C A N A D A

PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC
DISTRICT OF MONTRÉAL

N° : 500-11-060613-227

SUPERIOR COURT
(Commercial Division)
Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT, R.S.C. (1985) c. C-36 OF:

RISING PHOENIX INTERNATIONAL INC.
10864285 CANADA INC.
11753436 CANADA INC.
CDSQ IMMOBILIER INC.
COLLÈGE DE L'ESTRIE INC.
ÉCOLE D'ADMINISTRATION ET DE SECRÉTARIAT DE LA RIVE-SUD INC.
9437-6845 QUÉBEC INC.
9437-6852 QUÉBEC INC.

Debtors

and

RICHTER ADVISORY GROUP INC.

Monitor

and

13901823 CANADA INC. (CESTAR COLLEGE)

Purchaser/Applicant

BOOK OF AUTHORITIES OF LES CONSULTANTS 3 L M INC.

1	*Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance),* 2002 SCC 41
2	*Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25
3	*Yukon (Government of) v. Yukon Zinc Corporation*, 2022 YKSC2
4	*GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Company v 1262354 Ontario Inc.*, 2014 ONSC 1173
5	*Arrangement relatif à Bloom Lake*, 2017 QCCS 3529, (Appeal dismissed, 2018 QCCA 551 and leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada denied, appeal dismissed; leave to the SCC denied 2019 CanLII 3746)
6	*Standard form vesting order published on the Barreau de Montréal's website*

7 *Aquino v. Aquino*, 2021 ONSC 7797

8 Houlden & Morawetz, *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Law of Canada*, 4th edition, section 7:61

Montréal, this July 25, 2022

Fasken Martineau DuMoulin S.E.N.C.R.L., s.r.l.

Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP
Attorneys for the Applicant

800 Victoria Square, Suite 3500
P.O. Box 242
Montréal, Quebec H4Z 1E9
Fax number: +1 514 397 7600

Mtre Brandon Farber
Phone number: +1 514 397 5179
Email: bfarber@fasken.com

Mtre Éliane Dupéré-Tremblay
Phone number: +1 514 397 7412
Email: edtremblay@fasken.com

ONGLET 1

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited *Appellant*

v.

Sierra Club of Canada *Respondent*

and

The Minister of Finance of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Minister of International Trade of Canada and the Attorney General of Canada *Respondents*

Énergie atomique du Canada Limitée *Appelante*

c.

Sierra Club du Canada *Intimé*

et

Le ministre des Finances du Canada, le ministre des Affaires étrangères du Canada, le ministre du Commerce international du Canada et le procureur général du Canada *Intimés*

INDEXED AS: SIERRA CLUB OF CANADA *v.* CANADA (MINISTER OF FINANCE)

Neutral citation: 2002 SCC 41.

File No.: 28020.

2001: November 6; 2002: April 26.

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

RÉPERTORIÉ : SIERRA CLUB DU CANADA *c.* CANADA (MINISTRE DES FINANCES)

Référence neutre : 2002 CSC 41.

Nº du greffe : 28020.

2001 : 6 novembre; 2002 : 26 avril.

Présents : Le juge en chef McLachlin et les juges Gonthier, Iacobucci, Bastarache, Binnie, Arbour et LeBel.

ON APPEAL FROM THE FEDERAL COURT OF APPEAL

Practice — Federal Court of Canada — Filing of confidential material — Environmental organization seeking judicial review of federal government's decision to provide financial assistance to Crown corporation for construction and sale of nuclear reactors — Crown corporation requesting confidentiality order in respect of certain documents — Proper analytical approach to be applied to exercise of judicial discretion where litigant seeks confidentiality order — Whether confidentiality order should be granted — Federal Court Rules, 1998, SOR/98-106, r. 151.

Sierra Club is an environmental organization seeking judicial review of the federal government's decision to provide financial assistance to Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. ("AECL"), a Crown corporation, for the construction and sale to China of two CANDU reactors. The reactors are currently under construction in China, where AECL is the main contractor and project manager. Sierra Club maintains that the authorization of financial assistance

EN APPEL DE LA COUR D'APPEL FÉDÉRALE

Pratique — Cour fédérale du Canada — Production de documents confidentiels — Contrôle judiciaire demandé par un organisme environnemental de la décision du gouvernement fédéral de donner une aide financière à une société d'État pour la construction et la vente de réacteurs nucléaires — Ordonnance de confidentialité demandée par la société d'État pour certains documents — Analyse applicable à l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire judiciaire sur une demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité — Faut-il accorder l'ordonnance? — Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998), DORS/98-106, règle 151.

Un organisme environnemental, Sierra Club, demande le contrôle judiciaire de la décision du gouvernement fédéral de fournir une aide financière à Énergie atomique du Canada Ltée (« ÉACL »), une société de la Couronne, pour la construction et la vente à la Chine de deux réacteurs CANDU. Les réacteurs sont actuellement en construction en Chine, où ÉACL est l'entrepreneur principal et le gestionnaire de projet. Sierra Club soutient que

by the government triggered s. 5(1)(*b*) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* ("*CEAA*"), requiring an environmental assessment as a condition of the financial assistance, and that the failure to comply compels a cancellation of the financial arrangements. AECL filed an affidavit in the proceedings which summarized confidential documents containing thousands of pages of technical information concerning the ongoing environmental assessment of the construction site by the Chinese authorities. AECL resisted Sierra Club's application for production of the confidential documents on the ground, *inter alia*, that the documents were the property of the Chinese authorities and that it did not have the authority to disclose them. The Chinese authorities authorized disclosure of the documents on the condition that they be protected by a confidentiality order, under which they would only be made available to the parties and the court, but with no restriction on public access to the judicial proceedings. AECL's application for a confidentiality order was rejected by the Federal Court, Trial Division. The Federal Court of Appeal upheld that decision.

Held: The appeal should be allowed and the confidentiality order granted on the terms requested by AECL.

In light of the established link between open courts and freedom of expression, the fundamental question for a court to consider in an application for a confidentiality order is whether the right to freedom of expression should be compromised in the circumstances. The court must ensure that the discretion to grant the order is exercised in accordance with *Charter* principles because a confidentiality order will have a negative effect on the s. 2(*b*) right to freedom of expression. A confidentiality order should only be granted when (1) such an order is necessary to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and (2) the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings. Three important elements are subsumed under the first branch of the test. First, the risk must be real and substantial, well grounded in evidence, posing a serious threat to the commercial interest in question. Second, the important commercial interest must be one which can be expressed in terms of a public interest in confidentiality, where there is a general principle at stake. Finally, the judge is required to consider not only whether reasonable alternatives are available to such an order but also to restrict the order as much as is reasonably possible while preserving the commercial interest in question.

l'autorisation d'aide financière du gouvernement déclenche l'application de l'al. 5(1)*b*) de la *Loi canadienne sur l'évaluation environnementale* (« *LCÉE* ») exigeant une évaluation environnementale comme condition de l'aide financière, et que le défaut d'évaluation entraîne l'annulation des ententes financières. ÉACL dépose un affidavit qui résume des documents confidentiels contenant des milliers de pages d'information technique concernant l'évaluation environnementale du site de construction qui est faite par les autorités chinoises. ÉACL s'oppose à la communication des documents demandée par Sierra Club pour la raison notamment qu'ils sont la propriété des autorités chinoises et qu'elle n'est pas autorisée à les divulguer. Les autorités chinoises donnent l'autorisation de les communiquer à la condition qu'ils soient protégés par une ordonnance de confidentialité n'y donnant accès qu'aux parties et à la cour, mais n'imposant aucune restriction à l'accès du public aux débats. La demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité est rejetée par la Section de première instance de la Cour fédérale. La Cour d'appel fédérale confirme cette décision.

Arrêt : L'appel est accueilli et l'ordonnance demandée par ÉACL est accordée.

Vu le lien existant entre la publicité des débats judiciaires et la liberté d'expression, la question fondamentale pour la cour saisie d'une demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité est de savoir si, dans les circonstances, il y a lieu de restreindre le droit à la liberté d'expression. La cour doit s'assurer que l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire de l'accorder est conforme aux principes de la *Charte* parce qu'une ordonnance de confidentialité a des effets préjudiciables sur la liberté d'expression garantie à l'al. 2*b*). On ne doit l'accorder que (1) lorsqu'elle est nécessaire pour écarter un risque sérieux pour un intérêt important, y compris un intérêt commercial, dans le contexte d'un litige, en l'absence d'autres options raisonnables pour écarter ce risque, et (2) lorsque ses effets bénéfiques, y compris ses effets sur le droit des justiciables civils à un procès équitable, l'emportent sur ses effets préjudiciables, y compris ses effets sur la liberté d'expression qui, dans ce contexte, comprend l'intérêt du public dans la publicité des débats judiciaires. Trois éléments importants sont subsumés sous le premier volet de l'analyse. Premièrement, le risque en cause doit être réel et important, être bien étayé par la preuve et menacer gravement l'intérêt commercial en question. Deuxièmement, l'intérêt doit pouvoir se définir en termes d'intérêt public à la confidentialité, mettant en jeu un principe général. Enfin le juge doit non seulement déterminer s'il existe d'autres options raisonnables, il doit aussi restreindre l'ordonnance autant qu'il est raisonnablement possible de le faire tout en préservant l'intérêt commercial en question.

Applying the test to the present circumstances, the commercial interest at stake here relates to the objective of preserving contractual obligations of confidentiality, which is sufficiently important to pass the first branch of the test as long as certain criteria relating to the information are met. The information must have been treated as confidential at all relevant times; on a balance of probabilities, proprietary, commercial and scientific interests could reasonably be harmed by disclosure of the information; and the information must have been accumulated with a reasonable expectation of it being kept confidential. These requirements have been met in this case. Disclosure of the confidential documents would impose a serious risk on an important commercial interest of AECL, and there are no reasonably alternative measures to granting the order.

Under the second branch of the test, the confidentiality order would have significant salutary effects on AECL's right to a fair trial. Disclosure of the confidential documents would cause AECL to breach its contractual obligations and suffer a risk of harm to its competitive position. If a confidentiality order is denied, AECL will be forced to withhold the documents in order to protect its commercial interests, and since that information is relevant to defences available under the *CEAA*, the inability to present this information hinders AECL's capacity to make full answer and defence. Although in the context of a civil proceeding, this does not engage a *Charter* right, the right to a fair trial is a fundamental principle of justice. Further, the confidentiality order would allow all parties and the court access to the confidential documents, and permit cross-examination based on their contents, assisting in the search for truth, a core value underlying freedom of expression. Finally, given the technical nature of the information, there may be a substantial public security interest in maintaining the confidentiality of such information.

The deleterious effects of granting a confidentiality order include a negative effect on the open court principle, and therefore on the right to freedom of expression. The more detrimental the confidentiality order would be to the core values of (1) seeking the truth and the common good, (2) promoting self-fulfilment of individuals by allowing them to develop thoughts and ideas as they see fit, and (3) ensuring that participation in the political process is open to all persons, the harder it will be to justify the confidentiality order. In the hands of the parties and their experts, the confidential documents may be of great assistance in probing the truth of the Chinese environmental assessment process, which would assist the court in reaching accurate factual conclusions. Given the highly technical nature of the documents, the important value of the search for the truth which underlies

En l'espèce, l'intérêt commercial en jeu, la préservation d'obligations contractuelles de confidentialité, est suffisamment important pour satisfaire au premier volet de l'analyse, pourvu que certaines conditions soient remplies : les renseignements ont toujours été traités comme des renseignements confidentiels; il est raisonnable de penser que, selon la prépondérance des probabilités, leur divulgation compromettrait des droits exclusifs, commerciaux et scientifiques; et les renseignements ont été recueillis dans l'expectative raisonnable qu'ils resteraient confidentiels. Ces conditions sont réunies en l'espèce. La divulgation des documents confidentiels ferait courir un risque sérieux à un intérêt commercial important de ÉACL et il n'existe pas d'options raisonnables autres que l'ordonnance de confidentialité.

À la deuxième étape de l'analyse, l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait des effets bénéfiques considérables sur le droit de ÉACL à un procès équitable. Si ÉACL divulguait les documents confidentiels, elle manquerait à ses obligations contractuelles et s'exposerait à une détérioration de sa position concurrentielle. Le refus de l'ordonnance obligerait ÉACL à retenir les documents pour protéger ses intérêts commerciaux et comme ils sont pertinents pour l'exercice des moyens de défense prévus par la *LCÉE*, l'impossibilité de les produire empêcherait ÉACL de présenter une défense pleine et entière. Même si en matière civile cela n'engage pas de droit protégé par la *Charte*, le droit à un procès équitable est un principe de justice fondamentale. L'ordonnance permettrait aux parties et au tribunal d'avoir accès aux documents confidentiels, et permettrait la tenue d'un contre-interrogatoire fondé sur leur contenu, favorisant ainsi la recherche de la vérité, une valeur fondamentale sous-tendant la liberté d'expression. Il peut enfin y avoir un important intérêt de sécurité publique à préserver la confidentialité de ce type de renseignements techniques.

Une ordonnance de confidentialité aurait un effet préjudiciable sur le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires et donc sur la liberté d'expression. Plus l'ordonnance porte atteinte aux valeurs fondamentales que sont (1) la recherche de la vérité et du bien commun, (2) l'épanouissement personnel par le libre développement des pensées et des idées et (3) la participation de tous au processus politique, plus il est difficile de justifier l'ordonnance. Dans les mains des parties et de leurs experts, les documents peuvent être très utiles pour apprécier la conformité du processus d'évaluation environnementale chinois, et donc pour aider la cour à parvenir à des conclusions de fait exactes. Compte tenu de leur nature hautement technique, la production des documents confidentiels en vertu de l'ordonnance demandée favoriserait mieux l'importante valeur de la recherche de la vérité, qui

both freedom of expression and open justice would be promoted to a greater extent by submitting the confidential documents under the order sought than it would by denying the order.

Under the terms of the order sought, the only restrictions relate to the public distribution of the documents, which is a fairly minimal intrusion into the open court rule. Although the confidentiality order would restrict individual access to certain information which may be of interest to that individual, the second core value of promoting individual self-fulfilment would not be significantly affected by the confidentiality order. The third core value figures prominently in this appeal as open justice is a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. By their very nature, environmental matters carry significant public import, and openness in judicial proceedings involving environmental issues will generally attract a high degree of protection, so that the public interest is engaged here more than if this were an action between private parties involving private interests. However, the narrow scope of the order coupled with the highly technical nature of the confidential documents significantly temper the deleterious effects the confidentiality order would have on the public interest in open courts. The core freedom of expression values of seeking the truth and promoting an open political process are most closely linked to the principle of open courts, and most affected by an order restricting that openness. However, in the context of this case, the confidentiality order would only marginally impede, and in some respects would even promote, the pursuit of these values. The salutary effects of the order outweigh its deleterious effects and the order should be granted. A balancing of the various rights and obligations engaged indicates that the confidentiality order would have substantial salutary effects on AECL's right to a fair trial and freedom of expression, while the deleterious effects on the principle of open courts and freedom of expression would be minimal.

Cases Cited

Applied: *Edmonton Journal v. Alberta (Attorney General)*, [1989] 2 S.C.R. 1326; *Canadian Broadcasting Corp. v. New Brunswick (Attorney General)*, [1996] 3 S.C.R. 480; *Dagenais v. Canadian Broadcasting Corp.*, [1994] 3 S.C.R. 835; *R. v. Mentuck*, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 442, 2001 SCC 76; *M. (A.) v. Ryan*, [1997] 1 S.C.R. 157; *Irwin Toy Ltd. v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, [1989] 1 S.C.R. 927; *R. v. Keegstra*, [1990] 3 S.C.R. 697; **referred to:** *AB Hassle v. Canada (Minister of National Health and*

sous-tend à la fois la liberté d'expression et la publicité des débats judiciaires, que ne le ferait le refus de l'ordonnance.

Aux termes de l'ordonnance demandée, les seules restrictions ont trait à la distribution publique des documents, une atteinte relativement minime à la règle de la publicité des débats judiciaires. Même si l'ordonnance de confidentialité devait restreindre l'accès individuel à certains renseignements susceptibles d'intéresser quelqu'un, la deuxième valeur fondamentale, l'épanouissement personnel, ne serait pas touchée de manière significative. La troisième valeur joue un rôle primordial dans le pourvoi puisque la publicité des débats judiciaires est un aspect fondamental de la société démocratique. Par leur nature même, les questions environnementales ont une portée publique considérable, et la transparence des débats judiciaires sur les questions environnementales mérite généralement un degré élevé de protection, de sorte que l'intérêt public est en l'espèce plus engagé que s'il s'agissait d'un litige entre personnes privées à l'égard d'intérêts purement privés. Toutefois la portée étroite de l'ordonnance associée à la nature hautement technique des documents confidentiels tempère considérablement les effets préjudiciables que l'ordonnance de confidentialité pourrait avoir sur l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats judiciaires. Les valeurs centrales de la liberté d'expression que sont la recherche de la vérité et la promotion d'un processus politique ouvert sont très étroitement liées au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires, et sont les plus touchées par une ordonnance limitant cette publicité. Toutefois, en l'espèce, l'ordonnance de confidentialité n'entraverait que légèrement la poursuite de ces valeurs, et pourrait même les favoriser à certains égards. Ses effets bénéfiques l'emportent sur ses effets préjudiciables, et il y a lieu de l'accorder. Selon la pondération des divers droits et intérêts en jeu, l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait des effets bénéfiques importants sur le droit de ÉACL à un procès équitable et à la liberté d'expression, et ses effets préjudiciables sur le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires et la liberté d'expression seraient minimes.

Jurisprudence

Arrêts appliqués : *Edmonton Journal c. Alberta (Procureur général)*, [1989] 2 R.C.S. 1326; *Société Radio-Canada c. Nouveau-Brunswick (Procureur général)*, [1996] 3 R.C.S. 480; *Dagenais c. Société Radio-Canada*, [1994] 3 R.C.S. 835; *R. c. Mentuck*, [2001] 3 R.C.S. 442, 2001 CSC 76; *M. (A.) c. Ryan*, [1997] 1 R.C.S. 157; *Irwin Toy Ltd. c. Québec (Procureur général)*, [1989] 1 R.C.S. 927; *R. c. Keegstra*, [1990] 3 R.C.S. 697; **arrêts mentionnés :** *AB Hassle c.*

Welfare), [2000] 3 F.C. 360, aff'g (1998), 83 C.P.R. (3d) 428; *Ethyl Canada Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)* (1998), 17 C.P.C. (4th) 278; *R. v. Oakes*, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103; *R. v. O.N.E.*, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 478, 2001 SCC 77; *F.N. (Re)*, [2000] 1 S.C.R. 880, 2000 SCC 35; *Eli Lilly and Co. v. Novopharm Ltd.* (1994), 56 C.P.R. (3d) 437.

Statutes and Regulations Cited

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, ss. 1, 2(*b*).
Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, S.C. 1992, c. 37, ss. 5(1)(*b*), 8, 54, 54(2)(*b*).
Federal Court Rules, 1998, SOR/98-106, rr. 151, 312.

APPEAL from a judgment of the Federal Court of Appeal, [2000] 4 F.C. 426, 187 D.L.R. (4th) 231, 256 N.R. 1, 24 Admin. L.R. (3d) 1, [2000] F.C.J. No. 732 (QL), affirming a decision of the Trial Division, [2000] 2 F.C. 400, 178 F.T.R. 283, [1999] F.C.J. No. 1633 (QL). Appeal allowed.

J. Brett Ledger and *Peter Chapin*, for the appellant.

Timothy J. Howard and *Franklin S. Gertler*, for the respondent Sierra Club of Canada.

Graham Garton, *Q.C.*, and *J. Sanderson Graham*, for the respondents the Minister of Finance of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Minister of International Trade of Canada and the Attorney General of Canada.

