following the Applicants filing and serving their affidavit material;
- d) TD shall file with this Court and serve on the Applicants, the Monitor and the Lien Notice Parties the materials, including a motion brief, that it intends to rely upon to establish its priority over and entitlement to some or all of the Funds within fourteen (14) days of the completion of cross-examinations;
- e) any responding motion briefs in response to the motion brief of TD shall be filed and served by the Lien Notice Parties on the Applicants, Monitor and TD within one (1) week of TD filing and serving its motion brief.

17. THIS COURT ORDERS that the Applicants or TD may apply to this Court to have the schedule herein varied on four (4) days' notice to the Monitor and Lien Notice Parties.

April 11, 2023

  
BOCK, J.

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

Ian Sutherland K.C., McDougall Gauley LLP, counsel for Deloitte Restructuring Inc.

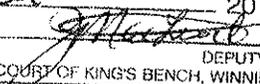
Sam Gabor, Gowling WLG, counsel for The Toronto-Dominion Bank

Jon Hillson, Dentons, counsel for Chandos Construction

Jared Wheeler, Holloway Thliveris LLP, counsel for Oscar Bidco, Inc.

Kelsey Meyer, Bennett Jones LLP, counsel for Kawneer Company Canada Ltd.

AS DIRECTED BY THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE BOCK.

I hereby certify that the within instrument is a true and correct copy of the instrument of which it purports to be a copy.  
Given under my hand and seal of office this 11<sup>th</sup> day of April 20 23  
  
DEPUTY REGISTRAR  
COURT OF KING'S BENCH, WINNIPEG CENTRE

**SALE AND INVESTMENT SOLICITATION PROCEDURES**

**POLAR WINDOW OF CANADA LTD., ACCURATE DORWIN (2020) INC., GLASS 8 INC., NATIONAL INTERIORS (2021) INC., 12986647 CANADA LTD. (O/A ALLSCO WINDOWS & DOORS), AND 12986591 CANADA LTD. (O/A ALWEATHER WINDOWS & DOORS), POLAR HOLDING LTD., 10064720 MANITOBA LTD. AND 12986914 CANADA LTD.**

**RECITALS**

- A. Pursuant to an order granted by the Court of King's Bench in Manitoba (the "**Court**") on February 10, 2023 (the "**Initial Order**"), which Initial Order was amended and restated on February 14, 2023 (the "**ARIO**"), Deloitte Restructuring Inc. was appointed as monitor (the "**Monitor**") in the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* proceedings (the "**CCAA Proceedings**") of Polar Window of Canada Ltd. ("**Polar Window**"), Accurate Dorwin (2020) Inc. ("**Accurate Dorwin**"), Glass 8 Inc. ("**Glass 8**"), National Interiors (2021) Inc. ("**National Interiors**"), 12986647 Canada Ltd. (o/a Allsco Windows & Doors) ("**Allsco**"), and 12986591 Canada Ltd. (o/a Alweather Windows & Doors) ("**Alweather**") (collectively the "**Accurate Group**"), in addition to three (3) holding corporations, Polar Holding Ltd. ("**Polar Holdco**"), 10064720 Manitoba Ltd. ("**1006**"), and 12986914 Canada Ltd. ("**6914**") (collectively the "**Holdcos**"), which hold shares in the Accurate Group.
- B. On April 5, 2023, the Court granted an order (the "**SISP Approval Order**"), among other things, approving and ratifying the sale and investment solicitation procedures (the "**SISP**") and the SISP procedures set forth herein (these "**SISP Procedures**").
- C. The SISP Approval Order, the SISP, and these SISP Procedures shall govern the process for soliciting and selecting bids for:
- (a) the sale (a "**Sale**") of some, all or substantially all of the property, assets and undertakings of the Accurate Group (the "**Property**"), including without limitation:
    - (i) Polar Window;
    - (ii) Accurate Dorwin;
    - (iii) Glass 8;
    - (iv) National Interiors;
    - (v) Allsco; and
    - (vi) Alweather; and
  - (b) for the restructuring, recapitalization, or refinancing of the Accurate Group (an "**Investment**", and together with a Sale, a "**Transaction**").
- D. All dollar amounts expressed herein, unless otherwise noted, are in Canadian currency. Unless otherwise indicated herein, any event that occurs on a day that is not a Business Day shall be deemed to occur on the next Business Day.

## ARTICLE 1 INTERPRETATION

### 1.1 Definitions

In these SISP Procedures, the following terms have the definitions given to them below:

- (a) “**Business Day**” means a day (other than Saturday or Sunday) on which banks are generally open for business in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- (b) “**Draft Approval Order**” means the form of sale approval and vesting order to be developed by the Monitor, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, and provided to Qualified Phase 2 Bidders making a Sale Proposal (in each case as defined below).
- (c) “**Draft Purchase Agreement**” means the form of purchase and sale agreement to be developed by the Monitor, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, and provided to Qualified Phase 2 Bidders making a Sale Proposal (in each case as defined below).
- (d) “**DIP Lender**” means The Toronto-Dominion Bank.
- (e) “**Secured Creditors**” means, as applicable, The Toronto-Dominion Bank, FWCU Capital Corp. and Sallyport Commercial Finance ULC, as parties with first ranking security interests in respect of certain property and assets of the Accurate Group (subject to the priority charges granted in the ARIO).

## ARTICLE 2 OPPORTUNITY

### 2.1 Solicitation Process

- (a) These SISP Procedures describe, among other things, the Property available for sale, the opportunity for an investment in the Accurate Group, the manner in which prospective bidders may gain access to or continue to have access to due diligence materials concerning the Accurate Group, the Property, the manner in which bidders and bids become Qualified Bidders and Qualified Bids (in each case as defined below), respectively, the receipt and negotiation of bids received, the ultimate selection of one or more Successful Bids and a Backup Bid (in each case as defined below), if in the discretion of the Monitor in consultation with the DIP Lender, a Backup Bid is identified in accordance with these SISP Procedures, and the approval thereof by the Court (collectively, the “**Solicitation Process**”).
- (b) The Monitor shall conduct the Solicitation Process as outlined herein. In the event that there is a disagreement or clarification required as to the interpretation or application of these SISP Procedures, the Monitor shall, within ten (10) Business Days, file a motion with the Court seeking directions.

### 2.2 Sale and Investment Opportunity

These SISP Procedures are intended to solicit interest in, and opportunities for: (a) a sale of all or part of the Property, and/or (b) an Investment, in each case to be structured in a manner acceptable

to the Monitor in consultation with the DIP Lender and Tim Morris acting on behalf of the Accurate Group, and not in his personal capacity (the "Accurate Director"). Such offers may include one or more of a restructuring, recapitalization or other form or reorganization of the business and affairs of the Accurate Group as a going concern, or a sale of all, substantially all, of the Property as a going concern or otherwise.