The judgment of the Court was delivered by

IACOBUCCI J. —

I. Introduction

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

Canada (Ministre de la Santé nationale et du Bien-être social), [2000] 3 C.F. 360, conf. [1998] A.C.F. nº 1850 (QL); *Ethyl Canada Inc. c. Canada (Attorney General)* (1998), 17 C.P.C. (4th) 278; *R. c. Oakes*, [1986] 1 R.C.S. 103; *R. c. O.N.E.*, [2001] 3 R.C.S. 478, 2001 CSC 77; *F.N. (Re)*, [2000] 1 R.C.S. 880, 2000 CSC 35; *Eli Lilly and Co. c. Novopharm Ltd.* (1994), 56 C.P.R. (3d) 437.

Lois et règlements cités

Charte canadienne des droits et libertés, art. 1, 2*b*).
Loi canadienne sur l'évaluation environnementale, L.C. 1992, ch. 37, art. 5(1)*b*), 8, 54, 54(2) [abr. & rempl. 1993, ch. 34, art. 37].
Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998), DORS/98-106, règles 151, 312.

POURVOI contre un arrêt de la Cour d'appel fédérale, [2000] 4 C.F. 426, 187 D.L.R. (4th) 231, 256 N.R. 1, 24 Admin. L.R. (3d) 1, [2000] A.C.F. nº 732 (QL), qui a confirmé une décision de la Section de première instance, [2000] 2 C.F. 400, 178 F.T.R. 283, [1999] A.C.F. nº 1633 (QL). Pourvoi accueilli.

J. Brett Ledger et *Peter Chapin*, pour l'appelante.

Timothy J. Howard et *Franklin S. Gertler*, pour l'intimé Sierra Club du Canada.

Graham Garton, *c.r.*, et *J. Sanderson Graham*, pour les intimés le ministre des Finances du Canada, le ministre des Affaires étrangères du Canada, le ministre du Commerce international du Canada et le procureur général du Canada.

Version française du jugement de la Cour rendu par

LE JUGE IACOBUCCI —

I. Introduction

Dans notre pays, les tribunaux sont les institutions généralement choisies pour résoudre au mieux les différends juridiques par l'application de principes juridiques aux faits de chaque espèce. Un des principes sous-jacents au processus judiciaire est la transparence, tant dans la procédure suivie que dans les éléments pertinents à la solution du litige. Certains de ces éléments peuvent toutefois faire l'objet d'une ordonnance de confidentialité. Le

issues of when, and under what circumstances, a confidentiality order should be granted.

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

II. Facts

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

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

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

In the course of the application by Sierra Club to set aside the funding arrangements, the appellant

pourvoi soulève les importantes questions de savoir à quel moment et dans quelles circonstances il y a lieu de rendre une ordonnance de confidentialité.

2 Pour les motifs qui suivent, je suis d'avis de rendre l'ordonnance de confidentialité demandée et par conséquent d'accueillir le pourvoi.

II. Les faits

3 L'appelante, Énergie atomique du Canada Limitée (« ÉACL »), société d'État propriétaire et vendeuse de la technologie nucléaire CANDU, est une intervenante ayant reçu les droits de partie dans la demande de contrôle judiciaire présentée par l'intimé, Sierra Club du Canada (« Sierra Club »), un organisme environnemental. Sierra Club demande le contrôle judiciaire de la décision du gouvernement fédéral de fournir une aide financière, sous forme de garantie d'emprunt de 1,5 milliard de dollars, pour la construction et la vente à la Chine de deux réacteurs nucléaires CANDU par l'appelante. Les réacteurs sont actuellement en construction en Chine, où l'appelante est entrepreneur principal et gestionnaire de projet.

4 L'intimé soutient que l'autorisation d'aide financière du gouvernement déclenche l'application de l'al. 5(1)*b*) de la *Loi canadienne sur l'évaluation environnementale*, L.C. 1992, ch. 37 (« *LCÉE* »), qui exige une évaluation environnementale avant qu'une autorité fédérale puisse fournir une aide financière à un projet. Le défaut d'évaluation entraîne l'annulation des ententes financières.

5 Selon l'appelante et les ministres intimés, la *LCÉE* ne s'applique pas à la convention de prêt et si elle s'y applique, ils peuvent invoquer les défenses prévues aux art. 8 et 54 de cette loi. L'article 8 prévoit les circonstances dans lesquelles les sociétés d'État sont tenues de procéder à des évaluations environnementales. Le paragraphe 54(2) reconnaît la validité des évaluations environnementales effectuées par des autorités étrangères pourvu qu'elles soient compatibles avec les dispositions de la *LCÉE*.

6 Dans le cadre de la requête de Sierra Club en annulation des ententes financières, l'appelante a

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

déposé un affidavit de M. Simon Pang, un de ses cadres supérieurs. Dans l'affidavit, M. Pang mentionne et résume certains documents (les « documents confidentiels ») qui sont également mentionnés dans un affidavit de M. Feng, un expert d'ÉACL. Avant de contre-interroger M. Pang sur son affidavit, Sierra Club a demandé par requête la production des documents confidentiels, au motif qu'il ne pouvait vérifier la validité de sa déposition sans consulter les documents de base. L'appelante s'oppose pour plusieurs raisons à la production des documents, dont le fait qu'ils sont la propriété des autorités chinoises et qu'elle n'est pas autorisée à les divulguer. Après avoir obtenu des autorités chinoises l'autorisation de communiquer les documents à la condition qu'ils soient protégés par une ordonnance de confidentialité, l'appelante a cherché à les produire en invoquant la règle 312 des *Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998)*, DORS/98-106, et a demandé une ordonnance de confidentialité à leur égard.

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

Aux termes de l'ordonnance demandée, seules les parties et la cour auraient accès aux documents confidentiels. Aucune restriction ne serait imposée à l'accès du public aux débats. On demande essentiellement d'empêcher la diffusion des documents confidentiels au public.

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

Les documents confidentiels comprennent deux Rapports d'impact environnemental (« RIE ») sur le site et la construction, un Rapport préliminaire d'analyse sur la sécurité (« RPAS ») ainsi que l'affidavit supplémentaire de M. Pang qui résume le contenu des RIE et du RPAS. S'ils étaient admis, les rapports seraient joints en annexe de l'affidavit supplémentaire de M. Pang. Les RIE ont été préparés en chinois par les autorités chinoises, et le RPAS a été préparé par l'appelante en collaboration avec les responsables chinois du projet. Les documents contiennent une quantité considérable de renseignements techniques et comprennent des milliers de pages. Ils décrivent l'évaluation environnementale du site de construction qui est faite par les autorités chinoises en vertu des lois chinoises.

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

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

III. Relevant Statutory Provisions

Federal Court Rules, 1998, SOR/98-106

151. (1) On motion, the Court may order that material to be filed shall be treated as confidential.

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

IV. Judgments Below

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

Pelletier J. first considered whether leave should be granted pursuant to Rule 312 to introduce the supplementary affidavit of Dr. Pang to which the Confidential Documents were filed as exhibits. In his view, the underlying question was that of relevance, and he concluded that the documents were relevant to the issue of the appropriate remedy. Thus, in the absence of prejudice to the respondent, the affidavit should be permitted to be served and filed. He noted that the respondent would be prejudiced by delay, but since both parties had brought

9 Comme je le note plus haut, l'appelante prétend ne pas pouvoir produire les documents confidentiels en preuve sans qu'ils soient protégés par une ordonnance de confidentialité, parce que ce serait un manquement à ses obligations envers les autorités chinoises. L'intimé soutient pour sa part que son droit de contre-interroger M. Pang et M. Feng sur leurs affidavits serait pratiquement futile en l'absence des documents auxquels ils se réfèrent. Sierra Club entend soutenir que le juge saisi de la demande de contrôle judiciaire devrait donc leur accorder peu de poids.

10 La Section de première instance de la Cour fédérale du Canada a rejeté la demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité et la Cour d'appel fédérale, à la majorité, a rejeté l'appel. Le juge Robertson, dissident, était d'avis d'accorder l'ordonnance.

III. Dispositions législatives

11 *Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998)*, DORS/98-106

151. (1) La Cour peut, sur requête, ordonner que des documents ou éléments matériels qui seront déposés soient considérés comme confidentiels.

(2) Avant de rendre une ordonnance en application du paragraphe (1), la Cour doit être convaincue de la nécessité de considérer les documents ou éléments matériels comme confidentiels, étant donné l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats judiciaires.

IV. Les décisions antérieures

A. *Cour fédérale, Section de première instance*, [2000] 2 C.F. 400

12 Le juge Pelletier examine d'abord s'il y a lieu, en vertu de la règle 312, d'autoriser la production de l'affidavit supplémentaire de M. Pang auquel sont annexés les documents confidentiels. À son avis, il s'agit d'une question de pertinence et il conclut que les documents se rapportent à la question de la réparation. En l'absence de préjudice pour l'intimé, il y a donc lieu d'autoriser la signification et le dépôt de l'affidavit. Il note que des retards seraient préjudiciables à l'intimé mais que, puisque les deux parties ont présenté des requêtes

interlocutory motions which had contributed to the delay, the desirability of having the entire record before the court outweighed the prejudice arising from the delay associated with the introduction of the documents.

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

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

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

16 A very significant factor, in his view, was the fact that mandatory production of documents was not in issue here. The fact that the application involved a voluntary tendering of documents to advance the

interlocutoires qui ont entraîné les délais, les avantages de soumettre le dossier au complet à la cour compensent l'inconvénient du retard causé par la présentation de ces documents.

Sur la confidentialité, le juge Pelletier conclut qu'il doit être convaincu que la nécessité de protéger la confidentialité l'emporte sur l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats judiciaires. Il note que les arguments en faveur de la publicité des débats judiciaires en l'espèce sont importants vu l'intérêt du public envers le rôle du Canada comme vendeur de technologie nucléaire. Il fait aussi remarquer que les ordonnances de confidentialité sont une exception au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires et ne devraient être accordées que dans des cas de nécessité absolue.

Le juge Pelletier applique le même critère que pour une ordonnance conservatoire en matière de brevets, qui est essentiellement une ordonnance de confidentialité. Pour obtenir l'ordonnance, le requérant doit démontrer qu'il croit subjectivement que les renseignements sont confidentiels et que leur divulgation nuirait à ses intérêts. De plus, si l'ordonnance est contestée, le requérant doit démontrer objectivement qu'elle est nécessaire. Cet élément objectif l'oblige à démontrer que les renseignements ont toujours été traités comme étant confidentiels et qu'il est raisonnable de croire que leur divulgation risque de compromettre ses droits exclusifs, commerciaux et scientifiques.

Ayant conclu qu'il est satisfait à l'élément subjectif et aux deux volets de l'élément objectif du critère, il ajoute : « J'estime toutefois aussi que, dans les affaires de droit public, le critère objectif comporte, ou devrait comporter, un troisième volet, en l'occurrence la question de savoir si l'intérêt du public à l'égard de la divulgation l'emporte sur le préjudice que la divulgation risque de causer à une personne » (par. 23).

Il estime très important le fait qu'il ne s'agit pas en l'espèce de production obligatoire de documents. Le fait que la demande vise le dépôt volontaire de documents en vue d'étayer la thèse de l'appelante,

appellant's own cause as opposed to mandatory production weighed against granting the confidentiality order.

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

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

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

par opposition à une production obligatoire, joue contre l'ordonnance de confidentialité.

17 En soupesant l'intérêt du public dans la divulgation et le préjudice que la divulgation risque de causer à ÉACL, le juge Pelletier note que les documents que l'appelante veut soumettre à la cour ont été rédigés par d'autres personnes à d'autres fins, et il reconnaît que l'appelante est tenue de protéger la confidentialité des renseignements. À cette étape, il examine de nouveau la question de la pertinence. Si on réussit à démontrer que les documents sont très importants sur une question cruciale, « les exigences de la justice militent en faveur du prononcé d'une ordonnance de confidentialité. Si les documents ne sont pertinents que d'une façon accessoire, le caractère facultatif de la production milite contre le prononcé de l'ordonnance de confidentialité » (par. 29). Il conclut alors que les documents sont importants pour résoudre la question de la réparation à accorder, elle-même un point important si l'appelante échoue sur la question principale.

18 Le juge Pelletier considère aussi le contexte de l'affaire et conclut que, puisque la question du rôle du Canada comme vendeur de technologies nucléaires est une importante question d'intérêt public, la charge de justifier une ordonnance de confidentialité est très onéreuse. Il conclut qu'ÉACL pourrait retrancher les éléments délicats des documents ou soumettre à la cour la même preuve sous une autre forme, et maintenir ainsi son droit à une défense complète tout en préservant la publicité des débats judiciaires.

19 Le juge Pelletier signale qu'il prononce l'ordonnance sans avoir examiné les documents confidentiels puisqu'ils n'ont pas été portés à sa connaissance. Bien qu'il mentionne la jurisprudence indiquant qu'un juge ne devrait pas se prononcer sur une demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité sans avoir examiné les documents eux-mêmes, il estime qu'il n'aurait pas été utile d'examiner les documents, vu leur volume et leur caractère technique, et sans savoir quelle part d'information était déjà dans le domaine public.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dans son ordonnance, le juge Pelletier autorise l'appelante à déposer les documents sous leur forme actuelle ou sous une version révisée, à son gré. Il autorise aussi l'appelante à déposer des documents concernant le processus réglementaire chinois en général et son application au projet, à condition qu'elle le fasse sous 60 jours.

B. *Cour d'appel fédérale*, [2000] 4 C.F. 426

(1) Le juge Evans (avec l'appui du juge Sharlow)

ÉACL fait appel en Cour d'appel fédérale, en vertu de la règle 151 des *Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998)*, et Sierra Club forme un appel incident en vertu de la règle 312.

Sur la règle 312, le juge Evans conclut que les documents en cause sont clairement pertinents dans une défense que l'appelante a l'intention d'invoquer en vertu du par. 54(2) si la cour conclut que l'al. 5(1)*b*) de la *LCÉE* doit s'appliquer, et pourraient l'être aussi pour l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire de la cour de refuser d'accorder une réparation dans le cas où les ministres auraient enfreint la *LCÉE*. Comme le juge Pelletier, le juge Evans est d'avis que l'avantage pour l'appelante et pour la cour d'une autorisation de déposer les documents l'emporte sur tout préjudice que le retard pourrait causer à l'intimé, et conclut par conséquent que le juge des requêtes a eu raison d'accorder l'autorisation en vertu de la règle 312.

Sur l'ordonnance de confidentialité, le juge Evans examine la règle 151 et tous les facteurs que le juge des requêtes a appréciés, y compris le secret commercial attaché aux documents, le fait que l'appelante les a reçus à titre confidentiel des autorités chinoises, et l'argument de l'appelante selon lequel, sans les documents, elle ne pourrait assurer effectivement sa défense. Ces facteurs doivent être pondérés avec le principe de la publicité des documents soumis aux tribunaux. Le juge Evans convient avec le juge Pelletier que le poids à accorder à l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats varie selon le contexte, et il conclut que lorsqu'une affaire soulève des questions de grande importance pour le public, le principe de la publicité des débats a plus de poids

the balancing process. Evans J.A. noted the public interest in the subject matter of the litigation, as well as the considerable media attention it had attracted.

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

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

Evans J.A. rejected the argument that the motions judge had erred in deciding the motion without

comme facteur à prendre en compte dans le processus de pondération. Le juge Evans note l'intérêt du public à l'égard de la question en litige ainsi que la couverture médiatique considérable qu'elle a suscitée.

24 À l'appui de sa conclusion que le poids accordé au principe de la publicité des débats peut varier selon le contexte, le juge Evans invoque les décisions *AB Hassle c. Canada (Ministre de la Santé nationale et du Bien-être social)*, [2000] 3 C.F. 360 (C.A.), où la cour a tenu compte du peu d'intérêt du public, et *Ethyl Canada Inc. c. Canada (Attorney General)* (1998), 17 C.P.C. (4th) 278 (C. Ont. (Div. gén.)), p. 283, où la cour a ordonné la divulgation après avoir déterminé qu'il s'agissait d'une affaire constitutionnelle importante et qu'il importait que le public comprenne ce qui était en cause. Le juge Evans fait remarquer que la transparence du processus d'évaluation et la participation du public ont une importance fondamentale pour la *LCÉE*, et il conclut qu'on ne peut prétendre que le juge des requêtes a accordé trop de poids au principe de la publicité des débats, même si la confidentialité n'est demandée que pour un nombre relativement restreint de documents hautement techniques.

25 Le juge Evans conclut que le juge des requêtes a donné trop de poids au fait que la production des documents était volontaire mais qu'il ne s'ensuit pas que sa décision au sujet de la confidentialité doive être écartée. Le juge Evans est d'avis que l'erreur n'entâche pas sa conclusion finale, pour trois motifs. Premièrement, comme le juge des requêtes, il attache une grande importance à la publicité du débat judiciaire. Deuxièmement, il conclut que l'inclusion dans les affidavits d'un résumé des rapports peut, dans une large mesure, compenser l'absence des rapports, si l'appelante décide de ne pas les déposer sans ordonnance de confidentialité. Enfin, si ÉACL déposait une version modifiée des documents, la demande de confidentialité reposerait sur un facteur relativement peu important, savoir l'argument que l'appelante perdrait des occasions d'affaires si elle violait son engagement envers les autorités chinoises.

26 Le juge Evans rejette l'argument selon lequel le juge des requêtes a commis une erreur en statuant

reference to the actual documents, stating that it was not necessary for him to inspect them, given that summaries were available and that the documents were highly technical and incompletely translated. Thus the appeal and cross-appeal were both dismissed.

(2) Robertson J.A. (dissenting)

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

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

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

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

sans avoir examiné les documents réels, affirmant que cela n'était pas nécessaire puisqu'il y avait des précis et que la documentation était hautement technique et partiellement traduite. L'appel et l'appel incident sont donc rejetés.

(2) Le juge Robertson (dissident)

Le juge Robertson se dissocie de la majorité pour trois raisons. En premier lieu, il estime que le degré d'intérêt du public dans une affaire, l'importance de la couverture médiatique et l'identité des parties ne devraient pas être pris en considération pour statuer sur une demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité. Selon lui, il faut plutôt examiner la nature de la preuve que protégerait l'ordonnance de confidentialité.

Il estime aussi qu'à défaut d'ordonnance de confidentialité, l'appelante doit choisir entre deux options inacceptables : subir un préjudice financier irréparable si les renseignements confidentiels sont produits en preuve, ou être privée de son droit à un procès équitable parce qu'elle ne peut se défendre pleinement si la preuve n'est pas produite.

Finalement, il dit que le cadre analytique utilisé par les juges majoritaires pour arriver à leur décision est fondamentalement défectueux en ce qu'il est fondé en grande partie sur le point de vue subjectif du juge des requêtes. Il rejette l'approche contextuelle sur la question de l'ordonnance de confidentialité, soulignant la nécessité d'un cadre d'analyse objectif pour combattre la perception que la justice est un concept relatif et pour promouvoir la cohérence et la certitude en droit.

Pour établir ce cadre plus objectif appelé à régir la délivrance d'ordonnances de confidentialité en matière de renseignements commerciaux et scientifiques, il examine le fondement juridique du principe de la publicité du processus judiciaire, en citant l'arrêt de notre Cour, *Edmonton Journal c. Alberta (Procureur général)*, [1989] 2 R.C.S. 1326, qui conclut que la publicité des débats favorise la recherche de la vérité et témoigne de l'importance de soumettre le travail des tribunaux à l'examen public.

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

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

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

Selon le juge Robertson, même si le principe de la publicité du processus judiciaire reflète la valeur fondamentale que constitue dans une démocratie l'imputabilité dans l'exercice du pouvoir judiciaire, le principe selon lequel il faut que justice soit faite doit, à son avis, l'emporter. Il conclut que la justice vue comme principe universel signifie que les règles ou les principes doivent parfois souffrir des exceptions.