### 2.3 "As Is, Where Is"

Any Sale or Investment will be on an "as is, where is" basis and without surviving representations, warranties, covenants or indemnities of any kind, nature, or description by the Monitor or the Accurate Group or any of their agents, estates, advisors, professionals or otherwise, except to the extent set forth in the relevant agreement with the Successful Bidder.

### 2.4 Timeline

The following table sets out the key milestones under these SISP Procedures:

Milestone	Deadline
Monitor to create list of Known Potential Bidders and distribute Teaser Letters and Confidentiality Agreements	April 10, 2023
Monitor to consider preparation of a CIM and open data room	April 14, 2023
Phase 1 Bid Deadline	May 5, 2023
Phase 2 Bid Deadline	May 19, 2023
Transaction Approval Hearing	June 2, 2023
Target Closing Date	June 9, 2023

The dates set out in the SISP Procedures may be extended by the Monitor in accordance with the terms hereof.

## ARTICLE 3 SOLICITATION OF INTEREST

### 3.1 Solicitation of Interest

- (a) As soon as reasonably practicable, but in any event by no later than April 10, 2023, the Monitor, in consultation with the Accurate Director, shall prepare a list of: (i) potential bidders capable of submitting a Sale Proposal or Investment Proposal and (ii) local or international strategic and financial parties who may be interested in participating in the SISP (the "Known Potential Bidders").
- (b) The Accurate Director and the applicable Secured Creditors may, on a timely basis, identify any parties to the Monitor which shall be included in the list of Known Potential Bidders. Concurrently, the Monitor, in consultation with the DIP Lender will prepare (i) an initial offering summary (the "Teaser Letter") to notify Known Potential Bidders of the existence and terms of the Solicitation Process and invite the Known Potential Bidders to express their interest in participating in a Sale or Investment, and (ii) a form of confidentiality agreement satisfactory to the Monitor (a "Confidentiality Agreement").

- (c) The Monitor may also issue a press release with Canada Newswire setting out the information contained in the Teaser Letter and such other relevant information which the Monitor, in consultation with the Accurate Director, considers appropriate for dissemination in Canada.
- (d) The Monitor shall send the Teaser Letter and Confidentiality Agreement to each Known Potential Bidder by no later than April 12, 2023 and to any other party who requests a copy of the Teaser Letter and Confidentiality Agreement or who is identified as a potential bidder as soon as reasonably practicable after such request or identification, as applicable.

#### ARTICLE 4 PRE-QUALIFICATION

##### 4.1 Participation Requirements

- (a) Unless otherwise provided for herein, ordered by the Court, or agreed by the Monitor, in order to participate in the Solicitation Process and be considered for qualification as a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder in accordance with this Article 4, an interested party, including a Known Potential Bidder (a "**Potential Bidder**"), must deliver the following to the Monitor prior to the Phase 1 Bid Deadline (as defined below):
  - (i) an executed Confidentiality Agreement, which shall inure to the benefit of any Successful Bidder in the event that a Transaction is completed;
  - (ii) a letter setting forth the identity of the Potential Bidder, the contact information for such Potential Bidder, full disclosure of the direct and indirect owners of the Potential Bidder and their principals;
  - (iii) a written acknowledgment of receipt of a copy of the SISP Approval Order (including these SISP Procedures) agreeing to accept and be bound by the provisions contained therein; and
  - (iv) a form of financial disclosure and credit quality support or enhancement that allows the Monitor and the Accurate Director to make a reasonable determination as to the Potential Bidder's financial and other capabilities to consummate a Sale or Investment, as applicable.
- (b) If the Monitor, in consultation with the Accurate Director, determines that a Potential Bidder:
  - (i) has satisfied all of the requirements described in Section 4.1(a) above; and
  - (ii) demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Monitor, in its reasonable business judgement, the financial capability of such Potential Bidder to consummate a Transaction and that such Potential Bidder is likely (based on availability of financing, experience and other considerations) to consummate either a Sale or an Investment,

then such Potential Bidder will be deemed to be a "**Qualified Phase 1 Bidder**". For greater certainty, no Potential Bidder shall be deemed to be a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder without the approval of the Monitor. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Monitor may waive one or

more of the requirements set out in Section 4.1(a)(i) to (iv) and designate a Potential Bidder as a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder.

- (c) The determination as to whether a Potential Bidder is a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder pursuant to Section 4.1(a) will be made as promptly as practicable after a Potential Bidder delivers all of the materials required above. If it is determined that a Potential Bidder is a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, the Monitor will promptly notify the Potential Bidder that it is a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder.
- (d) At any time during Phase 1 of the SISP, the Monitor may eliminate a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, in which case such bidder will be eliminated from the SISP and will no longer be a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder for the purposes of the SISP.
- (e) If it is determined in accordance with Section 4.1(b) above, that there are no Qualified Phase 1 Bidders and that, as a consequence, proceeding with these SISP Procedures is not in the best interests of the Accurate Group or its stakeholders, the Monitor shall notify the applicable Secured Creditors and the Accurate Director forthwith, and within ten (10) Business Days of such determination, and either file a motion with the Court seeking directions with respect to the conduct of the SISP or terminate the SISP.

#### 4.2 Due Diligence

- (a) As soon as reasonably practicable after the determination that a party is a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, the Monitor, with the assistance of the Accurate Director, shall prepare and make available to each Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, in a secure online electronic data room:
  - (i) confidential due diligence information that is in the possession and control of the Monitor, including regarding:
    - (A) the Property available for sale; and
    - (B) the debt of the Accurate Group.

The Monitor may also prepare a confidential information memorandum (the "CIM") providing additional information considered relevant to the Accurate Group if determined to be appropriate.

- (b) At the request of a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, such confidential due diligence information shall also be provided on a confidential basis satisfactory to the Monitor to a proposed lender of such Qualified Phase 1 Bidder that is reasonably acceptable to the Monitor.
- (c) Each Qualified Phase 1 Bidder shall also have such access to due diligence materials, on-site inspections and information relating to the Property, and other information as the Monitor deems appropriate in its discretion.
- (d) The Monitor shall not be obligated to furnish any due diligence materials or information after the Phase 2 Bid Deadline.
- (e) Without limiting the generality of any term or condition of any Confidentiality Agreement between the Monitor and any Potential Bidder or bidder, unless otherwise agreed by the Monitor or ordered by the Court, no bidder shall be permitted to have any discussions with

any counterparty to any contract with the Accurate Group, any current or former director, officer or employee of the Accurate Group, or any of their businesses or any other Potential Bidder or bidder in connection with a Non-Binding Indication of Interest (as defined below) or any other bid submitted in accordance with the terms hereof or in contemplation thereof.