Il fait observer qu'en droit commercial, lorsque les renseignements qu'on cherche à protéger ont trait à des « secrets industriels », ils ne sont pas divulgués au procès lorsque cela aurait pour effet d'annihiler les droits du propriétaire et l'exposerait à un préjudice financier irréparable. Il conclut que, même si l'espèce ne porte pas sur des secrets industriels, on peut traiter de la même façon des renseignements commerciaux et scientifiques acquis sur une base confidentielle, et il établit les critères suivants comme conditions à la délivrance d'une ordonnance de confidentialité (au par. 13) :

1) les renseignements sont de nature confidentielle et non seulement des faits qu'une personne désire ne pas divulguer; 2) les renseignements qu'on veut protéger ne sont pas du domaine public; 3) selon la prépondérance des probabilités, la partie qui veut obtenir une ordonnance de confidentialité subirait un préjudice irréparable si les renseignements étaient rendus publics; 4) les renseignements sont pertinents dans le cadre de la résolution des questions juridiques soulevées dans le litige; 5) en même temps, les renseignements sont « nécessaires » à la résolution de ces questions; 6) l'octroi d'une ordonnance de confidentialité ne cause pas un préjudice grave à la partie adverse; 7) l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats judiciaires ne prime pas les intérêts privés de la partie qui sollicite l'ordonnance de confidentialité. Le fardeau de démontrer que les critères un à six sont respectés incombe à la partie qui cherche à obtenir l'ordonnance de confidentialité. Pour le septième critère, c'est la partie adverse qui doit démontrer que le droit *prima facie* à une ordonnance de non-divulgation doit céder le pas au besoin de maintenir la publicité des débats judiciaires. En utilisant ces critères, il y a lieu de tenir compte de deux des fils conducteurs qui sous-tendent le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires : la recherche de la vérité et la sauvegarde de la primauté du droit. Comme je l'ai dit au tout début, je ne crois pas que le degré d'importance qu'on croit que le public accorde à une affaire soit une considération pertinente.

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

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

V. Issues

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

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

VI. Analysis

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

(1) The General Framework: Herein the *Dagenais* Principles

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

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

Appliquant ces critères aux circonstances de l'espèce, le juge Robertson conclut qu'il y a lieu de rendre l'ordonnance de confidentialité. Selon lui, l'intérêt du public dans la publicité des débats judiciaires ne prime pas l'intérêt de ÉACL à préserver le caractère confidentiel de ces documents hautement techniques.

Le juge Robertson traite aussi de l'intérêt du public à ce qu'il soit garanti que les plans de site d'installations nucléaires ne seront pas, par exemple, affichés sur un site Web. Il conclut qu'une ordonnance de confidentialité n'aurait aucun impact négatif sur les deux objectifs primordiaux du principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires, savoir la vérité et la primauté du droit. Il aurait par conséquent accueilli l'appel et rejeté l'appel incident.

V. Questions en litige

A. Quelle méthode d'analyse faut-il appliquer à l'exercice du pouvoir judiciaire discrétionnaire lorsqu'une partie demande une ordonnance de confidentialité en vertu de la règle 151 des *Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998)*?

B. Y a-t-il lieu d'accorder l'ordonnance de confidentialité en l'espèce?

VI. Analyse

A. *Méthode d'analyse applicable aux ordonnances de confidentialité*

(1) Le cadre général : les principes de l'arrêt *Dagenais*

Le lien entre la publicité des procédures judiciaires et la liberté d'expression est solidement établi dans *Société Radio-Canada c. Nouveau-Brunswick (Procureur général)*, [1996] 3 R.C.S. 480. Le juge La Forest l'exprime en ces termes au par. 23 :

> Le principe de la publicité des débats en justice est inextricablement lié aux droits garantis à l'al. 2*b*). Grâce à ce principe, le public a accès à l'information concernant les tribunaux, ce qui lui permet ensuite de discuter des pratiques des tribunaux et des procédures qui s'y déroulent, et d'émettre des opinions et des critiques à cet égard. La liberté d'exprimer des idées et des opinions sur

freedom guaranteed by s. 2(*b*), so too is the right of members of the public to obtain information about the courts in the first place.

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

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

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

Dagenais dealt with an application by four accused persons under the court's common law jurisdiction requesting an order prohibiting the broadcast of a television programme dealing with the physical and sexual abuse of young boys at

le fonctionnement des tribunaux relève clairement de la liberté garantie à l'al. 2*b*), mais en relève également le droit du public d'obtenir au préalable de l'information sur les tribunaux.

L'ordonnance sollicitée aurait pour effet de limiter l'accès du public aux documents confidentiels et leur examen public; cela porterait clairement atteinte à la garantie de la liberté d'expression du public.

37 L'examen de la méthode générale à suivre dans l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire d'accorder une ordonnance de confidentialité devrait commencer par les principes établis par la Cour dans *Dagenais c. Société Radio-Canada*, [1994] 3 R.C.S. 835. Cette affaire portait sur le pouvoir discrétionnaire judiciaire, issu de la common law, de rendre des ordonnances de non-publication dans le cadre de procédures criminelles, mais il y a de fortes ressemblances entre les interdictions de publication et les ordonnances de confidentialité dans le contexte des procédures judiciaires. Dans les deux cas, on cherche à restreindre la liberté d'expression afin de préserver ou de promouvoir un intérêt en jeu dans les procédures. En ce sens, la question fondamentale que doit résoudre le tribunal auquel on demande une interdiction de publication ou une ordonnance de confidentialité est de savoir si, dans les circonstances, il y a lieu de restreindre le droit à la liberté d'expression.

38 Même si, dans chaque cas, la liberté d'expression entre en jeu dans un contexte différent, le cadre établi dans *Dagenais* fait appel aux principes déterminants de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés* afin de pondérer la liberté d'expression avec d'autres droits et intérêts, et peut donc être adapté et appliqué à diverses circonstances. L'analyse de l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire sous le régime de la règle 151 devrait par conséquent refléter les principes sous-jacents établis par *Dagenais*, même s'il faut pour cela l'ajuster aux droits et intérêts précis qui sont en jeu en l'espèce.

39 L'affaire *Dagenais* porte sur une requête par laquelle quatre accusés demandaient à la cour de rendre, en vertu de sa compétence de common law, une ordonnance interdisant la diffusion d'une émission de télévision décrivant des abus physiques et

religious institutions. The applicants argued that because the factual circumstances of the programme were very similar to the facts at issue in their trials, the ban was necessary to preserve the accuseds' right to a fair trial.

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

> A publication ban should only be ordered when:
>
> (a) Such a ban is necessary in order to prevent a real and substantial risk to the fairness of the trial, because reasonably available alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and
>
> (b) The salutary effects of the publication ban outweigh the deleterious effects to the free expression of those affected by the ban. [Emphasis in original.]

41 In *New Brunswick*, *supra*, this Court modified the *Dagenais* test in the context of the related issue of how the discretionary power under s. 486(1) of the *Criminal Code*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46, to exclude the public from a trial should be exercised. That case dealt with an appeal from the trial judge's order excluding the public from the portion of a sentencing proceeding for sexual assault and sexual interference dealing with the specific acts committed by the accused on the basis that it would avoid "undue hardship" to both the victims and the accused.

42 La Forest J. found that s. 486(1) was a restriction on the s. 2(*b*) right to freedom of expression in that it provided a "discretionary bar on public and media access to the courts": *New Brunswick*, at para. 33;

sexuels infligés à de jeunes garçons dans des établissements religieux. Les requérants soutenaient que l'interdiction était nécessaire pour préserver leur droit à un procès équitable, parce que les faits racontés dans l'émission ressemblaient beaucoup aux faits en cause dans leurs procès.

Le juge en chef Lamer conclut que le pouvoir discrétionnaire de common law d'ordonner l'interdiction de publication doit être exercé dans les limites prescrites par les principes de la *Charte*. Puisque les ordonnances de non-publication restreignent nécessairement la liberté d'expression de tiers, il adapte la règle de common law qui s'appliquait avant l'entrée en vigueur de la *Charte* de façon à établir un juste équilibre entre le droit à la liberté d'expression et le droit de l'accusé à un procès équitable, d'une façon qui reflète l'essence du critère énoncé dans *R. c. Oakes*, [1986] 1 R.C.S. 103. À la page 878 de *Dagenais*, le juge en chef Lamer énonce le critère reformulé :

> Une ordonnance de non-publication ne doit être rendue que si :
>
> a) elle est nécessaire pour écarter le risque réel et important que le procès soit inéquitable, vu l'absence d'autres mesures raisonnables pouvant écarter ce risque;
>
> b) ses effets bénéfiques sont plus importants que ses effets préjudiciables sur la libre expression de ceux qui sont touchés par l'ordonnance. [Souligné dans l'original.]

Dans *Nouveau-Brunswick*, précité, la Cour modifie le critère de l'arrêt *Dagenais* dans le contexte de la question voisine de l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire d'ordonner l'exclusion du public d'un procès en vertu du par. 486(1) du *Code criminel*, L.R.C. 1985, ch. C-46. Il s'agissait d'un appel d'une décision du juge du procès d'ordonner l'exclusion du public de la partie des procédures de détermination de la peine pour agression sexuelle et contacts sexuels portant sur les actes précis commis par l'accusé, au motif que cela éviterait un « préjudice indu » aux victimes et à l'accusé.

Le juge La Forest conclut que le par. 486(1) limite la liberté d'expression garantie à l'al. 2*b*) en créant un « pouvoir discrétionnaire permettant d'interdire au public et aux médias l'accès aux

however he found this infringement to be justified under s. 1 provided that the discretion was exercised in accordance with the *Charter*. Thus, the approach taken by La Forest J. at para. 69 to the exercise of discretion under s. 486(1) of the *Criminal Code*, closely mirrors the *Dagenais* common law test:

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

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

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

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

This Court has recently revisited the granting of a publication ban under the court's common law jurisdiction in *R. v. Mentuck*, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 442, 2001 SCC 76, and its companion case *R. v. O.N.E.*, [2001] 3 S.C.R. 478, 2001 SCC 77. In *Mentuck*, the Crown moved for a publication ban to protect the identity of undercover police officers and operational methods employed by the officers in their investigation of the accused. The accused opposed the motion as an infringement of his right to a fair and public hearing under s. 11(*d*) of the *Charter*. The order was also opposed by two intervening newspapers as an infringement of their right to freedom of expression.

The Court noted that, while *Dagenais* dealt with the balancing of freedom of expression on the one hand, and the right to a fair trial of the accused on the other, in the case before it, both the right of the

tribunaux » (*Nouveau-Brunswick*, par. 33). Il considère toutefois que l'atteinte peut être justifiée en vertu de l'article premier pourvu que le pouvoir discrétionnaire soit exercé conformément à la *Charte*. Donc l'analyse de l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire en vertu du par. 486(1) du *Code criminel*, décrite par le juge La Forest au par. 69, concorde étroitement avec le critère de common law établi par *Dagenais* :

a) le juge doit envisager les solutions disponibles et se demander s'il existe d'autres mesures de rechange raisonnables et efficaces;

b) il doit se demander si l'ordonnance a une portée aussi limitée que possible; et

c) il doit comparer l'importance des objectifs de l'ordonnance et de ses effets probables avec l'importance de la publicité des procédures et l'activité d'expression qui sera restreinte, afin de veiller à ce que les effets positifs et négatifs de l'ordonnance soient proportionnels.

Appliquant cette analyse aux faits de l'espèce, le juge La Forest conclut que la preuve du risque de préjudice indu consiste principalement en la prétention de l'avocat du ministère public quant à la « nature délicate » des faits relatifs aux infractions et que cela ne suffit pas pour justifier l'atteinte à la liberté d'expression.

43 La Cour a récemment réexaminé la question des interdictions de publication prononcées par un tribunal en vertu de sa compétence de common law dans *R. c. Mentuck*, [2001] 3 R.C.S. 442, 2001 CSC 76, et l'arrêt connexe *R. c. O.N.E.*, [2001] 3 R.C.S. 478, 2001 CSC 77. Dans *Mentuck*, le ministère public demandait l'interdiction de publication en vue de protéger l'identité de policiers banalisés et leurs méthodes d'enquête. L'accusé s'opposait à la demande en soutenant que l'interdiction porterait atteinte à son droit à un procès public et équitable protégé par l'al. 11*d*) de la *Charte*. Deux journaux intervenants s'opposaient aussi à la requête, en faisant valoir qu'elle porterait atteinte à leur droit à la liberté d'expression.

44 La Cour fait remarquer que *Dagenais* traite de la pondération de la liberté d'expression, d'une part, et du droit de l'accusé à un procès équitable, d'autre part, tandis que dans l'affaire dont elle est saisie, le

accused to a fair and public hearing, and freedom of expression weighed in favour of denying the publication ban. These rights were balanced against interests relating to the proper administration of justice, in particular, protecting the safety of police officers and preserving the efficacy of undercover police operations.

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

A publication ban should only be ordered when:

(a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to the proper administration of justice because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and

(b) the salutary effects of the publication ban outweigh the deleterious effects on the rights and interests of the parties and the public, including the effects on the right to free expression, the right of the accused to a fair and public trial, and the efficacy of the administration of justice.

46 The Court emphasized that under the first branch of the test, three important elements were subsumed under the "necessity" branch. First, the risk in question must be a serious risk well grounded in the evidence. Second, the phrase "proper administration of justice" must be carefully interpreted so as not to

droit de l'accusé à un procès public et équitable tout autant que la liberté d'expression militent en faveur du rejet de la requête en interdiction de publication. Ces droits ont été soupesés avec l'intérêt de la bonne administration de la justice, en particulier la protection de la sécurité des policiers et le maintien de l'efficacité des opérations policières secrètes.

Malgré cette distinction, la Cour note que la méthode retenue dans *Dagenais* et *Nouveau-Brunswick* a pour objectif de garantir que le pouvoir discrétionnaire des tribunaux d'ordonner des interdictions de publication n'est pas assujetti à une norme de conformité à la *Charte* moins exigeante que la norme applicable aux dispositions législatives. Elle vise cet objectif en incorporant l'essence de l'article premier de la *Charte* et le critère *Oakes* dans l'analyse applicable aux interdictions de publication. Comme le même objectif s'applique à l'affaire dont elle est saisie, la Cour adopte une méthode semblable à celle de *Dagenais*, mais en élargissant le critère énoncé dans cet arrêt (qui portait spécifiquement sur le droit de l'accusé à un procès équitable) de manière à fournir un guide à l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire des tribunaux dans les requêtes en interdiction de publication, afin de protéger tout aspect important de la bonne administration de la justice. La Cour reformule le critère en ces termes (au par. 32) :

Une ordonnance de non-publication ne doit être rendue que si :

a) elle est nécessaire pour écarter le risque sérieux pour la bonne administration de la justice, vu l'absence d'autres mesures raisonnables pouvant écarter ce risque;

b) ses effets bénéfiques sont plus importants que ses effets préjudiciables sur les droits et les intérêts des parties et du public, notamment ses effets sur le droit à la libre expression, sur le droit de l'accusé à un procès public et équitable, et sur l'efficacité de l'administration de la justice.

La Cour souligne que dans le premier volet de l'analyse, trois éléments importants sont subsumés sous la notion de « nécessité ». En premier lieu, le risque en question doit être sérieux et bien étayé par la preuve. En deuxième lieu, l'expression « bonne administration de la justice » doit être interprétée

allow the concealment of an excessive amount of information. Third, the test requires the judge ordering the ban to consider not only whether reasonable alternatives are available, but also to restrict the ban as far as possible without sacrificing the prevention of the risk.

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

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

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

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

judicieusement de façon à ne pas empêcher la divulgation d'un nombre excessif de renseignements. En troisième lieu, le critère exige non seulement que le juge qui prononce l'ordonnance détermine s'il existe des mesures de rechange raisonnables, mais aussi qu'il limite l'ordonnance autant que possible sans pour autant sacrifier la prévention du risque.

47 Au paragraphe 31, la Cour fait aussi l'importante observation que la bonne administration de la justice n'implique pas nécessairement des droits protégés par la *Charte*, et que la possibilité d'invoquer la *Charte* n'est pas une condition nécessaire à l'obtention d'une interdiction de publication :

> Elle [la règle de common law] peut s'appliquer aux ordonnances qui doivent parfois être rendues dans l'intérêt de l'administration de la justice, qui englobe davantage que le droit à un procès équitable. Comme on veut que le critère « reflète [. . .] l'essence du critère énoncé dans l'arrêt *Oakes* », nous ne pouvons pas exiger que ces ordonnances aient pour seul objectif légitime les droits garantis par la *Charte*, pas plus que nous exigeons que les actes gouvernementaux et les dispositions législatives contrevenant à la *Charte* soient justifiés exclusivement par la recherche d'un autre droit garanti par la *Charte*. [Je souligne.]

La Cour prévoit aussi que, dans les cas voulus, le critère de *Dagenais* pourrait être élargi encore davantage pour régir des requêtes en interdiction de publication mettant en jeu des questions autres que l'administration de la justice.

48 *Mentuck* illustre bien la souplesse de la méthode *Dagenais*. Comme elle a pour objet fondamental de garantir que le pouvoir discrétionnaire d'interdire l'accès du public aux tribunaux est exercé conformément aux principes de la *Charte*, à mon avis, le modèle *Dagenais* peut et devrait être adapté à la situation de la présente espèce, où la question centrale est l'exercice du pouvoir discrétionnaire du tribunal d'exclure des renseignements confidentiels au cours d'une procédure publique. Comme dans *Dagenais*, *Nouveau-Brunswick* et *Mentuck*, une ordonnance de confidentialité aura un effet négatif sur le droit à la liberté d'expression garanti par la *Charte*, de même que sur le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires et, comme dans ces affaires, les tribunaux doivent veiller à ce que le

However, in order to adapt the test to the context of this case, it is first necessary to determine the particular rights and interests engaged by this application.

(2) The Rights and Interests of the Parties

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

50 Aside from this direct commercial interest, if the confidentiality order is denied, then in order to protect its commercial interests, the appellant will have to withhold the documents. This raises the important matter of the litigation context in which the order is sought. As both the motions judge and the Federal Court of Appeal found that the information contained in the Confidential Documents was relevant to defences available under the *CEAA*, the inability to present this information hinders the appellant's capacity to make full answer and defence, or, expressed more generally, the appellant's right, as a civil litigant, to present its case. In that sense, preventing the appellant from disclosing these documents on a confidential basis infringes its right to a fair trial. Although in the context of a civil proceeding this does not engage a *Charter* right, the right to a fair trial generally can be viewed as a fundamental principle of justice: *M. (A.) v. Ryan*, [1997] 1 S.C.R. 157, at para. 84, *per* L'Heureux-Dubé J. (dissenting, but not on that point). Although this fair trial right is directly relevant to the appellant, there is also a general public interest in protecting the right to a fair trial. Indeed, as a general proposition, all disputes in the courts should be decided under a fair trial standard. The legitimacy of the judicial process alone

pouvoir discrétionnaire d'accorder l'ordonnance soit exercé conformément aux principes de la *Charte*. Toutefois, pour adapter le critère au contexte de la présente espèce, il faut d'abord définir les droits et intérêts particuliers qui entrent en jeu.

(2) Les droits et les intérêts des parties

L'objet immédiat de la demande d'ordonnance de confidentialité d'ÉACL a trait à ses intérêts commerciaux. Les renseignements en question appartiennent aux autorités chinoises. Si l'appelante divulguait les documents confidentiels, elle manquerait à ses obligations contractuelles et s'exposerait à une détérioration de sa position concurrentielle. Il ressort clairement des conclusions de fait du juge des requêtes qu'ÉACL est tenue, par ses intérêts commerciaux et par les droits de propriété de son client, de ne pas divulguer ces renseignements (par. 27), et que leur divulgation risque de nuire aux intérêts commerciaux de l'appelante (par. 23).

Indépendamment de cet intérêt commercial direct, en cas de refus de l'ordonnance de confidentialité, l'appelante devra, pour protéger ses intérêts commerciaux, s'abstenir de produire les documents. Cela soulève l'importante question du contexte de la présentation de la demande. Comme le juge des requêtes et la Cour d'appel fédérale concluent tous deux que l'information contenue dans les documents confidentiels est pertinente pour les moyens de défense prévus par la *LCÉE*, le fait de ne pouvoir la produire nuit à la capacité de l'appelante de présenter une défense pleine et entière ou, plus généralement, au droit de l'appelante, en sa qualité de justiciable civile, de défendre sa cause. En ce sens, empêcher l'appelante de divulguer ces documents pour des raisons de confidentialité porte atteinte à son droit à un procès équitable. Même si en matière civile cela n'engage pas de droit protégé par la *Charte*, le droit à un procès équitable peut généralement être considéré comme un principe de justice fondamentale : *M. (A.) c. Ryan*, [1997] 1 R.C.S. 157, par. 84, le juge L'Heureux-Dubé (dissidente, mais non sur ce point). Le droit à un procès équitable intéresse directement l'appelante, mais le public a aussi un intérêt général à la protection du droit à un procès équitable. À vrai dire, le principe

demands as much. Similarly, courts have an interest in having all relevant evidence before them in order to ensure that justice is done.

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

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

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

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

A confidentiality order under Rule 151 should only be granted when:

(a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and

général est que tout litige porté devant les tribunaux doit être tranché selon la norme du procès équitable. La légitimité du processus judiciaire n'exige pas moins. De même, les tribunaux ont intérêt à ce que toutes les preuves pertinentes leur soient présentées pour veiller à ce que justice soit faite.

51 Ainsi, les intérêts que favoriserait l'ordonnance de confidentialité seraient le maintien de relations commerciales et contractuelles, de même que le droit des justiciables civils à un procès équitable. Est lié à ce dernier droit l'intérêt du public et du judiciaire dans la recherche de la vérité et la solution juste des litiges civils.

52 Milite contre l'ordonnance de confidentialité le principe fondamental de la publicité des débats judiciaires. Ce principe est inextricablement lié à la liberté d'expression constitutionnalisée à l'al. 2*b*) de la *Charte* : *Nouveau-Brunswick*, précité, par. 23. L'importance de l'accès du public et des médias aux tribunaux ne peut être sous-estimée puisque l'accès est le moyen grâce auquel le processus judiciaire est soumis à l'examen et à la critique. Comme il est essentiel à l'administration de la justice que justice soit faite et soit perçue comme l'étant, cet examen public est fondamental. Le principe de la publicité des procédures judiciaires a été décrit comme le « souffle même de la justice », la garantie de l'absence d'arbitraire dans l'administration de la justice : *Nouveau-Brunswick*, par. 22.

(3) Adaptation de l'analyse de *Dagenais* aux droits et intérêts des parties

53 Pour appliquer aux droits et intérêts en jeu en l'espèce l'analyse de *Dagenais* et des arrêts subséquents précités, il convient d'énoncer de la façon suivante les conditions applicables à une ordonnance de confidentialité dans un cas comme l'espèce :

Une ordonnance de confidentialité en vertu de la règle 151 ne doit être rendue que si :

a) elle est nécessaire pour écarter un risque sérieux pour un intérêt important, y compris un intérêt commercial, dans le contexte d'un litige, en l'absence d'autres options raisonnables pour écarter ce risque;

(b) the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

b) ses effets bénéfiques, y compris ses effets sur le droit des justiciables civils à un procès équitable, l'emportent sur ses effets préjudiciables, y compris ses effets sur la liberté d'expression qui, dans ce contexte, comprend l'intérêt du public dans la publicité des débats judiciaires.

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

Comme dans *Mentuck*, j'ajouterais que trois éléments importants sont subsumés sous le premier volet de l'analyse. En premier lieu, le risque en cause doit être réel et important, en ce qu'il est bien étayé par la preuve et menace gravement l'intérêt commercial en question.

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

De plus, l'expression « intérêt commercial important » exige une clarification. Pour être qualifié d'« intérêt commercial important », l'intérêt en question ne doit pas se rapporter uniquement et spécifiquement à la partie qui demande l'ordonnance de confidentialité; il doit s'agir d'un intérêt qui peut se définir en termes d'intérêt public à la confidentialité. Par exemple, une entreprise privée ne pourrait simplement prétendre que l'existence d'un contrat donné ne devrait pas être divulguée parce que cela lui ferait perdre des occasions d'affaires, et que cela nuirait à ses intérêts commerciaux. Si toutefois, comme en l'espèce, la divulgation de renseignements doit entraîner un manquement à une entente de non-divulgation, on peut alors parler plus largement de l'intérêt commercial général dans la protection des renseignements confidentiels. Simplement, si aucun principe général n'entre en jeu, il ne peut y avoir d'« intérêt commercial important » pour les besoins de l'analyse. Ou, pour citer le juge Binnie dans *F.N. (Re)*, [2000] 1 R.C.S. 880, 2000 CSC 35, par. 10, la règle de la publicité des débats judiciaires ne cède le pas que « dans les cas où le droit du public à la confidentialité l'emporte sur le droit du public à l'accessibilité » (je souligne).

56 In addition to the above requirement, courts must be cautious in determining what constitutes an "important commercial interest". It must be remembered that a confidentiality order involves an infringement on freedom of expression. Although the balancing of the commercial interest with freedom of expression takes place under the second

Outre l'exigence susmentionnée, les tribunaux doivent déterminer avec prudence ce qui constitue un « intérêt commercial important ». Il faut rappeler qu'une ordonnance de confidentialité implique une atteinte à la liberté d'expression. Même si la pondération de l'intérêt commercial et de la liberté d'expression intervient à la deuxième étape

branch of the test, courts must be alive to the fundamental importance of the open court rule. See generally Muldoon J. in *Eli Lilly and Co. v. Novopharm Ltd.* (1994), 56 C.P.R. (3d) 437 (F.C.T.D.), at p. 439.

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

B. *Application of the Test to this Appeal*

(1) Necessity

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

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

Pelletier J. noted that the order sought in this case was similar in nature to an application for a protective order which arises in the context of patent litigation. Such an order requires the applicant to demonstrate that the information in question has been treated at all relevant times as confidential and that on a balance of probabilities its proprietary, commercial and scientific interests could reasonably be harmed by the disclosure of the information: *AB Hassle v. Canada (Minister of National Health and Welfare)* (1998), 83 C.P.R. (3d) 428 (F.C.T.D.), at p. 434. To this I would add the requirement proposed

de l'analyse, les tribunaux doivent avoir pleinement conscience de l'importance fondamentale de la règle de la publicité des débats judiciaires. Voir généralement *Eli Lilly and Co. c. Novopharm Ltd.* (1994), 56 C.P.R. (3d) 437 (C.F. 1re inst.), p. 439, le juge Muldoon.

57 Enfin, l'expression « autres options raisonnables » oblige le juge non seulement à se demander s'il existe des mesures raisonnables autres que l'ordonnance de confidentialité, mais aussi à restreindre l'ordonnance autant qu'il est raisonnablement possible de le faire tout en préservant l'intérêt commercial en question.

B. *Application de l'analyse en l'espèce*

(1) Nécessité

58 À cette étape, il faut déterminer si la divulgation des documents confidentiels ferait courir un risque sérieux à un intérêt commercial important de l'appelante, et s'il existe d'autres solutions raisonnables que l'ordonnance elle-même, ou ses modalités.

59 L'intérêt commercial en jeu en l'espèce a trait à la préservation d'obligations contractuelles de confidentialité. L'appelante fait valoir qu'un préjudice irréparable sera causé à ses intérêts commerciaux si les documents confidentiels sont divulgués. À mon avis, la préservation de renseignements confidentiels est un intérêt commercial suffisamment important pour satisfaire au premier volet de l'analyse dès lors que certaines conditions relatives aux renseignements sont réunies.

60 Le juge Pelletier souligne que l'ordonnance sollicitée en l'espèce s'apparente à une ordonnance conservatoire en matière de brevets. Pour l'obtenir, le requérant doit démontrer que les renseignements en question ont toujours été traités comme des renseignements confidentiels et que, selon la prépondérance des probabilités, il est raisonnable de penser que leur divulgation risquerait de compromettre ses droits exclusifs, commerciaux et scientifiques : *AB Hassle c. Canada (Ministre de la Santé nationale et du Bien-être social)*, [1998] A.C.F. no 1850 (QL) (C.F. 1re inst.), par. 29-30. J'ajouterais à cela

by Robertson J.A. that the information in question must be of a "confidential nature" in that it has been "accumulated with a reasonable expectation of it being kept confidential" as opposed to "facts which a litigant would like to keep confidential by having the courtroom doors closed" (para. 14).

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

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

63 Two alternatives to the confidentiality order were put forward by the courts below. The motions judge suggested that the Confidential Documents could be expunged of their commercially sensitive contents, and edited versions of the documents could be

l'exigence proposée par le juge Robertson que les renseignements soient « de nature confidentielle » en ce qu'ils ont été « recueillis dans l'expectative raisonnable qu'ils resteront confidentiels », par opposition à « des faits qu'une partie à un litige voudrait garder confidentiels en obtenant le huis clos » (par. 14).

Le juge Pelletier constate que le critère établi dans *AB Hassle* est respecté puisque tant l'appelante que les autorités chinoises ont toujours considéré les renseignements comme confidentiels et que, selon la prépondérance des probabilités, leur divulgation risque de nuire aux intérêts commerciaux de l'appelante (par. 23). Le juge Robertson conclut lui aussi que les renseignements en question sont clairement confidentiels puisqu'il s'agit de renseignements commerciaux, uniformément reconnus comme étant confidentiels, qui présentent un intérêt pour les concurrents d'ÉACL (par. 16). Par conséquent, l'ordonnance est demandée afin de prévenir un risque sérieux de préjudice à un intérêt commercial important.

Le premier volet de l'analyse exige aussi l'examen d'options raisonnables autres que l'ordonnance de confidentialité, et de la portée de l'ordonnance pour s'assurer qu'elle n'est pas trop vaste. Les deux jugements antérieurs en l'espèce concluent que les renseignements figurant dans les documents confidentiels sont pertinents pour les moyens de défense offerts à l'appelante en vertu de la *LCÉE*, et cette conclusion n'est pas portée en appel devant notre Cour. De plus, je suis d'accord avec la Cour d'appel lorsqu'elle affirme (au par. 99) que vu l'importance des documents pour le droit de présenter une défense pleine et entière, l'appelante est pratiquement forcée de les produire. Comme les renseignements sont nécessaires à la cause de l'appelante, il ne reste qu'à déterminer s'il existe d'autres options raisonnables pour communiquer les renseignements nécessaires sans divulguer de renseignements confidentiels.

Deux options autres que l'ordonnance de confidentialité sont mentionnées dans les décisions antérieures. Le juge des requêtes suggère de retrancher des documents les passages commercialement délicats et de produire les versions ainsi modifiées.

filed. As well, the majority of the Court of Appeal, in addition to accepting the possibility of expungement, was of the opinion that the summaries of the Confidential Documents included in the affidavits could go a long way to compensate for the absence of the originals. If either of these options is a reasonable alternative to submitting the Confidential Documents under a confidentiality order, then the order is not necessary, and the application does not pass the first branch of the test.

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

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

La majorité en Cour d'appel estime que, outre cette possibilité d'épuration des documents, l'inclusion dans les affidavits d'un résumé des documents confidentiels pourrait, dans une large mesure, compenser l'absence des originaux. Si l'une ou l'autre de ces deux options peut raisonnablement se substituer au dépôt des documents confidentiels aux termes d'une ordonnance de confidentialité, alors l'ordonnance n'est pas nécessaire et la requête ne franchit pas la première étape de l'analyse.

64 Il existe deux possibilités pour l'épuration des documents et, selon moi, elles comportent toutes deux des problèmes. La première serait que ÉACL retranche les renseignements confidentiels sans divulguer les éléments retranchés ni aux parties ni au tribunal. Toutefois, dans cette situation, la documentation déposée serait encore différente de celle utilisée pour les affidavits. Il ne faut pas perdre de vue que la requête découle de l'argument de Sierra Club selon lequel le tribunal ne devrait accorder que peu ou pas de poids aux résumés sans la présence des documents de base. Même si on pouvait totalement séparer les renseignements pertinents et les renseignements confidentiels, ce qui permettrait la divulgation de tous les renseignements sur lesquels se fondent les affidavits, l'appréciation de leur pertinence ne pourrait pas être mise à l'épreuve en contre-interrogatoire puisque la documentation retranchée ne serait pas disponible. Par conséquent, même dans le meilleur cas de figure, où l'on n'aurait qu'à retrancher les renseignements non pertinents, les parties se retrouveraient essentiellement dans la même situation que celle qui a donné lieu au pourvoi, en ce sens qu'au moins une partie des documents ayant servi à la préparation des affidavits en question ne serait pas mise à la disposition de Sierra Club.

65 De plus, je partage l'opinion du juge Robertson que ce meilleur cas de figure, où les renseignements pertinents et les renseignements confidentiels ne se recoupent pas, est une hypothèse non confirmée (par. 28). Même si les documents eux-mêmes n'ont pas été produits devant les tribunaux dans le cadre de la présente requête, parce qu'ils comprennent des milliers de pages de renseignements détaillés, cette hypothèse est au mieux optimiste. L'option de

authorities require prior approval for any request by AECL to disclose information.

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

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

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

(2) The Proportionality Stage

69 As stated above, at this stage, the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the appellant's right to a fair trial, must be weighed against the deleterious effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right to free

l'épuration serait en outre compliquée par le fait que les autorités chinoises exigent l'approbation préalable de toute demande de divulgation de renseignements de la part d'ÉACL.

La deuxième possibilité serait de mettre les documents supprimés à la disposition du tribunal et des parties en vertu d'une ordonnance de confidentialité plus restreinte. Bien que cela permettrait un accès public un peu plus large que ne le ferait l'ordonnance de confidentialité sollicitée, selon moi, cette restriction mineure à la requête n'est pas une option viable étant donné les difficultés liées à l'épuration dans les circonstances. Il s'agit de savoir s'il y a d'autres options raisonnables et non d'adopter l'option qui soit absolument la moins restrictive. Avec égards, j'estime que l'épuration des documents confidentiels serait une solution virtuellement impraticable et inefficace qui n'est pas raisonnable dans les circonstances.

Une deuxième option autre que l'ordonnance de confidentialité serait, selon le juge Evans, l'inclusion dans les affidavits d'un résumé des documents confidentiels pour « dans une large mesure, compenser [leur] absence » (par. 103). Il ne semble toutefois envisager ce fait qu'à titre de facteur à considérer dans la pondération des divers intérêts en cause. Je conviens qu'à cette étape liminaire, se fonder uniquement sur les résumés en connaissant l'intention de Sierra Club de plaider leur faiblesse ou l'absence de valeur probante, ne semble pas être une « autre option raisonnable » à la communication aux parties des documents de base.

Vu les facteurs susmentionnés, je conclus que l'ordonnance de confidentialité est nécessaire en ce que la divulgation des documents confidentiels ferait courir un risque sérieux à un intérêt commercial important de l'appelante, et qu'il n'existe pas d'autres options raisonnables.

(2) L'étape de la proportionnalité

Comme on le mentionne plus haut, à cette étape, les effets bénéfiques de l'ordonnance de confidentialité, y compris ses effets sur le droit de l'appelante à un procès équitable, doivent être pondérés avec ses effets préjudiciables, y compris ses effets sur le droit

expression, which in turn is connected to the principle of open and accessible court proceedings. This balancing will ultimately determine whether the confidentiality order ought to be granted.

(a) *Salutary Effects of the Confidentiality Order*

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

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

Aside from the salutary effects on the fair trial interest, the confidentiality order would also have a beneficial impact on other important rights and interests. First, as I discuss in more detail below, the confidentiality order would allow all parties and the court access to the Confidential Documents, and

à la liberté d'expression, qui à son tour est lié au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires. Cette pondération déterminera finalement s'il y a lieu d'accorder l'ordonnance de confidentialité.

a) *Les effets bénéfiques de l'ordonnance de confidentialité*

70 Comme nous l'avons vu, le principal intérêt qui serait promu par l'ordonnance de confidentialité est l'intérêt du public à la protection du droit du justiciable civil de faire valoir sa cause ou, de façon plus générale, du droit à un procès équitable. Puisque l'appelante l'invoque en l'espèce pour protéger ses intérêts commerciaux et non son droit à la liberté, le droit à un procès équitable dans ce contexte n'est pas un droit visé par la *Charte*; toutefois, le droit à un procès équitable pour tous les justiciables a été reconnu comme un principe de justice fondamentale : *Ryan*, précité, par. 84. Il y a lieu de rappeler qu'il y a des circonstances où, en l'absence de violation d'un droit garanti par la *Charte*, la bonne administration de la justice exige une ordonnance de confidentialité : *Mentuck*, précité, par. 31. En l'espèce, les effets bénéfiques d'une telle ordonnance sur l'administration de la justice tiennent à la capacité de l'appelante de soutenir sa cause, dans le cadre du droit plus large à un procès équitable.

71 Les documents confidentiels ont été jugés pertinents en ce qui a trait aux moyens de défense que l'appelante pourrait invoquer s'il est jugé que la *LCÉE* s'applique à l'opération attaquée et, comme nous l'avons vu, l'appelante ne peut communiquer les documents sans risque sérieux pour ses intérêts commerciaux. De ce fait, il existe un risque bien réel que, sans l'ordonnance de confidentialité, la capacité de l'appelante à mener à bien sa défense soit gravement réduite. Je conclus par conséquent que l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait d'importants effets bénéfiques pour le droit de l'appelante à un procès équitable.

72 En plus des effets bénéfiques pour le droit à un procès équitable, l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait aussi des incidences favorables sur d'autres droits et intérêts importants. En premier lieu, comme je l'exposerai plus en détail ci-après, l'ordonnance de confidentialité permettrait aux parties ainsi qu'au

permit cross-examination based on their contents. By facilitating access to relevant documents in a judicial proceeding, the order sought would assist in the search for truth, a core value underlying freedom of expression.

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

(b) *Deleterious Effects of the Confidentiality Order*

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

75 Underlying freedom of expression are the core values of (1) seeking the truth and the common good; (2) promoting self-fulfilment of individuals by allowing them to develop thoughts and ideas as they see fit; and (3) ensuring that participation in the political process is open to all persons: *Irwin Toy Ltd. v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, [1989] 1 S.C.R.

tribunal d'avoir accès aux documents confidentiels, et permettrait la tenue d'un contre-interrogatoire fondé sur leur contenu. En facilitant l'accès aux documents pertinents dans une procédure judiciaire, l'ordonnance sollicitée favoriserait la recherche de la vérité, qui est une valeur fondamentale sous-tendant la liberté d'expression.