- (f) The Monitor, the Accurate Director, and the Accurate Group are not responsible for, and will have no liability with respect to, any information obtained by any Known Potential Bidder, Potential Bidder, or Qualified Bidder in connection with the Property, a Sale or Investment. The Monitor, the Accurate Director, and the Accurate Group do not make any representations or warranties whatsoever as to the information or the materials provided, except, to the extent the representations or warranties are contained in any Definitive Purchase Agreement or Definitive Investment Agreement (in each case as defined below) between a Successful Bidder or Backup Bidder and the Monitor. Each Qualified Phase 1 Bidder must rely solely on their own independent review, investigation and/or inspection of all information and of the Property and business in connection with their participation in the SISP and any Transaction arising out of the SISP.

## ARTICLE 5 PHASE 1

### 5.1 Seeking Non-Binding Indications of Interest by Qualified Phase 1 Bidders

In order to continue to participate in the Solicitation Process, a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder must deliver a non-binding indication of interest to acquire all, or substantially all, of the Property or make an Investment (each a "**Non-Binding Indication of Interest**") to the Monitor so as to be received by the Monitor not later than 5:00 p.m. (Winnipeg time) on May 5, 2023, or such later date or time as the Monitor may determine appropriate with the prior written consent of the DIP Lender, acting reasonably (the "**Phase 1 Bid Deadline**" and until such time, "**Phase 1**").

### 5.2 Non-Binding Indications of Interest by Qualified Phase 1 Bidders

- (a) Unless otherwise ordered by the Court or agreed by the Monitor, in order to be considered a "**Qualified Phase 1 Bid**" a Non-Binding Indication of Interest submitted by a Qualified Phase 1 Bidder must be received by the Monitor on or before the Phase 1 Bid Deadline, and contain the following information:
- (i) An indication of whether the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder is offering to:
    - (A) acquire all or part of the Property (a "**Sale Proposal**"); or
    - (B) make an Investment (an "**Investment Proposal**");
  - (ii) In the case of a Sale Proposal, the Non-Binding Indication of Interest shall identify:
    - (A) the purchase price in Canadian dollars (including the cash component thereof and/or the liabilities to be assumed by the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder);
    - (B) the assets included, any of the assets expected to be excluded, and/or any additional assets desired to be included in the Transaction;

- (C) the structure and financing of the Transaction (including, but not limited to, the sources of financing for the purchase price, preliminary evidence of the availability of such financing and the steps necessary and associated timing to obtain the financing and consummate the proposed Transaction and any related contingencies, as applicable);
  - (D) an acknowledgement that the contemplated sale will be made on an "*as is, where is*" basis;
  - (E) the key material contracts and leases, if any, the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder wishes to acquire and the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder's proposed treatment of related cure costs, if any;
  - (F) any anticipated corporate, shareholder, internal or regulatory approvals, including without limitation any approvals with respect to the transfer of any permits or licenses or other approvals with respect to environmental matters, required to close the Transaction and the anticipated time frame and any anticipated impediments for obtaining such approvals;
  - (G) a timeline to closing with critical milestones and a statement with respect to the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder's ability to consummate the contemplated Transaction by June 9, 2023 (the "**Target Closing Date**");
  - (H) a detailed description of any additional due diligence required or desired to be conducted prior to the Phase 2 Bid Deadline, if any;
  - (I) contact information for any business, financial or legal advisors retained or to be retained in connection with the contemplated Transaction;
  - (J) a specific indication of sources of capital for the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder and preliminary evidence of the availability of such capital, or such other form of financial disclosure and credit-quality support or enhancement, including contact information for capital/financing sources, that will allow the Monitor to make a reasonable business judgement as to the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder's financial or other capabilities to consummate the contemplated Transaction;
  - (K) any conditions to closing that the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder may wish to impose; and
  - (L) any other terms or conditions of the Sale Proposal which the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder believes are material to the Transaction;
- (iii) In the case of an Investment Proposal, it shall identify:
- (A) the aggregate amount of the equity and debt investment (including, the sources of such capital, preliminary evidence of the availability of such capital and the steps necessary and associated timing to obtain the capital and consummate the proposed Transaction and any related contingencies, as applicable) to be made in the Accurate Group;

- (B) the underlying assumptions regarding the *pro forma* capital structure (including, the anticipated debt levels, debt service fees, interest and amortization);
  - (C) the consideration to be allocated to the stakeholders including claims of any secured or unsecured creditors of the Accurate Group and the proposed treatment of employees;
  - (D) the structure and financing of the Transaction including all requisite financial assurance including a specific indication of sources of capital for the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder and preliminary evidence of the availability of such capital, or such other form of financial disclosure and credit-quality support or enhancement, including contact information for capital/financing sources, that will allow the Monitor to make a reasonable business judgement as to the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder's financial or other capabilities to consummate the contemplated Transaction;
  - (E) any anticipated corporate, shareholder, internal or regulatory approvals, including without limitation any approvals with respect to the transfer of any permits or licenses, required to close the Transaction, the anticipated time frame and any anticipated impediments for obtaining such approvals;
  - (F) the proposed corporate governance structure of the entity or entities owning/operating the business, following implementation of the Investment;
  - (G) contact information for any business, financial or legal advisors retained or to be retained in connection with the contemplated Transaction;
  - (H) additional due diligence required or desired to be conducted prior to the Phase 2 Bid Deadline, if any;
  - (I) a timeline to closing with critical milestones and a statement with respect to the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder's ability to consummate the contemplated Transaction by the Target Closing Date;
  - (J) the proposed treatment of stakeholders, including lenders, trade creditors, shareholders and employees;
  - (K) any conditions to closing that the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder may wish to impose;
  - (L) any other terms or conditions of the Investment Proposal which the Qualified Phase 1 Bidder believes are material to the Transaction; and
- (iv) Such other information reasonably requested by the Monitor.
- (b) The Monitor may, in consultation with the Accurate Director and with the consent of the DIP Lender, acting reasonably, waive compliance with any one or more of the requirements specified herein and deem any non-compliant Non-Binding Indication of Interest to be a Qualified Phase 1 Bid. Notwithstanding the foregoing, prior written consent shall not be

required for amendments or modifications to the SISP that are administrative or minor in nature such that they are unlikely (in the Monitor's reasonable discretion) to have a material effect on the results of the SISP or the DIP Lender, provided further that the Monitor shall consult with the DIP Lender in advance of any such matters.

### 5.3 Assessment of Qualified Phase 1 Bids and Determination of Qualified Phase 2 Bidders

- (a) Within three (3) Business Days of the expiry of the Phase 1 Bid Deadline, the Monitor will provide copies or a summary of any Qualified Phase 1 Bids received to the applicable Secured Creditors and the Accurate Director and set up a meeting by teleconference or other electronic medium to consult with such parties in respect of such bids.
- (b) Following the meeting in (a), the Monitor will, as promptly as practicable after the Phase 1 Bid Deadline but no later than May 12, 2023, assess any Qualified Phase 1 Bids received based on such factors and circumstances as they consider appropriate in the circumstances including, but not limited to:
  - (i) the number of Qualified Phase 1 Bids received;
  - (ii) the extent to which the Qualified Phase 1 Bids relate to the same Property or business or involve Investment Proposals predicated on certain Property or business;
  - (iii) the scope of the Property or business to which any Qualified Phase 1 Bids may relate; and
  - (iv) whether to proceed by way of sealed bid or auction with respect to some or all of the Property.
- (c) If the Monitor is not satisfied with the number or terms of the Qualified Phase 1 Bids (including if none are received), the Monitor, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, may: (i) extend the Phase 1 Bid Deadline for no more than an aggregate period of two (2) weeks without further Court approval and, unless otherwise agreed by the Monitor, the Phase 2 Bid Deadline, and any other deadlines or timeframes hereunder, shall be extended by the same time period, as necessary; or (ii) within ten (10) Business Days of such determination, file a motion with the Court seeking directions.
- (d) If the Monitor, in accordance with Section 5.3(b), determines that:
  - (i) one or more Qualified Phase 1 Bids were received, and
  - (ii) proceeding with Phase 2 (as defined below) of these SISP Procedures is in the best interest of the Accurate Group and its stakeholders,

these SISP Procedures will continue and each Qualified Phase 1 Bidder who has submitted a Qualified Phase 1 Bid that is approved by the Monitor shall be a "**Qualified Phase 2 Bidder**". The Monitor shall provide advance written notice of the commencement of Phase 2 and the names of the Qualified Phase 2 Bidders to the applicable Secured Creditors and the Accurate Director.

- (e) Notwithstanding Section 5.3(d), if the Monitor, in accordance with Section 5.3(b), determines that:
  - (i) one or more Qualified Phase 1 Bids were received, and
  - (ii) proceeding with Phase 2 of these SISP Procedures is not in the best interest of the Accurate Group and its stakeholders,

the Monitor may, in consultation with the Accurate Director and with the consent of the DIP Lender and the applicable Secured Creditors, deem one or more of the Qualified Phase 1 Bids received to be a Qualified Bid, Successful Bid and/or Backup Bid, as applicable, and bypass Phase 2. If the Monitor elects to bypass Phase 2, the timelines set out in these SISP Procedures shall be proportionally accelerated.

## ARTICLE 6 PHASE 2

### 6.1 Seeking Qualified Bids by Qualified Phase 2 Bidders

In order to continue to participate in the Solicitation Process, a Qualified Phase 2 Bidder must deliver a Qualified Purchase Bid or Qualified Investment Bid (as applicable, a "**Phase 2 Bid**") to the Monitor so as to be received by the Monitor by no later than 5:00 p.m. (Winnipeg time) on May 19, 2023, or such later date or time as the Monitor may determine appropriate (the "**Phase 2 Bid Deadline**" and the period between the foregoing and the Phase 1 Bid Deadline being "**Phase 2**").

### 6.2 Qualified Purchase Bids

A Sale Proposal submitted by a Qualified Phase 2 Bidder will be considered a "**Qualified Purchase Bid**" only if the Sale Proposal complies with all of the following:

- (a) it includes a letter stating that the Sale Proposal is irrevocable until the earlier of:
  - (i) approval by the Court of a Successful Bid; and
  - (ii) forty-five (45) Business Days following the Phase 2 Bid Deadline;

provided, however, that if such Sale Proposal is selected as the Successful Bid or the Backup Bid, it shall remain irrevocable until the earlier of: (i) the closing of the Successful Bid or the Backup Bid, as the case may be; and (ii) the outside date stipulated in the Successful Bid or the Backup Bid, as applicable;

- (b) it includes a duly authorized and executed purchase and sale agreement substantially in the form of Draft Purchase Agreement specifying the purchase price, including the cash component thereof and/or the liabilities to be assumed by the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder, expressed in Canadian dollars (the "**Purchase Price**"), together with all exhibits and schedules thereto (the "**Definitive Purchase Agreement**"), and such ancillary agreements as may be required by the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder with all exhibits and schedules thereto (or term sheets that describe the material terms and provisions of such ancillary agreements) and the proposed orders to approve the sale by the Court, as well as copies of

such materials marked to show the amendments and modifications to the Draft Purchase Agreement and Draft Approval Order;

- (c) it does not include any request or entitlement to any break-fee, expense reimbursement or similar type of payment. Further, by submitting a Sale Proposal, a Qualified Phase 2 Bidder shall be deemed to waive its right to pursue a claim for any costs or expenses in any way related to the submissions of its Sale Proposal or these SISP Procedures;
- (d) it includes evidence sufficient to allow the Monitor to make a reasonable determination as to the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's (and its direct and indirect owners and their principals') financial and other capabilities to consummate the transaction contemplated by the Sale Proposal, which evidence could include but is not limited to evidence of a firm, irrevocable commitment for all required funding and/or financing from a creditworthy bank or financial institution;
- (e) it is not conditioned on:
  - (i) the outcome of unperformed due diligence by the bidder; and/or
  - (ii) obtaining any financing capital; andit includes an acknowledgement and representation that the bidder has had an opportunity to conduct any and all required due diligence prior to making its Sale Proposal;
- (f) it fully discloses the identity of each entity that is bidding or otherwise that will be sponsoring or participating in the Sale Proposal, including the identification of the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's direct and indirect owners and their principals, and the complete terms of any such participation;
- (g) it includes an acknowledgement and representation that the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder:
  - (i) has relied solely upon its own independent review, investigation and/or inspection of any documents and/or the assets to be acquired and liabilities to be assumed in making its Sale Proposal;
  - (ii) did not rely upon any written or oral statements, representations, promises, warranties or guaranties whatsoever, whether express or implied (by operation of law or otherwise), regarding the assets to be acquired or liabilities to be assumed or the completeness of any information provided in connection therewith, including by the Monitor, or any of its advisors, except as expressly stated in the Definitive Purchase Agreement submitted by it;
  - (iii) is a sophisticated party capable of making its own assessments in respect of making its Sale Proposal; and
  - (iv) has had the benefit of independent legal advice in connection with its Sale Proposal;
- (h) it includes evidence, in form and substance reasonably satisfactory to the Monitor, of authorization and approval from the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's board of directors (or

comparable governing body) with respect to the submission, execution, delivery and closing of the transaction contemplated by the Sale Proposal;