En deuxième lieu, je suis d'accord avec l'observation du juge Robertson selon laquelle puisque les documents confidentiels contiennent des renseignements techniques détaillés touchant la construction et la conception d'une installation nucléaire, il peut être nécessaire, dans l'intérêt public, d'empêcher que ces renseignements tombent dans le domaine public (par. 44). Même si le contenu exact des documents demeure un mystère, il est évident qu'ils comprennent des détails techniques d'une installation nucléaire et il peut bien y avoir un important intérêt de sécurité publique à préserver la confidentialité de ces renseignements.

b) *Les effets préjudiciables de l'ordonnance de confidentialité*

Une ordonnance de confidentialité aurait un effet préjudiciable sur le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires, puisqu'elle priverait le public de l'accès au contenu des documents confidentiels. Comme on le dit plus haut, le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires est inextricablement lié au droit à la liberté d'expression protégé par l'al. 2*b*) de la *Charte*, et la vigilance du public envers les tribunaux est un aspect fondamental de l'administration de la justice : *Nouveau-Brunswick*, précité, par. 22-23. Même si, à titre de principe général, l'importance de la publicité des débats judiciaires ne peut être sous-estimée, il faut examiner, dans le contexte de l'espèce, les effets préjudiciables particuliers que l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait sur la liberté d'expression.

Les valeurs fondamentales qui sous-tendent la liberté d'expression sont (1) la recherche de la vérité et du bien commun; (2) l'épanouissement personnel par le libre développement des pensées et des idées; et (3) la participation de tous au processus politique : *Irwin Toy Ltd. c. Québec (Procureur général)*, [1989] 1 R.C.S. 927, p. 976; *R. c. Keegstra*, [1990]

927, at p. 976; *R. v. Keegstra*, [1990] 3 S.C.R. 697, at pp. 762-64, *per* Dickson C.J. *Charter* jurisprudence has established that the closer the speech in question lies to these core values, the harder it will be to justify a s. 2(*b*) infringement of that speech under s. 1 of the *Charter*: *Keegstra*, at pp. 760-61. Since the main goal in this case is to exercise judicial discretion in a way which conforms to *Charter* principles, a discussion of the deleterious effects of the confidentiality order on freedom of expression should include an assessment of the effects such an order would have on the three core values. The more detrimental the order would be to these values, the more difficult it will be to justify the confidentiality order. Similarly, minor effects of the order on the core values will make the confidentiality order easier to justify.

Seeking the truth is not only at the core of freedom of expression, but it has also been recognized as a fundamental purpose behind the open court rule, as the open examination of witnesses promotes an effective evidentiary process: *Edmonton Journal*, *supra*, at pp. 1357-58, *per* Wilson J. Clearly the confidentiality order, by denying public and media access to documents relied on in the proceedings, would impede the search for truth to some extent. Although the order would not exclude the public from the courtroom, the public and the media would be denied access to documents relevant to the evidentiary process.

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

3 R.C.S. 697, p. 762-764, le juge en chef Dickson. La jurisprudence de la *Charte* établit que plus l'expression en cause est au cœur de ces valeurs fondamentales, plus il est difficile de justifier, en vertu de l'article premier de la *Charte*, une atteinte à l'al. 2*b*) à son égard : *Keegstra*, p. 760-761. Comme l'objectif principal en l'espèce est d'exercer un pouvoir discrétionnaire dans le respect des principes de la *Charte*, l'examen des effets préjudiciables de l'ordonnance de confidentialité sur la liberté d'expression devrait comprendre une appréciation des effets qu'elle aurait sur les trois valeurs fondamentales. Plus l'ordonnance de confidentialité porte préjudice à ces valeurs, plus il est difficile de la justifier. Inversement, des effets mineurs sur les valeurs fondamentales rendent l'ordonnance de confidentialité plus facile à justifier.

76 La recherche de la vérité est non seulement au cœur de la liberté d'expression, elle est aussi reconnue comme un objectif fondamental de la règle de la publicité des débats judiciaires, puisque l'examen public des témoins favorise l'efficacité du processus de présentation de la preuve : *Edmonton Journal*, précité, p. 1357-1358, le juge Wilson. À l'évidence, en enlevant au public et aux médias l'accès aux documents invoqués dans les procédures, l'ordonnance de confidentialité nuirait jusqu'à un certain point à la recherche de la vérité. L'ordonnance n'exclurait pas le public de la salle d'audience, mais le public et les médias n'auraient pas accès aux documents pertinents quant à la présentation de la preuve.

77 Toutefois, comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, la recherche de la vérité peut jusqu'à un certain point être favorisée par l'ordonnance de confidentialité. La présente requête résulte de l'argument de Sierra Club selon lequel il doit avoir accès aux documents confidentiels pour vérifier l'exactitude de la déposition de M. Pang. Si l'ordonnance est refusée, le scénario le plus probable est que l'appelante s'abstiendra de déposer les documents, avec la conséquence fâcheuse que des preuves qui peuvent être pertinentes ne seront pas portées à la connaissance de Sierra Club ou du tribunal. Par conséquent, Sierra Club ne sera pas en mesure de vérifier complètement l'exactitude de la preuve de M. Pang en contre-

documentary evidence, and will be required to draw conclusions based on an incomplete evidentiary record. This would clearly impede the search for truth in this case.

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

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

80 The second core value underlying freedom of speech, namely, the promotion of individual self-fulfilment by allowing open development of thoughts and ideas, focusses on individual expression, and thus does not closely relate to the open court principle which involves institutional expression. Although the confidentiality order would

interrogatoire. De plus, le tribunal ne bénéficiera pas du contre-interrogatoire ou de cette preuve documentaire, et il lui faudra tirer des conclusions fondées sur un dossier de preuve incomplet. Cela nuira manifestement à la recherche de la vérité en l'espèce.

De plus, il importe de rappeler que l'ordonnance de confidentialité ne restreindrait l'accès qu'à un nombre relativement peu élevé de documents hautement techniques. La nature de ces documents est telle que le public en général est peu susceptible d'en comprendre le contenu, de sorte qu'ils contribueraient peu à l'intérêt du public à la recherche de la vérité en l'espèce. Toutefois, dans les mains des parties et de leurs experts respectifs, les documents peuvent être très utiles pour apprécier la conformité du processus d'évaluation environnementale chinois, ce qui devrait aussi aider le tribunal à tirer des conclusions de fait exactes. À mon avis, compte tenu de leur nature, la production des documents confidentiels en vertu de l'ordonnance de confidentialité sollicitée favoriserait mieux l'importante valeur de la recherche de la vérité, qui sous-tend à la fois la liberté d'expression et la publicité des débats judiciaires, que ne le ferait le rejet de la demande qui aurait pour effet d'empêcher les parties et le tribunal de se fonder sur les documents au cours de l'instance.

De plus, aux termes de l'ordonnance demandée, les seules restrictions imposées à l'égard de ces documents ont trait à leur distribution publique. Les documents confidentiels seraient mis à la disposition du tribunal et des parties, et il n'y aurait pas d'entrave à l'accès du public aux procédures. À ce titre, l'ordonnance représente une atteinte relativement minime à la règle de la publicité des débats judiciaires et elle n'aurait donc pas d'effets préjudiciables importants sur ce principe.

La deuxième valeur fondamentale sous-jacente à la liberté d'expression, la promotion de l'épanouissement personnel par le libre développement de la pensée et des idées, est centrée sur l'expression individuelle et n'est donc pas étroitement liée au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires qui concerne l'expression institutionnelle. Même

restrict individual access to certain information which may be of interest to that individual, I find that this value would not be significantly affected by the confidentiality order.

si l'ordonnance de confidentialité devait restreindre l'accès individuel à certains renseignements susceptibles d'intéresser quelqu'un, j'estime que cette valeur ne serait pas touchée de manière significative.

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

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

81 La troisième valeur fondamentale, la libre participation au processus politique, joue un rôle primordial dans le pourvoi puisque la publicité des débats judiciaires est un aspect fondamental de la société démocratique. Ce lien est souligné par le juge Cory dans *Edmonton Journal*, précité, p. 1339 :

> On voit que la liberté d'expression est d'une importance fondamentale dans une société démocratique. Il est également essentiel dans une démocratie et fondamental pour la primauté du droit que la transparence du fonctionnement des tribunaux soit perçue comme telle. La presse doit être libre de commenter les procédures judiciaires pour que, dans les faits, chacun puisse constater que les tribunaux fonctionnent publiquement sous les regards pénétrants du public.

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

Même si on ne peut douter de l'importance de la publicité des débats judiciaires dans une société démocratique, les décisions antérieures divergent sur la question de savoir si le poids à accorder au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires devrait varier en fonction de la nature de la procédure.

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

82 Sur ce point, le juge Robertson estime que la nature de l'affaire et le degré d'intérêt des médias sont des considérations dénuées de pertinence. Le juge Evans estime quant à lui que le juge des requêtes a eu raison de tenir compte du fait que la demande de contrôle judiciaire suscite beaucoup d'intérêt de la part du public et des médias. À mon avis, même si la nature publique de l'affaire peut être un facteur susceptible de renforcer l'importance de la publicité des débats judiciaires dans une espèce particulière, le degré d'intérêt des médias ne devrait pas être considéré comme facteur indépendant.

Since cases involving public institutions will generally relate more closely to the core value of public participation in the political process, the public nature of a proceeding should be taken into consideration when assessing the merits of a confidentiality order. It is important to note that this core value will always be engaged where the open court

83 Puisque les affaires concernant des institutions publiques ont généralement un lien plus étroit avec la valeur fondamentale de la participation du public au processus politique, la nature publique d'une instance devrait être prise en considération dans l'évaluation du bien-fondé d'une ordonnance de confidentialité. Il importe de noter que cette valeur

principle is engaged owing to the importance of open justice to a democratic society. However, where the political process is also engaged by the substance of the proceedings, the connection between open proceedings and public participation in the political process will increase. As such, I agree with Evans J.A. in the court below where he stated, at para. 87:

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

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

85 However, with respect, to the extent that Evans J.A. relied on media interest as an indicium of public interest, this was an error. In my view, it is important to distinguish public interest, from media interest, and I agree with Robertson J.A. that media exposure cannot be viewed as an impartial measure of public interest. It is the public nature of the proceedings which increases the need for openness, and this public nature is not necessarily reflected by the media desire to probe the facts of the case.

fondamentale sera toujours engagée lorsque sera mis en cause le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires, vu l'importance de la transparence judiciaire dans une société démocratique. Toutefois, le lien entre la publicité des débats judiciaires et la participation du public dans le processus politique s'accentue lorsque le processus politique est également engagé par la substance de la procédure. Sous ce rapport, je suis d'accord avec ce que dit le juge Evans (au par. 87) :

> Bien que tous les litiges soient importants pour les parties, et qu'il en va de l'intérêt du public que les affaires soumises aux tribunaux soient traitées de façon équitable et appropriée, certaines affaires soulèvent des questions qui transcendent les intérêts immédiats des parties ainsi que l'intérêt du public en général dans la bonne administration de la justice, et qui ont une signification beaucoup plus grande pour le public.

La requête est liée à une demande de contrôle judiciaire d'une décision du gouvernement de financer un projet d'énergie nucléaire. La demande est clairement de nature publique, puisqu'elle a trait à la distribution de fonds publics en rapport avec une question dont l'intérêt public a été démontré. De plus, comme le souligne le juge Evans, la transparence du processus et la participation du public ont une importance fondamentale sous le régime de la *LCÉE*. En effet, par leur nature même, les questions environnementales ont une portée publique considérable, et la transparence des débats judiciaires sur les questions environnementales mérite généralement un degré élevé de protection. À cet égard, je suis d'accord avec le juge Evans pour conclure que l'intérêt public est en l'espèce plus engagé que s'il s'agissait d'un litige entre personnes privées à l'égard d'intérêts purement privés.

J'estime toutefois avec égards que, dans la mesure où il se fonde sur l'intérêt des médias comme indice de l'intérêt du public, le juge Evans fait erreur. À mon avis, il est important d'établir une distinction entre l'intérêt du public et l'intérêt des médias et, comme le juge Robertson, je note que la couverture médiatique ne peut être considérée comme une mesure impartiale de l'intérêt public. C'est la nature publique de l'instance qui accentue le besoin de transparence, et cette nature publique ne se reflète

I reiterate the caution given by Dickson C.J. in *Keegstra*, *supra*, at p. 760, where he stated that, while the speech in question must be examined in light of its relation to the core values, "we must guard carefully against judging expression according to its popularity".

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

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

Open justice is a fundamentally important principle, particularly when the substance of the proceedings is public in nature. However, this does not detract from the duty to attach weight to this principle in accordance with the specific limitations on openness that the confidentiality order would have. As Wilson J. observed in *Edmonton Journal*, *supra*, at pp. 1353-54:

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

pas nécessairement dans le désir des médias d'examiner les faits de l'affaire. Je réitère l'avertissement donné par le juge en chef Dickson dans *Keegstra*, précité, p. 760, où il dit que même si l'expression en cause doit être examinée dans ses rapports avec les valeurs fondamentales, « nous devons veiller à ne pas juger l'expression en fonction de sa popularité ».

86

Même si l'intérêt du public à la publicité de la demande de contrôle judiciaire dans son ensemble est important, à mon avis, il importe tout autant de prendre en compte la nature et la portée des renseignements visés par l'ordonnance demandée, lorsqu'il s'agit d'apprécier le poids de l'intérêt public. Avec égards, le juge des requêtes a commis une erreur en ne tenant pas compte de la portée limitée de l'ordonnance dans son appréciation de l'intérêt du public à la communication et en accordant donc un poids excessif à ce facteur. Sous ce rapport, je ne partage pas la conclusion suivante du juge Evans (au par. 97) :

> Par conséquent, on ne peut dire qu'après que le juge des requêtes eut examiné la nature de ce litige et évalué l'importance de l'intérêt du public à la publicité des procédures, il aurait dans les circonstances accordé trop d'importance à ce facteur, même si la confidentialité n'est demandée que pour trois documents parmi la montagne de documents déposés en l'instance et que leur contenu dépasse probablement les connaissances de ceux qui n'ont pas l'expertise technique nécessaire.

La publicité des débats judiciaires est un principe fondamentalement important, surtout lorsque la substance de la procédure est de nature publique. Cela ne libère toutefois aucunement de l'obligation d'apprécier le poids à accorder à ce principe en fonction des limites particulières qu'imposerait l'ordonnance de confidentialité à la publicité des débats. Comme le dit le juge Wilson dans *Edmonton Journal*, précité, p. 1353-1354 :

> Une chose semble claire et c'est qu'il ne faut pas évaluer une valeur selon la méthode générale et l'autre valeur en conflit avec elle selon la méthode contextuelle. Agir ainsi pourrait fort bien revenir à préjuger de l'issue du litige en donnant à la valeur examinée de manière générale plus d'importance que ne l'exige le contexte de l'affaire.

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

88 In addressing the effects that the confidentiality order would have on freedom of expression, it should also be borne in mind that the appellant may not have to raise defences under the *CEAA*, in which case the Confidential Documents would be irrelevant to the proceedings, with the result that freedom of expression would be unaffected by the order. However, since the necessity of the Confidential Documents will not be determined for some time, in the absence of a confidentiality order, the appellant would be left with the choice of either submitting the documents in breach of its obligations, or withholding the documents in the hopes that either it will not have to present a defence under the *CEAA*, or that it will be able to mount a successful defence in the absence of these relevant documents. If it chooses the former option, and the defences under the *CEAA* are later found not to apply, then the appellant will have suffered the prejudice of having its confidential and sensitive information released into the public domain, with no corresponding benefit to the public. Although this scenario is far from certain, the possibility of such an occurrence also weighs in favour of granting the order sought.

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

À mon avis, il importe de reconnaître que, malgré l'intérêt significatif que porte le public à ces procédures, l'ordonnance demandée n'entraverait que légèrement la publicité de la demande de contrôle judiciaire. La portée étroite de l'ordonnance associée à la nature hautement technique des documents confidentiels tempère considérablement les effets préjudiciables que l'ordonnance de confidentialité pourrait avoir sur l'intérêt du public à la publicité des débats judiciaires.

Pour traiter des effets qu'aurait l'ordonnance de confidentialité sur la liberté d'expression, il faut aussi se rappeler qu'il se peut que l'appelante n'ait pas à soulever de moyens de défense visés par la *LCÉE*, auquel cas les documents confidentiels perdraient leur pertinence et la liberté d'expression ne serait pas touchée par l'ordonnance. Toutefois, puisque l'utilité des documents confidentiels ne sera pas déterminée avant un certain temps, l'appelante n'aurait plus, en l'absence d'ordonnance de confidentialité, que le choix entre soit produire les documents en violation de ses obligations, soit les retenir dans l'espoir de ne pas avoir à présenter de défense en vertu de la *LCÉE* ou de pouvoir assurer effectivement sa défense sans les documents pertinents. Si elle opte pour le premier choix et que le tribunal conclut par la suite que les moyens de défense visés par la *LCÉE* ne sont pas applicables, l'appelante aura subi le préjudice de voir ses renseignements confidentiels et délicats tomber dans le domaine public sans que le public n'en tire d'avantage correspondant. Même si sa réalisation est loin d'être certaine, la possibilité d'un tel scénario milite également en faveur de l'ordonnance sollicitée.

En arrivant à cette conclusion, je note que si l'appelante n'a pas à invoquer les moyens de défense pertinents en vertu de la *LCÉE*, il est également vrai que son droit à un procès équitable ne sera pas entravé même en cas de refus de l'ordonnance de confidentialité. Je ne retiens toutefois pas cela comme facteur militant contre l'ordonnance parce que, si elle est accordée et que les documents confidentiels ne sont pas nécessaires, il n'y aura alors aucun effet préjudiciable ni sur l'intérêt du public à la liberté d'expression ni sur les droits commerciaux ou le droit de l'appelante à un procès

scenario discussed above where the order is denied and the possibility arises that the appellant's commercial interests will be prejudiced with no corresponding public benefit. As a result, the fact that the Confidential Documents may not be required is a factor which weighs in favour of granting the confidentiality order.

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

VII. Conclusion

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

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

équitable. Cette issue neutre contraste avec le scénario susmentionné où il y a refus de l'ordonnance et possibilité d'atteinte aux droits commerciaux de l'appelante sans avantage correspondant pour le public. Par conséquent, le fait que les documents confidentiels puissent ne pas être nécessaires est un facteur en faveur de l'ordonnance de confidentialité.

90 En résumé, les valeurs centrales de la liberté d'expression que sont la recherche de la vérité et la promotion d'un processus politique ouvert sont très étroitement liées au principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires, et sont les plus touchées par une ordonnance limitant cette publicité. Toutefois, dans le contexte en l'espèce, l'ordonnance de confidentialité n'entraverait que légèrement la poursuite de ces valeurs, et pourrait même les favoriser à certains égards. À ce titre, l'ordonnance n'aurait pas d'effets préjudiciables importants sur la liberté d'expression.

VII. Conclusion

91 Dans la pondération des divers droits et intérêts en jeu, je note que l'ordonnance de confidentialité aurait des effets bénéfiques importants sur le droit de l'appelante à un procès équitable et sur la liberté d'expression. D'autre part, les effets préjudiciables de l'ordonnance de confidentialité sur le principe de la publicité des débats judiciaires et la liberté d'expression seraient minimes. En outre, si l'ordonnance est refusée et qu'au cours du contrôle judiciaire l'appelante n'est pas amenée à invoquer les moyens de défense prévus dans la *LCÉE*, il se peut qu'elle subisse le préjudice d'avoir communiqué des renseignements confidentiels en violation de ses obligations sans avantage correspondant pour le droit du public à la liberté d'expression. Je conclus donc que les effets bénéfiques de l'ordonnance l'emportent sur ses effets préjudiciables, et qu'il y a lieu d'accorder l'ordonnance.

92 Je suis donc d'avis d'accueillir le pourvoi avec dépens devant toutes les cours, d'annuler l'arrêt de la Cour d'appel fédérale, et d'accorder l'ordonnance de confidentialité selon les modalités demandées par l'appelante en vertu de la règle 151 des *Règles de la Cour fédérale (1998)*.

Appeal allowed with costs.

Solicitors for the appellant: Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt, Toronto.

Solicitors for the respondent Sierra Club of Canada: Timothy J. Howard, Vancouver; Franklin S. Gertler, Montréal.

Solicitor for the respondents the Minister of Finance of Canada, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, the Minister of International Trade of Canada and the Attorney General of Canada: The Deputy Attorney General of Canada, Ottawa.

Pourvoi accueilli avec dépens.

Procureurs de l'appelante : Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt, Toronto.

Procureurs de l'intimé Sierra Club du Canada : Timothy J. Howard, Vancouver; Franklin S. Gertler, Montréal.

Procureur des intimés le ministre des Finances du Canada, le ministre des Affaires étrangères du Canada, le ministre du Commerce international du Canada et le procureur général du Canada : Le sous-procureur général du Canada, Ottawa.

ONGLET 2

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: (paras. 1 to 108)	Kasirer J. (Wagner C.J. and Moldaver, Karakatsanis, Brown, Rowe and Martin JJ. concurring)

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

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

KASIRER J. —

I. Overview

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

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

[3] Notwithstanding this presumption, exceptional circumstances do arise where competing interests justify a restriction on the open court principle. Where a discretionary court order limiting constitutionally-protected openness is sought — for example, a sealing order, a publication ban, an order excluding the public from a hearing, or a redaction order — the applicant must demonstrate, as a threshold requirement, that openness presents a serious risk to a competing interest of public

importance. That this requirement is considered a high bar serves to maintain the strong presumption of open courts. Moreover, the protection of open courts does not stop there. The applicant must still show that the order is necessary to prevent the risk and that, as a matter of proportionality, the benefits of that order restricting openness outweigh its negative effects.

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

[5] This Court has, in different settings, consistently championed privacy as a fundamental consideration in a free society. Pointing to cases decided in other contexts, the appellants contend that privacy should be recognized here as a public interest that,

on the facts of this case, substantiates their plea for orders sealing the probate files. The respondents resist, recalling that privacy has generally been seen as a poor justification for an exception to openness. After all, they say, virtually every court proceeding entails some disquiet for the lives of those concerned and these intrusions on privacy must be tolerated because open courts are essential to a healthy democracy.

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

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

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

II. Background

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

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

[11] When the time came to obtain certificates of appointment of estate trustee from the Superior Court of Justice, the Trustees sought a sealing order so that the estate trustees and beneficiaries ("affected individuals") might be spared any further intrusions into their privacy and be protected from what was alleged to be a risk to their safety. The Trustees argued that if the information in the court files was revealed to the public, the safety of the affected individuals would be at risk and their privacy

[1] As noted in the title of proceedings, the appellants in this matter have been referred to consistently as the "Estate of Bernard Sherman and Trustees of the Estate and Estate of Honey Sherman and Trustees of the Estate." In these reasons the appellants are referred to throughout as the "Trustees" for convenience.

compromised as long as the deaths were unexplained and those responsible for the tragedy remained at large. In support of their request, they argued that there was a real and substantial risk that the affected individuals would suffer serious harm from the public exposure of the materials in the circumstances.

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

III. Proceedings Below

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

[13] In addressing whether the circumstances warranted interference with the open court principle, the application judge relied on this Court's judgment in *Sierra Club*. He noted that a confidentiality order should only be granted when: "(1) such an

[2] The use of "Toronto Star" as a collective term referring to both respondents should not be taken to suggest that only Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. is participating in this appeal. Mr. Donovan is the only respondent to have been a party throughout. Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was a party in first instance, but was removed as a party on consent at the Court of Appeal. By order of Karakatsanis J. dated March 25, 2020, Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. was added as a respondent in this Court.

order is necessary . . . to prevent a serious risk to an important interest because reasonable alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and (2) the salutary effects of the confidentiality order outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression and the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings" (para. 13(d)).

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

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

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

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

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

[18] The Court of Appeal considered the two interests advanced before the application judge in support of the orders to seal the probate files. As to the need to protect the privacy and dignity of the victims of violent crime and their loved ones, it recalled that the kind of interest that is properly protected by a sealing order must have

a public interest component. Citing *Sierra Club*, the Court of Appeal wrote that "[p]ersonal concerns cannot, without more, justify an order sealing material that would normally be available to the public under the open court principle" (para. 10). It concluded that the privacy interest for which the Trustees sought protection lacked this quality of public interest.

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

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

C. *Subsequent Proceedings*

[21] The Court of Appeal's order setting aside the sealing orders has been stayed pending the disposition of this appeal. The Toronto Star brought a motion to adduce new evidence on this appeal, comprised of land titles documents, transcripts of the cross-examination of a detective on the murder investigation, and various news articles.

This evidence, it says, supports the conclusion that the sealing orders should be lifted. The motion was referred to this panel.

IV. Submissions

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the issue of whether the sealing orders were necessary to protect the affected individuals from physical harm, the Toronto Star submits that the Court of Appeal was right to conclude that the Trustees had failed to establish a serious risk to this interest.

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

V. Analysis

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

[30] Court openness is protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and is essential to the proper functioning of our democracy (*Canadian Broadcasting Corp. v. New Brunswick (Attorney General)*, [1996] 3 S.C.R. 480, at para. 23; *Vancouver Sun (Re)*, 2004 SCC 43, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 332, at paras. 23-26).

Reporting on court proceedings by a free press is often said to be inseparable from the principle of open justice. "In reporting what has been said and done at a public trial, the media serve as the eyes and ears of a wider public which would be absolutely entitled to attend but for purely practical reasons cannot do so" (*Khuja v. Times Newspapers 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).[3] Further, in assessing the constitutionality of a legislative exception to the open court principle, this Court has recognized that the protection of individual privacy can be a pressing and substantial objective

[3] At the time of writing the House of Commons is considering a bill that would replace part one of *PIPEDA*: Bill C-11, *An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts*, 2nd Sess., 43rd Parl., 2020.

(*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 untailored reference to either privacy, harm or access to justice, was given pride of place. Indeed, it is that narrow aspect of privacy considered to be a fundamental right that courts had fixed upon before the enactment of art. 12 *C.C.P.* — [TRANSLATION] "what is part of one's personal life, in short, what constitutes a minimum personal sphere" (*Godbout*, at p. 2569, per Baudouin J.A.; see also *A. v. B.*, 1990 CanLII 3132 (Que. C.A.), at para. 20, per Rothman J.A.).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI. Conclusion

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

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

Appeal dismissed.

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.

ONGLET 3

SUPREME COURT OF YUKON

Citation: *Yukon (Government of) v Yukon Zinc Corporation*, 2022 YKSC 2

Date: 20220121
S.C. No. 19-A0067
Registry: Whitehorse

BETWEEN:

GOVERNMENT OF YUKON
as represented by the Minister of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

PETITIONER

AND

YUKON ZINC CORPORATION

RESPONDENT

Before Chief Justice S.M. Duncan

Counsel for the Petitioner	John T. Porter and Kimberly Sova (by video)
No one appearing	Yukon Zinc Corporation
Counsel for Welichem Research General Partnership	H. Lance Williams and Forrest Finn (by video)
Counsel for PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc.	Tevia Jeffries and Emma Newbery (by video)

REASONS FOR DECISION

Introduction

[1] The court-appointed Receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc., brings two applications: one for Orders approving the sale of certain mineral claims and related

assets of Yukon Zinc Corporation ("Yukon Zinc") to Almaden Minerals Ltd. ("Almaden") and for the termination of the sale and investment solicitation plan (the "SISP"), and the second for an Order sealing the Receiver's Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report to the Court, with appendices, currently unfiled.

[2] The Government of Yukon supports these applications. The applications are unopposed or subject to no position taken by Welichem Research General Partnership ("Welichem") a secured creditor of Yukon Zinc and lessor of items comprising substantially all of the infrastructure, tools, vehicles and equipment at the Wolverine Mine (the "Mine"). No other interested party appeared on the application or made submissions.

[3] For the following reasons, I will grant the Orders requested, subject to certain conditions as set out below.

Background

[4] These applications arise in the context of the ongoing receivership of all the assets, undertakings and property of Yukon Zinc. Its principal asset is the Mine, a zinc-silver-lead mine located 282 km northeast of Whitehorse, Yukon. It holds 2,945 quartz mineral claims, a quartz mining license issued under the *Quartz Mining Act*, SY 2003, c.14, and a water licence issued under the *Waters Act*, SY 2003, c.19. Yukon Zinc carried out exploration and development activities between 2008 and 2011. The Mine began production in March 2012. In January 2015, the Mine ceased operating because of financial difficulties and was put into care and maintenance. Despite a successful restructuring in October 2015, Yukon Zinc was unable to obtain additional funds to operate the Mine and it continued in care and maintenance. In 2017, the underground

portion of the Mine flooded and contaminated water was diverted to the tailings storage facility, creating an increased risk of the release of untreated water into the environment. In May 2018, the Yukon government requested from Yukon Zinc an increase in reclamation security from $10,588,966 to $35,548,650 to enable it to address the deteriorating condition of the Mine. Yukon Zinc never provided this increased amount. In September 2019, the Yukon government's petition for the appointment of the Receiver of Yukon Zinc's property and assets was granted by this Court. By October 2019, Yukon Zinc had not filed a proposal in the bankruptcy matter, commenced in British Columbia, and Yukon Zinc was deemed to have made an assignment into bankruptcy. PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. was appointed the trustee in bankruptcy.

[5] Pursuant to s. 243(1) of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3 as amended (the "*BIA*"), the Receiver became responsible for the care and maintenance of the Mine. It developed the SISP that proposed the evaluation of bids for the assets and property of Yukon Zinc on various factors. The SISP was approved by the Court on May 26, 2020 but was stayed pending the outcome of an appeal by Welichem. The Court's approval was confirmed on appeal.

[6] The sale process began in April 2021. The Receiver contacted 559 potential bidders, advertised the SISP on-line and through media in British Columbia and Yukon and encouraged other stakeholders such as Yukon government and the Kaska Nation to provide additional contacts. Eighteen potential bidders signed non-disclosure agreements and were given access to the data room. By June 2021 several entities submitted non-binding expressions of interest. Throughout the summer of 2021, the

Receiver held multiple calls with each of these potential bidders to discuss their plans and ensure the Receiver understood them, to explain and clarify the SISP evaluation criteria, and to support the bidders' due diligence work, including providing explanations of the regulatory requirements. The Receiver also discussed the progress of the SISP regularly with Yukon government and the Kaska Nation. The binding bid deadline was extended and by July the Receiver had received several binding bids. The Receiver began to evaluate these bids. By September 2021, however, some bidders withdrew from the process for various reasons. These withdrawals were confirmed in writing by the Receiver (the "Removal Letters").

[7] On completion of the evaluation of the remaining bids, the Receiver concluded that no bid could result in a viable sale of substantially all of Yukon Zinc's assets. The Receiver advised the relevant stakeholders by letter, after consultation with Yukon government, that the sale process would be terminated (the "Termination Letters"). The Receiver also determined at that time that the preferred approach was to transfer the care and maintenance to the Yukon government.

[8] In June 2021, the Receiver received a non-binding expression of interest and subsequently a binding bid from Almaden for a small portion of the assets of Yukon Zinc, the Logan interests. Almaden had entered into a joint venture agreement with Yukon Zinc (then called Expatriate Resources Ltd.) in 2005. This agreement led to the forming of a contractual joint venture to explore and develop the Logan interests. No such activity was ever commenced. The Logan interests consist of 156 mineral claims located approximately 100 km south of the Mine. Under the joint venture, Yukon Zinc

had an interest of 60% and Almaden 40%. Almaden offered to purchase the Yukon Zinc 60% interest.

[9] The Receiver believes the Almaden bid could be a viable sale of the Logan interests and has entered into a purchase and sale agreement with Almaden for this purpose, subject to court approval.

[10] The Receiver has submitted copies of the non-binding expressions of interest, binding bids, Removal letters, Termination letters, the Almaden bid, and the Almaden purchase agreement as attachments to the Receiver's Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report. All of these documents along with the report are considered to contain sensitive commercial information and the Receiver seeks a sealing order over them.

Approval of Sale to Almaden

[11] Subsections 3(k) and (l) of the Receiver's powers set out in the Order dated September 13, 2019 provide the Receiver with express power and authority to market any or all of the Yukon Zinc assets, undertakings or property, including advertising and soliciting offers for all or part of the property, negotiating appropriate terms and conditions, as well as authority to sell, convey, transfer, lease or assign the property with approval of this Court if the transaction exceeds $150,000.

[12] The SISP sets out at s. 22 the evaluation criteria for qualified purchase bids. They are:

(a) Price;

(b) Structural complexity of the proposed transaction;

(c) Nature and sufficiency of funding for the proposed transaction;

(d) Probability of closing the proposed transaction and any relevant risks thereto, including nature of any remaining conditions and due diligence requirements;

(e) Whether the proposed transaction leaves any of the YZC [Yukon Zinc Corporation] Assets within the receivership;

(f) Impact on former employees of YZC;

(g) Bidder's financial strength, technical and environmental expertise and relevant experience to carry out work required to maintain regulatory compliance at the Wolverine Mine after closing of the proposed transaction;

(h) Bidder's historical environmental safety record, operational experience with undertakings of similar nature and/or scale and record of successful restart of mines out of care and maintenance;

(i) Strength of a bidder's proposal for posted required Reclamation Security as required by the DEMR [Department of Energy, Mines and Resources] and any other security required by any other applicable regulator;

(j) Qualified Bidder's willingness and demonstrated ability to obtain and maintain any necessary regulatory approval in connection with ownership and operation or case and maintenance of the Wolverine Mine, including from but not limited to the Water Board and the DEMR;

(k) Benefits that may accrue to Yukon residents and businesses and the affected Kaska Nations of Ross River Dena Council, Liard First Nation, Kwadacha Nation and Dease River First Nation.

[13] The SISP also requires the Receiver to report to the Court on the outcome of the solicitation process, including whether it intends to proceed with any one or more of the qualified purchase bids. The applicable statutory obligations on the Receiver are set

out in s. 247(a) and (b) of the *BIA*: to act honestly and in good faith, and to deal with the property of the debtor in a commercially reasonable manner.

[14] The principles to be applied by a court in determining whether to approve a proposed sale by a receiver are set out in the leading case of *Royal Bank v Soundair Corp* (1991), 4 OR (3d) 1 (CA) at para. 16:

> 1. It should consider whether the receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently.
>
> 2. It should consider the interests of all parties.
>
> 3. It should consider the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained.
>
> 4. It should consider whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

[15] Here, the Receiver made extensive efforts through direct and indirect contacts of potential bidders and advertising to obtain the best price for the assets. There is no evidence of any improvident actions by the Receiver. The Receiver spent time with each interested potential bidder to assist with their due diligence activities and other aspects of the bidding process.

[16] As the Receiver reported, a review of the submitted bids shows that Almaden was the only bidder specifically for the Logan interests. While other bidders referred to the Logan interests, and included them in their bids, their overall bids were withdrawn or unacceptable to the Receiver. Almaden provided the best price for the Logan interests. Almaden is an experienced mining exploration company based in Vancouver.

[17] The Receiver noted that although the Logan interests represent a small fraction of the Yukon Zinc assets and property, their sale will generate some funds for the estate

which is in the interests of all parties. Yukon government supports this sale and Welichem does not oppose it.

[18] The Almaden offer was obtained through the SISP process. This process was approved by the Court as fair, transparent and commercially efficacious.

[19] Finally, the evidence shows the SISP process was conducted by the Receiver honestly and in good faith. There is no suggestion or evidence of unfairness in the way the process was carried out.

[20] The finalizing of this sale process will be simple: the 60% interest in the Logan assets under the joint venture agreement will be transferred to Almaden. The other 40% are already in the name of Almaden. The commercial joint venture agreement will become defunct on closing. The Receiver advised the splitting off of these interests from the remainder of the assets and property would not be detrimental to any future sale process as they represent a small portion and there was no other bidder interested in solely the Logan interests. The cost to the Receiver of this transaction is reasonable given Almaden's existing agreement and interests.

[21] The Almaden Purchase Agreement, a redacted copy of which is included in the filed materials, is approved.

Termination of the SISP

[22] As noted above, the Receiver concluded that the SISP process did not lead to a viable sale. None of the bids was acceptable, either because the bidder withdrew from the process, or the bids contained conditions for closing or available consideration that were unacceptably uncertain. The specifics of each bid were not disclosed in the

publicly filed eighth report of the Receiver, for reasons of confidentiality. This issue is addressed below.

[23] In general, the reasons why certain bidders withdrew from the process included:

(a) the realization during the SISP process of the need for the purchaser to obtain a new water licence instead of assuming the current water licence, a process which could take two years or more;

(b) the possibility of ongoing litigation over the Welichem assets which remain at the site (the Court has been advised that the matter is in the process of settling, although the settlement agreement is not yet finalized);

(c) the unknown extent and costs of reconstruction to make the Mine operational, given the flooded state of the underground part of the Mine and its questionable structural integrity;

(d) the inability to determine potential value of the mineral claims because of an absence of updated exploration results; and

(e) the uncertainty of reclamation or remediation costs and how they will be shared with the Yukon government.

[24] The Receiver explained that there was not one issue that presented a bar to the bidders who withdrew or were rejected; the concerns were different for each bidder.

[25] The Order approving the SISP or the SISP do not contain a provision for termination of the SISP process. However, s. 30(a) of the SISP states that the Receiver, in consultation with Yukon government, may reject at any time any bid that is:

(i) inadequate or insufficient;

> (ii) not in conformity with the requirements of the BIA, this SISP or any orders of the Court applicable to YZC or the Receiver; or
>
> (iii) contrary to the interests of YZC's estate and stakeholders as determined by the Receiver;

[26] Further, s. 23(f) of the SISP contemplates the possibility that the Receiver may report to the Court that it will not proceed with any one or more of the bids.

[27] The jurisprudence offers little guidance on the role of the court in a situation of termination of a sales process in the event of no acceptable bidders. The Receiver noted one decision in which the Supreme Court of British Columbia observed it saw no reason why the Receiver could not recommend against completion of a sale, and that it had a duty to advise the court of any reason why the court might conclude the sale should not be approved (*Bank of Montreal v On-Stream Natural Gas Ltd Partnership* (1992), 29 CBR (3) 203 (BC SC) at para. 24).

[28] The case law is clear that in reviewing a sales process the court is to defer to the business expertise of the Receiver, and is not to intervene or "second guess" the Receiver's recommendations and conclusions (*Royal Bank of Canada v Keller & Sons Farming Ltd*, 2016 MBCA 46 at para. 11). The court is to ensure the integrity of the process is maintained through the exercise of procedural fairness in any negotiations and bidding.

> … The court should not proceed against the recommendations of its Receiver except in special circumstances and where the necessity and propriety of doing so are plain. … [*Crown Trust Co v Rosenberg* (1986), 60 OR (2d) 87 (H Ct J) at para. 65]

[29] Here, the Receiver undertook a thorough process in attempting to attract and identify an acceptable bidder and ultimate purchaser, in consultation with Yukon

government and the Kaska Nation. By its own account, it provided substantial assistance to potential bidders throughout the summer of 2021, including extending deadlines, participating in multiple calls to clarify and understand their proposals, and providing them with necessary information and connections to enable them to complete their due diligence. The SISP has already been approved as fair and reasonable by this Court and as noted above, the Receiver's appears to have implemented the SISP fairly and in good faith.

[30] Yukon government agreed with the termination of the SISP, indicating that the Receiver's good faith efforts were the best that could be achieved at this time. Welichem did not oppose the termination of the SISP.

[31] While the confidential documents set out the more detailed reasons why the Receiver has concluded there are no appropriate bidders, scrutiny or assessment of these reasons is not the Court's role.

[32] I note that the SISP process may have some value for future in that entities with interest in the project were identified and educated about the process, and a large amount of information was gathered and learned about the Mine both by the interested parties and the Receiver in consultation with Yukon government and the Kaska Nation. This may have some value for future bidding or sales processes.