- (i) it is accompanied by a refundable cash deposit (the “**Deposit**”) in the form of a wire transfer (to a trust account specified by the Monitor), or such other form acceptable to the Monitor, payable to the order of Deloitte Restructuring Inc., in trust, in an amount equal to 10% of the proposed gross Purchase Price, to be held and dealt with in accordance with these SISP Procedures. For certainty, a Deposit will be required for all Sales Proposals, regardless of whether the consideration offered in the Sale Proposal is cash, credit or otherwise, or a combination of any of the foregoing;
- (j) it includes an acknowledgement and representation that the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder will assume the obligations of the Accurate Group under executory contracts, unexpired leases, and licences proposed to be assigned (or identifies with particularity which of such contracts, leases, and licenses of the Accurate Group, as applicable, that the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder wishes not to assume, or alternatively wishes to assume), contains full details of the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder’s proposal for the treatment of related cure costs, and which of these assumptions is a condition of closing;
- (k) it provides for closing of the Qualified Purchase Bid by no later than the Target Closing Date;
- (l) if the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder is an entity newly formed for the purpose of the Transaction, the bid shall contain an equity or debt commitment letter from the parent entity or sponsor, which is satisfactory to the Monitor, that names the Monitor as a third party beneficiary of any such commitment letter with recourse against such parent entity or sponsor;
- (m) it includes evidence, in form and substance satisfactory to the Monitor, of compliance or anticipated compliance with any and all applicable regulatory approvals (including, if applicable, anti-trust regulatory approval and any approvals with respect to the transfer of any permits or licenses), the anticipated time frame for such compliance and any anticipated impediments for obtaining such approvals;
- (n) it contains other information reasonably requested by the Monitor; and
- (o) it is received by no later than the Phase 2 Bid Deadline.

### 6.3 Qualified Investment Bids

An Investment Proposal submitted by a Qualified Phase 2 Bidder will be considered a “**Qualified Investment Bid**” only if the Investment Proposal complies with all of the following:

- (a) it includes duly authorized and executed binding definitive documentation setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed Transaction, including the aggregate amount of the proposed equity and/or debt investment (the “**Investment Amount**”) and details regarding the proposed equity and/or debt structure of the Accurate Group, if applicable, following completion of the proposed Transaction (a “**Definitive Investment Agreement**”);
- (b) it includes a letter stating that the Investment Proposal is irrevocable until the earlier of:
  - (i) approval by the Court of a Successful Bid; and

- (ii) forty-five (45) Business Days following the Phase 2 Bid Deadline;  
provided, however, that if such Investment Proposal is selected as the Successful Bid or Backup Bid, it shall remain irrevocable until the earlier of:
  - (iii) the closing of the Successful Bid or the Backup Bid, as the case may be; and
  - (iv) the outside date stipulated in the Successful Bid or the Backup Bid, as applicable;
- (c) it does not include any request or entitlement to any break-fee, expense reimbursement or similar type of payment. Further, by submitting an Investment Proposal, the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder shall be deemed to waive its right to pursue a claim for any costs or expenses in any way related to the submission of its Investment Proposal or these SISP Procedures;
- (d) it includes written evidence of a firm, irrevocable commitment for all required funding and/or financing from a creditworthy bank or financial institution to consummate the proposed Transaction, or other evidence satisfactory to the Monitor, to allow the Monitor to make a reasonable determination as to the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's financial and other capabilities to consummate the transaction contemplated by the Investment Proposal;
- (e) it is not conditioned on:
- (i) the outcome of unperformed due diligence by the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder; and/or
  - (ii) obtaining any financing capital; and
- includes an acknowledgement and representation that the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder has had an opportunity to conduct any and all required due diligence prior to making its bid;
- (f) it fully discloses the identity of each entity that is bidding or otherwise that will be sponsoring or participating in the Investment Proposal, including the identification of the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's direct and indirect owners and their principals, and the complete terms of any such participation;
- (g) it includes an acknowledgement and representation that the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder:
- (i) has relied solely upon its own independent review, investigation and/or inspection of any documents in making its Investment Proposal;
  - (ii) did not rely upon any written or oral statements, representations, promises, warranties or guaranties whatsoever, whether express or implied (by operation of law or otherwise), regarding the business of the Accurate Group or the completeness of any information provided in connection therewith, including by the Monitor or any of its advisors, except as expressly stated in the Definitive Investment Agreement;
  - (iii) is a sophisticated party capable of making its own assessments in respect of making its Investment Proposal; and

- (iv) has had the benefit of independent legal advice in connection with its Investment Proposal;
- (h) it includes evidence, in form and substance satisfactory to the Monitor, of authorization and approval from the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder's board of directors (or comparable governing body) with respect to the submission, execution, delivery and closing of the transaction contemplated by the Investment Proposal;
- (i) it is accompanied by a Deposit in the form of a wire transfer (to a trust account specified by the Monitor), or such other form acceptable to the Monitor, payable to the order of Deloitte Restructuring Inc., in trust, in an amount equal to 10% of the Investment Amount, to be held and dealt with in accordance with these SISP Procedures. For certainty, a Deposit will be required for all Investment Proposals, regardless of whether the consideration offered in the Investment Proposal is cash, credit or otherwise, or a combination of any of the foregoing;
- (j) it provides for closing of the Qualified Investment Bid by no later than the Target Closing Date;
- (k) if the Qualified Phase 2 Bidder is an entity newly formed for the purpose of the Transaction, the Investment Proposal shall contain an equity or debt commitment letter from the parent entity or sponsor, and satisfactory to the Monitor, that names the Accurate Group as a third party beneficiary of any such commitment letter with recourse against such parent entity or sponsor;
- (l) it includes evidence, in form and substance reasonably satisfactory to the Monitor, of compliance or anticipated compliance with any and all applicable regulatory approvals (including, if applicable, anti-trust regulatory approval), the anticipated time frame for such compliance and any anticipated impediments for obtaining such approvals;
- (m) it contains other information reasonably requested by the Monitor; and
- (n) it is received by no later than the Phase 2 Bid Deadline.