[33] For these reasons, the termination of the SISP is approved. The draft Approval and Vesting Order filed by the Receiver on this application is approved, with appropriate adjustments to reflect appearances of counsel.

Sealing Order

[34] The Receiver seeks an order sealing its Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report to the Court containing the results of the SISP and attached documents. The report sets out details of the process including:

(a) the names of the bidders, and the kind of work the Receiver engaged in over the summer of 2021 to advance the bids according to the evaluation criteria;

(b) the details of each bid, including price and conditions;

(c) the challenges of each bid;

(d) the Receiver's review and application of the evaluation criteria; and

(e) the reasons why certain bidders withdrew or were eliminated from the process.

[35] The documents attached to the report include unredacted:

(a) expressions of interest;

(b) binding bids;

(c) Removal Letters;

(d) Termination Letters;

(e) Almaden's bid; and

(f) Almaden's Purchase Agreement.

[36] The Receiver argues that the information in this report disclosing its application of the evaluation criteria and the challenges and problems with the bids, as well as the documents themselves, contain sensitive commercial information that would cause harm to any future efforts to market the Mine. Information about the identity of bidders, the proposed purchase prices, the proposed terms and conditions, the reasons for the

bidders' withdrawal or rejection would affect the possibility of free and open negotiation in any future sale process.

[37] The two-part test for a sealing order was set out in *Sierra Club of Canada v Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41 ("*Sierra Club*") at 543-44:

> (a) such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and
>
> (b) the salutary effects of the [sealing] order including the effects on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings.

[38] The recent Supreme Court of Canada decision of *Sherman Estate v Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25 ("*Sherman Estate*") confirmed the test set out in *Sierra Club* continues to be an appropriate guide for judicial discretion (at para.43), and added the following three core prerequisites to be met before the imposition of a sealing order at para. 38:

> (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.

[39] In the insolvency context, especially where there is a sale process, it is a standard practice to keep all aspects of the bidding or sales process confidential. Courts have found this appropriately meets the *Sierra Club* test as modified by *Sherman Estate*, as sealing this information ensures the integrity of the sales and marketing

process and avoids misuse of information by bidders in a subsequent process to obtain an unfair advantage. The important public interest at stake is described as the commercial interests of the Receiver, bidders, creditors and stakeholders in ensuring a fair sales and marketing process is carried out, with all bidders on a level playing field.

[40] This requirement for confidentiality no longer exists when the sale process is completed and as a result any sealing order is generally lifted at that time. As noted by the court in the insolvency proceeding of *GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Co v 1262354 Ontario Inc*, 2014 ONSC 1173 at paras. 33-34:

> The purpose of granting such a sealing order is to protect the integrity and fairness of the sales process by ensuring that competitors or potential bidders do not obtain an unfair advantage by obtaining sensitive commercial information about the asset up for sale while others have to rely on their own resources to place a value on the asset when preparing their bids.
>
> **To achieve that purpose a sealing order typically remains in place until the closing of the proposed sales transaction. If the transaction closes, then the need for confidentiality disappears and the sealed materials can become part of the public court file. If the transaction proposed by the receiver does not close for some reason, then the materials remain sealed so that the confidential information about the asset under sale does not become available to potential bidders in the next round of bidding, thereby preventing them from gaining an unfair advantage in their subsequent bids. The integrity of the sale process necessitates keeping all bids confidential until a final sale of the assets has taken place.** [emphasis added].

[41] *Look Communications Inc v Look Mobile Corp* (2009), 183 ACWS (3d) 736 (Ont Sup Ct) ("*Look*") was decided not in the insolvency context but in the context of a court-approved sales process requiring the appointment of a monitor, and a plan of arrangement under the *Business Corporations Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C.44. The facts

were like those of the case at bar in that only two of the five assets were sold through the initial sales process. The court ordered the monitor file an unredacted version of its report after the sale was completed and the monitor's certificate filed with the court. However, the company requested a further sealing of the report and documents for six months because it was continuing its efforts to sell the remaining assets and was in discussion with some of the same parties who submitted bids under the initial completed sales process. The court applied the principles in *Sierra Club*, noting that the "important commercial interest" must be more than the specific interest of the party requesting the confidentiality order, such as loss of business or profits. There must be a general principle at stake, such as a breach of a confidentiality agreement through the disclosure of the information.

[42] The court in *Look* noted at para. 17:

> It is common when assets are being sold pursuant to a court process to seal the Monitor's report disclosing all of the various bids in case a further bidding process is required if the transaction being approved falls through. Invariably, no one comes back asking that the sealing order be set aside. That is because ordinarily all of the assets that were bid on during the court sale process end up being sold and approved by court order, and so long as the sale transaction or transactions closed, no one has any further interest in the information. In *8857574 Ontario Inc. v. Pizza Pizza Ltd.* (1994) 23 B.L.R. (2nd) 239, Farley J. discussed the fact that valuations submitted by a Receiver for the purpose of obtaining court approval are normally sealed. He pointed out that the purpose of that was to maintain fair play so that competitors or potential bidders do not obtain an unfair advantage by obtaining such information while others have to rely on their own resources. In that context, he stated that he thought the most appropriate sealing order in a court approval sale situation would be that the supporting valuation materials remain sealed until such time as the sale transaction had closed.

[43] The court in *Look* granted the company's request for a sealing order for a further six months, finding that even though the remaining sales would not occur under the original sale process, the commercial interest in ensuring the assets were sold for the benefit of all stakeholders was the same.

[44] Here, I acknowledge the importance of sealing the Receiver's Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report to the Court and attached documents during the sale process and until any ongoing sale process is complete. The important interest is the commercial interests of the bidders, the creditors, the stakeholders and maintaining the integrity of the sales process. The Receiver's counsel advised they represented to the bidders that the process would be confidential until completion. The bidders all signed non-disclosure agreements before they received access to the data. These interests outweigh the negative effects of a sealing order. Redaction of the documents or reports is not a reasonable alternative as virtually all of the information contained in the report and documents (other than the parts that are already public) is confidential for the reasons noted.

[45] The issue of a future sales process of some kind however, is far less certain than it was in *Look*, where the new sales process was underway at the time of the court application. All parties in this case agree that the current Receiver-led SISP process is exhausted, and the unopposed or supported request for court approval of its termination confirms this. The Receiver has no intention of starting a new sales process.

[46] Counsel for Yukon government indicated that they would be open to discussing the sale of some or all of the Yukon Zinc assets in future if approached by a potential purchaser. Yukon government confirmed it had no intention of commencing a similar

sales process to the SISP in the near future, as their priority will be care and maintenance of the Mine when this responsibility is transitioned from the Receiver to them, likely in the fall of 2022.

[47] The Receiver noted in its public reports several of the ongoing issues affecting a potential sale. These include the regulatory complexities of obtaining a new water licence, the uncertainty of the responsibilities and costs of restoring the Mine to an operable state, the uncertain value of the mineral claims, and the possibility of ongoing litigation over the Welichem assets if a settlement is not achieved. Unless one or more of these factors changes, the possibility of a future sale is unlikely, in the Receiver's view. This is different from *Look*, where the new sales process had commenced at the time the sealing order was requested.

[48] The Supreme Court of Canada has emphasized the importance of the fundamental principle of open and accessible court proceedings. 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 SCR 480 at para. 23 ("*New Brunswick*"); *Vancouver Sun (Re)*, 2004 SCC 43 at paras. 23-26). Public and media access to the courts is the way in which the judicial process is scrutinized and criticized. "The open court principle has been described as "the very soul of justice," guaranteeing that justice is administered in a non-arbitrary manner" (*New Brunswick* at para. 22). There is a strong presumption in favour of court openness. Judicial discretion in determining confidentiality or sealing orders must be exercised against this backdrop.

[49] Given these unique factual circumstances, and applying the legal principles described above, I conclude the following in relation to sealing the materials.

[50] Once the Almaden sale is complete, and the Receiver's certificate has been filed with the Court, the redacted material related to Almaden's purchase of the Logan Interests will be unsealed. The Receiver has disclosed most of the information related to this purchase and sale but some information such as the purchase price remains redacted. As the sale of this portion of the assets will be over once this transaction is completed, there is no reason to continue to seal the Almaden documents contained in the Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report to Court that have not already been disclosed.

[51] The remoteness of a future sale of the remaining assets evident from the Receiver's materials and submissions means that the length of a sealing order could be indefinite. As noted in *Sierra Club* at 545, a court is to restrict the sealing order as much as is reasonably possible while preserving the important interest in question. While it is still in the public interest to maintain the sealing order where a future sale is a possibility, at some point that possibility may no longer be realistic. Or, so much time will have passed that the information in the original bids may have little relationship to the actual situation so the importance of the interest to be protected is diminished.

[52] The Receiver in this case advised that some of the current circumstances that prevented the success of the sales process would have to change before a sale is likely. Yukon government confirmed that their focus in the near term will be on care and maintenance issues and not on the longer term issues related to remediation, reconstruction, or water licence. It is possible, however, over the next few years, that

some of these circumstances may change. For example, the litigation between Welichem and the Receiver over its assets will either be settled or judicially determined, more clarity on the responsibilities for remediation or even further steps taken towards remediation and reconstruction may occur, or more work may be done to value the mineral claims. Some or all of these changes could lead to a successful sale.

[53] I will grant the sealing order over the Receiver's Confidential Supplemental Eighth Report to the Court, and attached documents, except for the documents related to the Almaden purchase once the Receiver's certificate is filed with the Court, for a period of three years, or until further order of this Court. The report shall be filed as of the date of these Reasons.

[54] The draft sealing order filed by the Receiver on this application should be modified to reflect the terms set out in these reasons and to reflect the presence of all counsel.

_____
DUNCAN C.J.

ONGLET 4

CITATION: GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Company v. 1262354 Ontario Inc., 2014 ONSC 1173
COURT FILE NO.: CV-12-9856-00CL
DATE: 20140224

SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE – ONTARIO

COMMERCIAL LIST

RE: GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Company, Applicant

AND:

1262354 Ontario Inc., Respondent

BEFORE: D. M. Brown J.

COUNSEL: L. Pillon and Y. Katirai, for the Receiver

L. Rogers, for the applicant, GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Company

C. Reed, for the Respondent and for Keith Munt, the principal of the Respondent, and 800145 Ontario Inc., a related subsequent encumbrancer

A. Grossi, for the proposed purchaser, 5230 Harvester Holdings Corp.

HEARD: February 18, 2014

REASONS FOR DECISION

I. Debtor's request for disclosure of commercially sensitive information on a receiver's motion to approve the sale of real property

[1] PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc., the receiver of all the assets, undertaking and properties of the respondent debtor, 1262354 Ontario Inc., pursuant to an Appointment Order made November 5, 2012, moved for an order approving its execution of an agreement of purchase and sale dated December 27, 2013, with G-3 Holdings Inc., vesting title in the purchased assets in that purchaser, approving the fees and disbursements of the Receiver and authorizing the distribution of some of the net proceeds from the sale to the senior secured creditor, GE Canada Real Estate Financing Business Property Company ("GE").

[2] The Receiver's motion was opposed by the Debtor, Keith Munt, the principal of the Debtor, and another of his companies, 800145 Ontario Inc. ("800 Inc."), which holds a subordinate mortgage on the sale property. The Debtor wanted access to the information filed by

the Receiver in the confidential appendices to its report, but the Debtor was not prepared to execute the form of confidentiality agreement sought by the Receiver.

[3] After adjourning the hearing date once at the request of the Debtor, I granted the orders sought by the Receiver. These are my reasons for so doing.

II. Facts

[4] The primary assets of the Debtor were two manufacturing facilities located on close to 13 acres of land at 5230 Harvester Road, Burlington (the "Property"). Prior to the initiation of the receivership the Property had been listed for sale for $10.9 million. Following its appointment in November, 2012, the Receiver entered into a new listing agreement with Colliers Macaulay Nicolls (Ontario) Inc. at a listing price of $9.95 million. In January, 2013, the listing price was reduced to $8.2 million.

[5] In its Second Report dated March 14, 2013 and Third Report dated February 5, 2014, the Receiver described in detail its efforts to market and sell the Property. As of the date of the Second Report Colliers had received expressions of interest from 33 parties, conducted 8 site tours and had received 8 executed Non-Disclosure Agreements from parties to which it had provided a confidential information package. From that 5-month marketing effort the Receiver had received one offer, which it rejected because it was significantly below the asking price, and one letter of intent, to which it responded by seeking an increased price.

[6] Prior to the appointment of the Receiver the Debtor had begun the process to seek permission to sever the Property into two parcels. Understanding that severing the Property might enhance its realization value, the Receiver continued the services of the Debtor's planning consultant and in July, 2013, filed a severance application with the City of Burlington. In mid-November, 2013 the City provided the Receiver with its comments and those of affected parties. The City would not support a parking variance request. Based on discussions with its counsel, the Receiver had concerns about the attractiveness of the Property to a potential purchaser should it withdraw the parking variance request. Since the Receiver had issued its notice of a bid deadline in November, it decided to put the severance application on hold and allow the future purchaser to proceed with it as it saw fit.

[7] Returning to the marketing process, following its March, 2013 Second Report the Receiver engaged Cushman & Wakefield Ltd. to prepare a narrative report form appraisal for the Property. On June 6, 2013, Cushman & Wakefield transmitted its report stating a value as at March 31, 2013. The Receiver filed that report on a confidential basis. In its Third Report the Receiver noted that the appraised value was less than the January, 2013 listing price, as a result of which on June 4, 2013 the Receiver authorized Colliers to reduce the Property's listing price to $6.8 million. That same day the Receiver notified the secured creditors of the reduction in the listing price and the expressions of interest for the Property it had received up until that point of time.

[8] One such letter was sent to Debtor's counsel. Accordingly, as of June 4, 2013, the Debtor and its principal, Munt: (i) were aware of the history of the listing price for the Property

under the receivership; (ii) knew of the marketing history of the Property, including the Receiver's advice that all offers and expressions of interest received up to that time had been rejected "because they were all significantly below the Listing Price and Revised Listing Price for the Property"; (iii) knew that the Receiver had obtained a new appraisal from Cushman which valued the Property at an amount "lower than the Revised Listing Price, which is consistent with the Offers and the feedback from the potential purchasers that have toured the Property"; and, (iv) learned that the listing price had been lowered to $6.8 million.

[9] On June 18 the Receiver received an offer from an interested party (the "Initial Purchaser") and by June 24 had entered into an agreement of purchase and sale with that party. The Receiver notified new counsel for Munt and his companies of that development on July 29, 2013. The Receiver advised that the agreement contemplated a 90-day due diligence period.

[10] As the deadline to satisfy the conditions under the agreement approached, the Initial Purchaser informed the Receiver that it would not be able to waive the conditions prior to the deadline and requested an extension of the due diligence period until November 5, 2013, as well as the inclusion of an additional condition in its favour that would make the deal conditional on the negotiation of a lease with a prospective tenant. The Receiver did not agree to extend the deadline. Its reasons for so doing were fully described in paragraphs 50 and 51 of its Third Report. As a result, that deal came to an end, the fact of which the Receiver communicated to the secured parties, including Munt's counsel, on September 27, 2013.

[11] The Colliers listing agreement expired on September 30; the Receiver elected not to renew it. Instead, it entered into an exclusive listing agreement with CBRE Limited for three months with the listing price remaining at $6.8 million. CBRE then conducted the marketing campaign described in paragraph 67 of the Third Report. Between October 7, 2013 and January 21, 2014, CBRE received expressions of interest from 56 parties, conducted 19 site tours and received 12 executed NDAs to whom it sent information packages.

[12] In October CBRE received three offers. The Receiver rejected them either because of their price or the conditions attached to them.

[13] By November, 2013, the Receiver had marketed the Property for one year, during which time GE had advanced approximately $593,000 of the $600,000 in permitted borrowings under the Appointment Order. The Receiver developed concerns about how long the receivership could continue without additional funding. By that point of time the Receiver had begun to accrue its fees to preserve cash.

[14] The Receiver decided to instruct CBRE to distribute an email notice to all previous bidders and interested parties announcing a December 2, 2013 offer submission deadline. Emails went out to about 1,200 persons.

[15] In response to the bid deadline notice, four offers were received. The Receiver concluded that none were acceptable.

[16] The Receiver then received five additional offers. It engaged in negotiations with those parties in an effort to maximize the purchase price. On December 13, 2013, the Receiver accepted an offer from G-3 and on December 27 executed an agreement with G-3, subject to court approval.

[17] The Receiver filed, on a confidential basis, charts summarizing the materials terms of the offers received, as well as an un-redacted copy of the G-3 APA. The G-3 offer was superior in terms of price, "clean" - in the sense of not conditional on financing, environmental site assessments, property conditions reports or other investigations – and provided for a reasonably quick closing date of February 25, 2014.

III. The adjournment request

[18] The only persons who opposed the proposed sale to G-3 were the Debtor, its principal, Munt, together with the related subsequent mortgagee, 800 Inc. When the motion originally came before the Court on February 13, 2014, the Debtor asked for an adjournment in order to review the Receiver's materials. Although the Receiver had served the Debtor with its motion materials eight days before the hearing date, the Debtor had changed counsel a few days before the hearing. I adjourned the hearing until February 18, 2014 and set a timetable for the Debtor to file responding materials, which it did.

[19] At the hearing the Debtor, Munt and 800 Inc. opposed the sale approval order on two grounds. First, they argued that they had been treated unfairly during the sale process because the Receiver would not disclose to them the terms of the G-3 APA, in particular the sales price. Second, they opposed the sale on the basis that the Receiver had used too low a listing price which did not reflect the true value of the land and was proposing an improvident sale. Let me deal with each argument in turn.

IV. Receiver's request for approval of the sale: the disclosure issue

A. The dispute over the disclosure of the purchase price

[20] The Debtor submitted that without access to information about the price in the G-3 APA, it could not evaluate the reasonableness of the proposed sale. In order to disclose that information to the Debtor, the Receiver had asked the Debtor to sign a form of confidentiality agreement (the "Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement"). A dispute thereupon arose between the Receiver and Debtor about the terms of that proposed agreement.

[21] By way of background, on January 8, 2014, the Receiver had advised the secured creditors (other than GE) that it had entered into the G-3 APA and would seek court approval of the sale during the week of February 10. In that letter the Receiver wrote:

> As you can appreciate, the economic terms of the Agreement, including the purchase price payable, are commercially sensitive. In order to maintain the integrity of the Sale Process, the Receiver is not in a position to disclose this information at this time.

[22] On January 10, 2014, counsel for the Debtor requested a copy of the G-3 APA. Receiver's counsel replied on January 13 that it would be seeking a court date during the week of February 10 and "as is normally the custom with insolvency proceedings, we will not be circulating the Agreement in advance".

[23] On January 23 Debtor's counsel wrote to the Receiver:

> My clients, being both the owner, and secured and unsecured creditors of the owner, and having other interests in the outcome of the sales transaction, have a right to the production of the subject Agreement, and should be afforded a sufficient opportunity to review it and understand its terms in advance of any court hearing to approve the transaction contemplated therein. I once again request a copy of the subject Agreement as soon as possible.

According to the Receiver's Supplemental Report, in response Receiver's counsel explained that the purchase price generally was not disclosed in an insolvency sales transaction prior to the closing of the sale and that the secured claim of GE exceeded the purchase price.

[24] The Receiver's motion record served on February 5 contained a full copy of the G-3 APA, save that the Receiver had redacted the references to the purchase price. An affidavit filed on behalf of the Debtor stated that "it has been Mr. Munt's position that his position on the approval motion is largely contingent upon the terms and conditions of the subject Agreement, particularly the purchase price".

[25] The Debtor and a construction lien claimant, Centimark Ltd., continued to request disclosure of the G-3 APA. On February 11, 2014, Receiver's counsel wrote to them advising that the Receiver was prepared to disclose the purchase price upon the execution of the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement which confirmed that (i) they would not be bidding on the Property at any time during the receivership proceedings and (ii) they would maintain the confidentiality of the information provided.