#### 6.4 Qualified Bids

- (a) Qualified Purchase Bids and Qualified Investment Bids shall hereinafter be referred to as "**Qualified Bids**" and each a "**Qualified Bid**" and each bidder who has submitted a Qualified Bid shall hereinafter be referred to as a "**Qualified Bidder**". The Monitor may, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, aggregate separate Phase 2 Bids from unaffiliated Qualified Phase 2 Bidders to create one Qualified Bid.
- (b) Notwithstanding Section 6.2 and Section 6.3 hereof, the Monitor, in consultation with Accurate Director and with the consent of the DIP Lender, may waive compliance with any one or more of the Qualified Bid requirements specified herein, and deem such non-compliant bids to be Qualified Purchase Bids or Qualified Investment Bids, as the case may be.

## 6.5 Qualified Bids

- (a) Within three (3) Business Days of the expiry of the Phase 2 Bid Deadline, the Monitor will provide copies or a summary of any Qualified Bids received to the applicable Secured Creditors and the Accurate Director and set up a meeting by teleconference or other electronic medium to consult with such parties in respect of such bids.
- (b) Following the meeting in (a), the Monitor will assess the Qualified Bids received, if any, and will determine whether the Transaction(s) contemplated by such Qualified Bids are likely to be consummated and whether proceeding with these SISP Procedures is in the best interests of the Accurate Group and its stakeholders. Such determination will be made, in consultation with the Accurate Director and is subject to the prior written consent of the DIP Lender, acting reasonably, as promptly as practicable after the Phase 2 Bid Deadline but no later than ten (10) Business Days following its expiry.
- (c) The Monitor shall notify each Qualified Phase 2 Bidder in writing as to whether its Phase 2 Bid constitutes a Qualified Bid within ten (10) Business Days of the Phase 2 Bid Deadline, or at such later time as the Monitor deems appropriate.
- (d) If the Monitor, in accordance with Section 6.5(b) above, determines, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, that (i) no Qualified Bid was received, or (ii) at least one Qualified Bid was received but it is not likely that the Transaction(s) contemplated in any such Qualified Bids will be consummated, the Monitor may, with the approval of the DIP Lender either: (iii) terminate the SISP; (iv) extend the Phase 2 Bid Deadline for no more than an aggregate period of two (2) weeks, or (v) within ten (10) Business Days of such determination, file a motion with the Court seeking directions.

## 6.6 Selection Criteria

- (a) In selecting the Successful Bid, the Monitor, in consultation with the DIP Lender and the Accurate Director, will review each Qualified Bid. Evaluation criteria with respect to a Sale Proposal may include, but are not limited to, items such as:
  - (i) the Purchase Price and the net value (including assumed liabilities and other obligations to be performed or assumed by the bidder) provided by such bid;
  - (ii) the claims likely to be created by such bid in relation to other bids;
  - (iii) the counterparties to the Transaction;
  - (iv) the proposed revisions to the Draft Purchase Agreement and the Draft Approval Order and the terms of the Transaction documents;
  - (v) other factors affecting the speed, certainty and value of the Transaction (including any regulatory approvals required to close the Transaction);
  - (vi) the assets included or excluded from the bid and the Transaction costs and risks associated with closing multiple Transactions versus a single Transaction for all or substantially all of the Property;

- (vii) the transition services required from the Accurate Group post-closing and any related restructuring costs; and
  - (viii) the likelihood and timing of consummating the Transaction by the Target Closing Date.
- (b) Evaluation criteria with respect to an Investment Proposal may include, but are not limited to items such as:
  - (i) the Investment Amount and the proposed sources and uses of such capital;
  - (ii) the debt-to-equity structure post-closing;
  - (iii) the counterparties to the Transaction;
  - (iv) the terms of the Transaction documents;
  - (v) other factors affecting the speed, certainty and value of the Transaction;
  - (vi) planned treatment of and recovery to stakeholders; and
  - (vii) the likelihood and timing of consummating the Transaction by the Target Closing Date.
- (c) The Monitor may select Qualified Bids for further negotiation and/or clarification of any terms or conditions of such Qualified Bids, including the Investment Amount or Purchase Price offered, before identifying the highest or otherwise best Qualified Bid(s) received (the "**Successful Bid**").
- (d) Upon completion of any further negotiations or clarifications that may be conducted pursuant to Section 6.6(b) above, the Monitor will identify the Successful Bid and may identify a next highest or otherwise best Qualified Bid received (such offer, the "**Backup Bid**"). The Qualified Bidder(s) who made the Successful Bid is/are the "**Successful Bidder**" and the Qualified Bidder(s) who made the Backup Bid (if a Backup Bid is identified in accordance with these SISP Procedures) shall be the "**Backup Bidder**". The Monitor will notify the Successful Bidder and any Backup Bidder that they are, respectively, the Successful Bidder and the Backup Bidder within five (5) Business Days of such determination.
- (e) The Monitor will finalize definitive agreements in respect of the Successful Bid and the Backup Bid, if any, conditional upon approval by the Court (the "**Definitive Agreements**").
- (f) If a Backup Bid is identified in accordance with these SISP Procedures, then such Backup Bid shall remain open until the consummation of the Transaction contemplated by the Successful Bid (the "**Backup Bid Expiration Date**").
- (g) All Qualified Bids (other than the Successful Bid and any Backup Bid) shall be deemed rejected by the Monitor on and as of the date of approval of the Successful Bid or any Backup Bid by the Court.

## 6.7 Approval Hearing

- (a) After Definitive Agreements in respect of a Successful Bid and Backup Bid, if any, have been finalized, in the case of the Successful Bid, signed (conditional on Court approval) and, in the case of the Backup Bid signed (conditional on non-completion of the Successful Bid and on Court approval), the Monitor shall seek a hearing as soon as practicable on a date to be scheduled by the Court that will permit not less than five (5) Business Days' notice to the service list (the "**Approval Hearing**") to approve the Successful Bid and the Backup Bid, if any, should the Successful Bid not close for any reason. The Approval Hearing may be adjourned or rescheduled by the Monitor, without further notice, by an announcement of the adjourned date at the Approval Hearing.
- (b) If, following approval of the Successful Bid by the Court, the Successful Bidder fails to consummate the Transaction for any reason, then the Backup Bid, if any, will be deemed to be the Successful Bid and the Monitor shall effectuate the Transaction with the Backup Bidder subject to the terms of the Backup Bid, without further order of the Court.

## 6.8 Deposits

- (a) All Deposits shall be retained by the Monitor and invested in an interest-bearing trust account in a Schedule I bank in Canada. If there is a Successful Bid, the Deposit (plus accrued interest) paid by the Successful Bidder whose bid is approved pursuant to the Approval Hearing shall be applied to the Purchase Price to be paid or Investment Amount to be made by the Successful Bidder upon closing of the Successful Bid. The Deposit (plus accrued interest) paid by the Backup Bidder, if there is one, shall be retained by the Monitor until the Backup Bid Expiration Date or, if the Backup Bid becomes the Successful Bid, shall be applied to the Purchase Price to be paid or Investment Amount to be made by the Backup Bidder upon closing of the Backup Bid. The Deposits (plus applicable interest) of all Qualified Phase 2 Bidders not selected as the Successful Bidder or Backup Bidder shall be returned to such bidders without interest within five (5) Business Days of the date upon which the Successful Bid and Backup Bid, if any, are approved by the Court. If these SISP Procedures are terminated in accordance with the provisions hereof, all Deposits shall be returned to the bidders without interest within five (5) Business Days of the date upon which these SISP Procedures are terminated.
- (b) If an entity selected as the Successful Bidder or Backup Bidder breaches its obligations to close the applicable Transaction, it shall forfeit its Deposit to the Monitor; provided, however, that the forfeiture of such Deposit shall be in addition to, and not in lieu of, any other rights in law or equity that the Monitor has or may have against such breaching entity.

## 6.9 Approvals

For greater certainty, the approvals required pursuant to the terms hereof are in addition to, and not in substitution for, any other approvals required by any Canadian or other foreign statute or are otherwise required at law in order to implement the Successful Bid or Backup Bid, as the case may be.

## 6.10 Confidentiality

- (a) All discussions regarding a Sale Proposal, Investment Proposal, Non-Binding Indication of Interest, Qualified Phase 1 Bid or Qualified Bid should be directed through the Monitor.

Under no circumstances should the employees, management, customers or suppliers of the Accurate Group be contacted directly without the prior consent of the Monitor. Any such unauthorized contact or communication could result in exclusion of the interested party from these SISP Procedures.

- (b) Participants and prospective participants in these SISP Procedures shall not be permitted to receive any information that is not made generally available to all participants relating to the number or identity of any bidder, the details of any bids submitted or the details of any confidential discussions or correspondence between the Accurate Group, Accurate Director, the Monitor and/or such other bidders in connection with the SISP, except to the extent the Monitor is seeking to combine separate bids from Qualified Phase 1 Bidders or Qualified Phase 2 Bidders.
- (c) In addition to the consultation rights granted to the DIP Lender, the Monitor may consult with any other parties with a material interest in the CCAA Proceedings regarding the status of and material information and developments relating to the SISP to the extent considered appropriate by the Monitor, provided that such parties shall have entered into confidentiality arrangements satisfactory to the Monitor. For certainty: (i) where this SISP contemplates the Monitor being required to consult with any parties, the nature, extent and frequency of such consultation shall be at the Monitor's sole discretion unless otherwise stated; and (ii) the Monitor may consult with any, some or all such parties, either together, separately or any group thereof, in the manner and frequency as it deems appropriate in the circumstances.
- (d) The Accurate Director shall be the sole employee and/or director from the Accurate Group entitled to: (i) consultation with the Monitor on matters involving the Solicitation Process and these SISP Procedures; and (ii) receive copies of the Non-Binding Indications of Interest, bids and all other confidential information and documents contemplated hereunder. The Accurate Director shall not share or otherwise disclose any such information to any other past or present member of the Accurate Group unless approved by the Monitor or necessary to close a Transaction contemplated in a Successful Bid. Prior to the commencement of the SISP, the Accurate Director shall provide an undertaking in writing to the Monitor that the Accurate Director shall not submit, directly or indirectly, any bid in the SISP, and will not provide financing, directly or indirectly, to any Potential Bidder, Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, Qualified Phase 2 Bidder, Successful Bidder, Backup Bidder or otherwise.
- (e) If the Monitor determines that the participation or information from a director, officer, employee or other member of senior management who is participating as a bidder in this SISP is required, such bidder shall participate and provide all information honestly and in good faith as requested by the Monitor, including adhering to any timelines and terms as to confidentiality as set by the Monitor.

#### **6.11 Supervision of the SISP**

- (a) The Monitor shall oversee the conduct of the SISP in all respects and the Monitor will participate in the SISP in the manner set out in these SISP Procedures, the SISP Approval Order, and any other orders of the Court. For the avoidance of doubt, the completion of any Sale Proposal or Investment Proposal shall be subject to the approval of the Court and the requirement of approval of the Court may not be waived.

- (b) This SISP does not, and will not be interpreted to create any contractual or other legal relationship between the Accurate Group, the Accurate Director, the Monitor and any bidder or any other party, other than as specifically set forth in the Definitive Agreements that may be entered into in respect of a Transaction.
- (c) The Monitor shall not have any liability whatsoever to any person or party, including without limitation any bidder or any other creditor or other stakeholder of the Accurate Group, for any act or omission related to the process contemplated by this SISP Procedure, except to the extent such act or omission is the result from gross negligence or wilful misconduct of the Monitor. By submitting a bid, each bidder shall be deemed to have agreed that it has no claim against the Monitor for any reason whatsoever, except to the extent that such claim is the result of gross negligence or wilful misconduct of the Monitor.
- (d) Participants in the SISP are responsible for all costs, expenses and liabilities incurred by them in connection with the submission of any Non-Binding Indication of Interest, Qualified Phase 1 Bid, Qualified Bid, due diligence activities, and any further negotiations or other actions whether or not they lead to the consummation of a Transaction.
- (e) Subject to the terms of the SISP Approval Order, the Monitor shall have the right to modify these SISP Procedures with the prior written approval of the DIP Lender if, in its reasonable business judgment, such modification will enhance the process or better achieve the objectives of the SISP; provided that the service list in the CCAA Proceedings shall be advised of any substantive modification to the procedures set forth herein.
- (f) In order to discharge its duties in connection with the SISP, the Monitor may engage professional or business advisors or agents as the Monitor deems fit in its sole discretion.

#### 6.12 Notice to the Monitor

Any notice or other communication to be given to the Monitor in connection with this SISP shall be given in writing and shall be given by personal delivery (in which case it shall be left with a responsible officer of the recipient) or by electronic communication addressed to the Monitor as follows:

Deloitte Restructuring Inc.  
360 Main Street, Suite 2300  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3Z3  
Attention: Brent Warga and John Fritz  
Telephone: (204) 944-3611 and (204) 944-3586  
Email: [bwarga@deloitte.ca](mailto:bwarga@deloitte.ca) and [jofritz@deloitte.ca](mailto:jofritz@deloitte.ca)

#### 6.13 Reservation of Rights

- (a) The Monitor may:
  - (i) reject at any time any bid that is:
    - (A) inadequate or insufficient;
    - (B) not in conformity with the requirements of these SISP Procedures or any orders of the Court applicable to the Accurate Group; or

- (C) contrary to the best interests of the Accurate Group, its estate, and stakeholders as determined by the Monitor;
  - (ii) in accordance with the terms hereof, accept bids not in conformity with these SISP Procedures to the extent that the Monitor determines, in its reasonable business judgement, that doing so would benefit the Accurate Group, its estate, and stakeholders;
  - (iii) in accordance with the terms hereof extend the Phase 1 Bid Deadline or Phase 2 Bid Deadline; and
  - (iv) reject all bids.
- (b) The Monitor shall not be required to accept the highest bid and shall be entitled to recommend to the Court a Transaction that in its view maximizes value for all of the Accurate Group's stakeholders.
  - (c) These SISP Procedures do not, and shall not be interpreted to, create any contractual or other legal relationship between the Monitor on the one hand and any Known Potential Bidder, Potential Bidder, Qualified Phase 1 Bidder, Qualified Phase 2 Bidder, Qualified Bidder, Successful Bidder or Backup Bidder, on the other hand, except as specifically set forth in Definitive Agreements that may be executed by the Monitor.

#### **6.14 Disclosure to the Secured Creditors**

Subject to the terms hereof, the Secured Creditors shall have access to all Non-Binding Indications of Interest, Qualified Phase 1 Bids, Qualified Bids relevant to their security in which they have a first charge and the Monitor, in consultation with the Accurate Director, shall periodically update the applicable Secured Creditors on the Solicitation Process and the prospect of a Successful Bid being completed thereunder as may be required herein. The Monitor may, in its sole discretion, require that any or all of the Secured Creditors execute a Confidentiality Agreement, in a form acceptable to the Monitor, as a condition of receiving any information in respect of the SISP. In the event that a Secured Creditor is involved, or may be involved, either directly or indirectly, in financing or otherwise transacting with a potential or actual participant in the SISP, it shall promptly notify the Monitor of such potential or actual relationship prior to receiving any information (or additional information) in respect of the SISP and the Monitor may condition, limit or otherwise restrict such Secured Creditor's access to information or ability to participate or vote in the SISP in the manner the Monitor deems appropriate in the circumstances.

#### **6.15 Further Orders**

At any time during the SISP, the Monitor may apply to the Court for directions with respect to the discharge of its powers and duties hereunder.

**NOTICE OF CLAIM**

A Notice of Claim to the Funds, as defined in a Court Order dated April 5, 2023 under Manitoba Court of King's Bench File No. CI 23-01-39360, shall be provided to Deloitte Restructuring Inc. c/o John Fritz on or before April 17, 2023 by email to [jofritz@deloitte.ca](mailto:jofritz@deloitte.ca)

**Claimant Information**

Name of claimant to the Funds: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of representative for service: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address for service: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you an: Owner  General Contractor  Sub-Contractor  Materials Supplier   
Rental Equipment Provider

**Lien and Statutory Trust Information**

Name of person claiming a lien or statutory trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address for service for person: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of party to whom person claiming a lien or statutory trust supplied services, materials or rental equipment to ("Payer"):

Address of Payer: \_\_\_\_\_

Time within which services, materials or rental equipment were supplied to:

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(date supply commenced) (date of most recent supply)

Description of services, materials or rental equipment that have been supplied:

\_\_\_\_\_

Schedule "2"

Amount of lien or statutory trust amount as owing in respect of services, materials or rental equipment that have been supplied: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Claiming interest Y/N, if yes \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Claiming costs Y/N, if yes \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Date of lien filing:

\_\_\_\_\_

Jurisdiction of lien filing: \_\_\_\_\_

Title number of property: \_\_\_\_\_

Lien registration number: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal description of lands:

\_\_\_\_\_

Municipal description of lands:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Project Details**

Who is the counter-party to your agreement with respect to your claim to the Funds ("Agreement")?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Agreement (including particulars of written contract if one):

a) If claimant is an owner:

\_\_\_\_\_

b) If claimant is a general contractor:

\_\_\_\_\_

c) If claimant is a sub-contractor: \_\_\_\_\_

d) If claimant is a supplier of materials:

\_\_\_\_\_

e) If claimant is a provider of rental equipment:

\_\_\_\_\_

Contract price: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Was a certificate of substantial performance issued: Y/N

Schedule "2"

Does the Claimant or the counter-party to the Agreement with the Claimant have a claim of set off, if yes  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons and particulars as to set off:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Court Proceedings**

Amount of funds paid into Court: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If bond - amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Surety: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Oblige: \_\_\_\_\_

Person who paid funds/gave security into court:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of payment of funds into court or security into court:

\_\_\_\_\_

Reasons and particulars as to why funds were paid into court or security given into court:

\_\_\_\_\_

Are the funds paid into court otherwise payable to the CCAA Applicants in Manitoba Court of King's Bench File No. CI 23-01-39360 (the "CCAA Applicants") pursuant to the Agreement or another agreement: Y/N, include particulars:

\_\_\_\_\_

Are the funds paid into court a set-off to amounts owing to the CCAA Applicants pursuant to the Agreement or another agreement, and have been paid into court to vacate the lien(s) particularized above: Y/N, include particulars:

\_\_\_\_\_

Is the bond submitted into court acting as security for a lien(s) filed by the CCAA Applicants: Y/N, include particulars:

\_\_\_\_\_

Certificate of Lis Pendens filed: Y/N

Has a lien action been commenced: Y/N

If yes, particulars (action no., defendants, relief sought):

\_\_\_\_\_

Schedule "2"

**FULL PARTICULARS AND REASONS AS TO YOUR CLAIM TO THE FUNDS PAID INTO COURT OR SECURITY GIVEN INTO COURT:**

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**Funds Held in Trust**

Amount(s) held in trust or will be paid into trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Person holding funds in trust or will hold funds in trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address of person holding funds in trust or will hold funds in trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of person holding funds in trust or will hold funds in trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of person holding funds in trust or will hold funds in trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of payment into trust or expected date of payment into trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons and particulars as to why funds are being held in trust or will be paid into trust: \_\_\_\_\_

Are the funds held in trust or will be paid into trust otherwise payable to the CCAA Applicants pursuant to the Agreement or another agreement: Y/N, include particulars: \_\_\_\_\_

Are the funds held in trust or will be paid into trust a set-off to amounts owing to the CCAA Applicants pursuant to the Agreement or another agreement, and were paid into trust or will be paid into trust to vacate the lien(s) particularized above: Y/N, include particulars: \_\_\_\_\_

**FULL PARTICULARS AND REASONS AS TO YOUR CLAIM TO THE FUNDS HELD IN TRUST:**

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Schedule "2"

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of person claiming the Funds)