[26] Centimark agreed to those terms, signed the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement and received the sales transaction information. Centimark did not oppose approval of the G-3 sales transaction.

[27] On February 12, the day before the initial return of the sales approval motion, counsel for the Receiver and Debtor discussed the terms of a confidentiality agreement, but were unable to reach an agreement. According to the Receiver's Supplement to the Third Report, "[Munt's counsel] did not inform the Receiver that Munt was prepared to waive its right to bid on the Real Property at some future date".

[28] At the initial hearing on February 13 the Debtor expanded its disclosure request to include all the confidential appendices filed by the Receiver – i.e. the June 6, 2013 Cushman & Wakefield appraisal; a chart summarizing the offers/letters of intent received while Colliers was the listing agent; a chart summarizing the offers/letters of intent received while CBRE had been

the listing agent; and, the un-redacted G-3 APA. Agreement on the terms of disclosure could not be reached between counsel; the motion was adjourned over the long weekend until February 18.

[29] The Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement contained a recital which read:

> The undersigned 1262354 Ontario Inc., 800145 Ontario Inc. and Keith Munt have confirmed that it, its affiliates, related parties, directors and officers (collectively the "Recipient"), have no intention of bidding on the Property, located at 5230 Harvester Road, Burlington, Ontario.

The operative portions of the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement stated:

> 1. The Recipient shall keep confidential the Confidential Information, and shall not disclose the Confidential Information in any manner whatsoever including in respect of any motion materials to be filed or submissions to be made in the receivership proceedings involving 1262354 Ontario Inc. The Recipient shall use the Confidential Information solely to evaluate the Sale Agreement in connection with the Receiver's motion for an order approving the Sale Agreement and the transaction contemplated therein, and not directly or indirectly for any other purpose.
>
> 2. The Recipient will not, in any manner, directly or indirectly, alone or jointly or in concert with any other person (including by providing financing to any other person), effect, seek, offer or propose, or in any way assist, advise or encourage any other person to effect, seek, offer or propose, whether publicly or otherwise, any acquisition of some or all of the Property, during the course of the Receivership proceedings involving 1262354 Ontario Inc.
>
> 3. The Recipient may disclose the Confidential Information to his legal counsel and financial advisors (the "Advisors") but only to the extent that the Advisors need to know the Confidential Information for the purposes described in Paragraph 1 hereof, have been informed of the confidential nature of the Confidential Information, are directed by the Recipient to hold the Confidential Information in the strictest confidence, and agree to act in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement. The Recipient shall cause the Advisors to observe the terms of this Agreement and is responsible for any breach by the Advisors of any of the provisions of this Agreement.
>
> 4. The obligations set out in this Agreement shall expire on the earlier of: (a) an order of the Ontario Superior Court (Commercial List) (the "Court") unsealing the copy of the Sale Agreement filed with the Court; and (b) the closing of a transaction of purchase and sale by the Receiver in respect of the Property.

[30] Following the adjourned initial hearing of February 13, Debtor's counsel informed the Receiver that his client would sign the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement if (i) paragraph 3 was removed and (ii) the last sentence of paragraph 1 was revised to read as follows:

> The Recipient shall use the Confidential Information solely in connection with the Receiver's motion for an order approving the Sale Agreement and other relief, and not directly or indirectly for any other purpose.

[31] By the time of the February 18 hearing the Debtor had not signed the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement.

B. Analysis

[32] In *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*[1] the Supreme Court of Canada sanctioned the making of a sealing order in respect of materials filed with a court when (i) the order was necessary to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, because reasonably alternative measures would not prevent the risk and (ii) the salutary effects of the order outweighed its deleterious effects.[2] As applied in the insolvency context that principle has led this Court to adopt a standard practice of sealing those portions of a report from a court-appointed officer – receiver, monitor or trustee – filed in support of a motion to approve a sale of assets which disclose the valuations of the assets under sale, the details of the bids received by the court-appointed officer and the purchase price contained in the offer for which court approval is sought.

[33] The purpose of granting such a sealing order is to protect the integrity and fairness of the sales process by ensuring that competitors or potential bidders do not obtain an unfair advantage by obtaining sensitive commercial information about the asset up for sale while others have to rely on their own resources to place a value on the asset when preparing their bids.[3]

[34] To achieve that purpose a sealing order typically remains in place until the closing of the proposed sales transaction. If the transaction closes, then the need for confidentiality disappears and the sealed materials can become part of the public court file. If the transaction proposed by the receiver does not close for some reason, then the materials remain sealed so that the confidential information about the asset under sale does not become available to potential bidders in the next round of bidding, thereby preventing them from gaining an unfair advantage in their subsequent bids. The integrity of the sales process necessitates keeping all bids confidential until a final sale of the assets has taken place.

[35] From that it follows that if an interested party requests disclosure from a receiver of the sensitive commercial information about the sales transaction, the party must agree to refrain from participating in the bidding process. Otherwise, the party would gain an unfair advantage over those bidders who lacked access to such information.

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[1] 2002 SCC 41
[2] *Ibid.*, para. 53.
[3] *8857574 Ontario Inc. v. Pizza Pizza Ltd.* (1994), 23 B.L.R. (2d) 239 (Gen. Div.).

[36] Applying those principles to the present case, I concluded that the Receiver had acted in a reasonable fashion in requesting the Debtor to sign the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement before disclosing information about the transaction price and other bids received. The provisions of the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement were tailored to address the concerns surrounding the disclosure of sensitive commercial information in the context of an insolvency asset sale:

(i) Paragraph 1 of the agreement specified that the disclosed confidential information could be used "solely to evaluate the Sale Agreement in connection with the Receiver's motion for an order approving the Sale Agreement". In other words, the disclosure would be made solely to enable the Debtor to assess whether the proposed sales transaction had met the criteria set out in *Royal Bank of Canada v. Soundair Corp.*,[4] specifically that (i) the Receiver had obtained the offers through a process characterized by fairness, efficiency and integrity, (ii) the Receiver had made a sufficient effort to get the best price and had not acted improvidently, and (iii) the Receiver had taken into account the interests of all parties. The Debtor was not prepared to agree to that language in the agreement and, instead, proposed more general language. The Debtor did not offer any evidence as to why it was not prepared to accept the tailored language of paragraph 1 of the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement;

(ii) The recital and paragraphs 2 and 4 of the agreement would prevent the Debtor, its principal and related company, from bidding on the Property during the course of the receivership – a proper request. The Debtor was prepared to agree to that term;

(iii) However, the Debtor was not prepared to agree with paragraph 3 of the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement which limited disclosure of the confidential information to the Debtor's financial advisors only for the purpose of evaluating the Receiver's proposed sale transaction. Again, the Debtor did not file any evidence explaining its refusal to agree to this reasonable provision. Although Munt filed an affidavit sworn on February 14, he did not deal with the issue of the form of the confidentiality agreement.

[37] In sum, I concluded that the form of confidentiality agreement sought by Receiver from the Debtor as a condition of disclosing the commercially sensitive sales transaction information was reasonable in scope and tailored to the objective of maintaining the integrity of the sales process. I regarded the Debtor's refusal to sign the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement as unreasonable in the circumstances and therefore I was prepared to proceed to hear and dispose of the sales approval motion in the absence of disclosure of the confidential information to the Debtor.

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

V. Receiver's request for approval of the sale: The *Soundair* analysis

[38] The Receiver filed detailed evidence describing the lengthy marketing process it had undertaken with the assistance of two listing agents, the offers received, and the bid-deadline process it ultimately adopted which resulted in the proposed G-3 APA. I was satisfied that the process had exposed the Property to the market in a reasonable fashion and for a reasonable period of time. In order to provide an updated benchmark against which to assess received bids the Receiver had obtained the June, 2013 valuation of the Property from Cushman & Wakefield.

[39] The offer received from the Initial Purchaser had contained the highest purchase price of all offers received and that price closely approximated the "as is value" estimated by Cushman & Wakefield. That offer did not proceed. The purchase price in the G-3 APA was the second highest received, although it was below the appraised value. However, it was far superior to any of the other 11 offers received through CBRE in the last quarter of 2013. From that circumstance I concluded that the appraised value of the Property did not accurately reflect prevailing market conditions and had over-stated the fair market value of the Property on an "as is" basis. That said, the purchase price in the G-3 APA significantly exceeded the appraised land value and the liquidation value estimated by Cushman & Wakefield.

[40] Nevertheless, Munt gave evidence of several reasons why he viewed the Receiver's marketing efforts as inadequate:

(i) Munt deposed that had the Receiver proceeded with the severance application, it could have marketed the Property as one or two separate parcels. As noted above, the Receiver explained why it had concluded that proceeding with the severance application would not likely enhance the realization value, and that business judgment of the Receiver was entitled to deference;

(ii) Munt pointed to appraisals of various sorts obtained in the period 2000 through to January, 2011 in support of his assertion that the ultimate listing price for the Property was too low. As mentioned, the June, 2013 appraisal obtained by the Receiver justified the reduction in the listing price and, in any event, the bids received from the market signaled that the valuation had over-estimated the value of the Property;

(iii) Finally, Munt complained that the MLS listing for the Property was too narrowly limited to the Toronto Real Estate Board, whereas the Property should have been listed on all boards from Windsor to Peterborough. I accepted the explanation of the Receiver that it had marketed the Property drawing on the advice of two real estate professionals as listing agents and was confident that the marketing process had resulted in the adequate exposure of the Property.

[41] Consequently, I concluded that the Receiver's marketing of the Property and the proposed sales transaction with G-3 had satisfied the *Soundair* criteria. I approved the sale agreement and granted the requested vesting order.

VI. Request to approve Receiver's activities and fees

[42] As part of its motion the Receiver sought approval of its fees and disbursements, together with those of its counsel, for the period up to January 31, 2014, as well as authorization to make distributions from the net sale proceeds for Priority Claims and an initial distribution to the senior secured, GE. The Debtor sought an adjournment of this part of the motion until after any sale had closed and the confidential information had been unsealed. I denied that request.

[43] As Marrocco J., as he then was, stated in *Bank of Montreal v. Dedicated National Pharmacies Inc.*,[5] motions for the approval of a receiver's actions and fees, as well as the fees of its counsel, should occur at a time that makes sense, having regard to the commercial realities of the receivership. For several reasons I concluded that it was appropriate to consider the Receiver's approval request at the present time.

[44] First, one had to take into account the economic reality of this receivership – i.e. that given the cash-flow challenges of this receivership, the Receiver had held off seeking approval of its fees and disbursements for a considerable period of time during which it had been accruing its fees.

[45] Second, the Receiver filed detailed information concerning the fees it and its legal counsel had incurred from September, 2012 until January 31, 2014, including itemized invoices and supporting dockets. The Receiver had incurred fees and disbursements amounting to $356,301.40, and its counsel had incurred fees approximating $188,000.00. That information was available for the Debtor to review prior to the hearing of the motion.

[46] Third, with the approval of the G-3 sale, little work remained to be done in this receivership. By its terms the G-3 APA contemplated a closing date prior to February 27, 2014, and the main condition of closing in favour of the purchaser was the securing of the approval and vesting order.

[47] Fourth, the Receiver reported that GE's priority secured claim exceeded the purchase price. Accordingly, GE had the primary economic interest in the receivership; it had consented to the Receiver's fees. Also, the next secured in line, Centimark, had not opposed the Receiver's motion.

[48] Which leads me to the final point. Like any other civil proceeding, receiverships before a court are subject to the principle of procedural proportionality. That principle requires taking account of the appropriateness of the procedure as a whole, as well as its individual component parts, their cost, timeliness and impact on the litigation given the nature and complexity of the litigation.[6] In this receivership the Receiver had served this motion over a week in advance of

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[5] 2011 ONSC 346, para. 7.
[6] *Hryniak v. Mauldin*, 2014 SCC 7, para. 31.

the hearing date and the Debtor had secured an adjournment over a long weekend; the Debtor had adequate time to review, consider and respond to the motion. I considered it unreasonable that the Debtor was not prepared to engage in a review of the Receiver's accounts in advance of the second hearing date, while at the same time the Debtor took advantage of the adjournment to file evidence in response to the sales approval part of the motion.

[49] Debtor's counsel submitted that an adjournment of the fees request was required so that the Debtor could assess the reasonableness of the fees in light of the purchase price. Yet, it was the Debtor's unreasonable refusal to sign the Receiver's Confidentiality Agreement which caused its inability to access the purchase price at this point of time, and such unreasonable behavior should not be rewarded by granting an adjournment of the fees portion of the motion.

[50] Further, to adjourn the fees portion of the motion to a later date would increase the litigation costs of this receivership. From the report of the Receiver the Debtor's economic position was "out of the money", so to speak, with the senior secured set to suffer a shortfall. It appeared to me that the Debtor's request to adjourn the fees part of the motion would result in additional costs without any evident benefit. I asked Debtor's counsel whether his client would be prepared to post security for costs as a term of any further adjournment; counsel did not have instructions on the point. In my view, courts should scrutinize with great care requests for adjournments that will increase the litigation costs of a receivership proceeding made by a party whose economic interests are "out of the money", especially where the party is not prepared to post security for the incremental costs it might cause.

[51] For those reasons, I refused the Debtor's second adjournment request.

[52] Having reviewed the detailed dockets and invoices filed by the Receiver and its counsel, as well as the narrative in the Third Report and its supplement, I was satisfied that its activities were reasonable in the circumstances, as were its fees and those of its counsel. I therefore approved them.

VII. Partial distribution

[53] Given that upon the closing of the sale to G-3 the Receiver will have completed most of its work, I considered reasonable its request for authorization to make an interim distribution of funds upon the closing. In its Third Report the Receiver described certain Priority Claims which it had concluded ranked ahead of GE's secured claim, including the amounts secured by the Receiver's Charge, the Receiver's Borrowing Charge and an H.S.T. claim. As well, it reported that it had received an opinion from its counsel about the validity, perfection and priority of the GE security, and it had concluded that GE was the only secured creditor with an economic interest in the receivership. In light of those circumstances, I accepted the Receiver's request that, in order to maximize efficiency and to avoid the need for an additional motion to seek approval for a distribution, authorization should be given at this point in time to the Receiver to pay out of the sale proceeds the priority claims and a distribution to GE, subject to the Receiver maintaining sufficient reserves to complete the administration of the receivership.

VIII. Summary

[54] For these reasons I granted the Receiver's motion, including its request to seal the Confidential Appendices until the closing of the sales transaction.

D. M. Brown J.

Date: February 24, 2014

ONGLET 5

SUPERIOR COURT

(*Commercial Division*)

CANADA
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC
DISTRICT OF MONTRÉAL

No: 500-11-048114-157

DATE: July 25, 2017

PRESIDED BY THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN W. HAMILTON, J.S.C.

IN THE MATTER OF THE PLAN OF COMPROMISE OR ARRANGEMENT OF:

BLOOM LAKE GENERAL PARTNER LIMITED
QUINTO MINING CORPORATION
8568391 CANADA LIMITED
CLIFFS QUÉBEC IRON MINING ULC
WABUSH IRON CO. LIMITED
WABUSH RESOURCES INC.
Petitioners
And
THE BLOOM LAKE IRON ORE MINE LIMITED PARTNERSHIP
BLOOM LAKE RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED
WABUSH MINES
ARNAUD RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED
WABUSH LAKE RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED
Mises en cause
And
FTI CONSULTING CANADA INC.
Monitor
And
VILLE DE FERMONT
Objecting Party

JH5439

JUDGMENT ON THE CCAA PARTIES' MOTION
FOR THE ISSUANCE OF AN ORDER APPROVING THE ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY AND OTHER RELIEF (#516)
AND THE NOTICE OF OBJECTION OF VILLE DE FERMONT

INTRODUCTION

[1] The Court is asked to approve an allocation methodology developed by the Monitor to allocate the proceeds of realization from asset sale transactions and the costs of the CCAA proceedings on a principled basis among the CCAA Parties and, where necessary, among their assets. The Court is also asked to authorize the repayment of some post-filing inter-company indebtedness and the payment of undisputed outstanding property taxes.

[2] One secured creditor opposes the allocation methodology because it argues that the methodology produces an inequitable result when it is applied to the proceeds of sale of certain assets over which the secured creditor claims priority.

CONTEXT

[3] The CCAA Parties initiated proceedings under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*[1] on January 27, 2015 for the Bloom Lake Parties and May 20, 2015 for the Wabush Mines Parties.

[4] Since those dates, the CCAA Parties entered into sixteen asset sale transactions in which they sold substantially all of their assets.

[5] With respect to each asset sale transaction, the Court issued an Approval and Vesting Order which generally provided, *inter alia*, the following provisions:

- The assets vested in the purchaser free and clear of any security;
- The security attached to the net proceeds from the sale; and
- The net proceeds were held by the Monitor on behalf of the creditors, pending further order of the Court.

[6] As of June 16, 2017, the total amount held by the Monitor from the asset sales and from other sources was $157,989,000.[2] With the sale of the Wabush Mine, that amount now exceeds $160 million.

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[1] R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 (« CCAA »).

[7] The Monitor developed the Proposed Allocation Methodology to allocate the proceeds of realization and the costs on a principled basis. The Monitor summarizes his methodology as follows:

> (a) Realizations from transactions would be allocated amongst specific assets and specific CCAA Parties as set out in each transaction agreement, which, in each case, are the allocations proposed by an arm's length purchaser;
>
> (b) Non-transaction related realizations specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated to that CCAA Party. For example cash on hand at the commencement of the CCAA Proceedings and collection of accounts receivable;
>
> (c) Non-transaction related realizations not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated pro-rata based on total realizations. For example, interest on funds held by the Monitor;
>
> (d) Costs specifically attributable to an asset or asset category would be applied to that asset or category. For example, railcar storage fees would be applied against railcar proceeds;
>
> (e) Costs specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated to that CCAA Party. For example, Bloom Lake mine and Wabush Mine direct operating costs would be allocated to BLLP and to Wabush Mine JV respectively;
>
> (f) Costs not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated pro-rata based on net realizations after specifically attributable costs. For example, costs of management and legal and professional costs. Within this category, legal and professional fees billed on the Bloom Lake accounts will be allocated amongst the Bloom Lake CCAA Parties, legal and professional fees billed on the Wabush accounts will be allocated amongst the Wabush CCAA Parties and legal and professional fees billed on the joint Bloom/Wabush accounts will be allocated amongst all of the CCAA Parties; and
>
> (g) As the Wabush Mines joint venture is not a legal entity, it does not have assets and liabilities in its own right. Accordingly any realizations and costs notionally allocated to Wabush Mines in the foregoing steps would be allocated to the joint venturers, WICL and WRI, based on their respective joint venture interests.[3]

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[2] Thirty-Eighth Report to the Court Submitted by FTI Consulting Canada Inc., in its Capacity as Monitor, dated June 21, 2017, par. 12.

[3] Thirty-Sixth Report to the Court Submitted by FTI Consulting Canada Inc., in its Capacity as Monitor, dated May 26, 2017, par. 36.

[8] The CCAA Parties asked the Court to approve the Proposed Allocation Methodology and to authorize the repayment of some post-filing inter-company indebtedness and the payment of undisputed outstanding property taxes.

[9] A number of creditors objected, principally on the basis that they did not have sufficient information or time to take a position. Concerns were also raised as to whether the Proposed Allocation Methodology and the proposed payments were prejudicial to the potential deemed trusts relating to Pension claims.[4]

[10] The hearing originally scheduled for May 31, 2017 was postponed to June 26, 2017. During that period, the concerns raised by the creditors other than Ville de Fermont were resolved and their objections were withdrawn.

[11] Ville de Fermont maintained its objection and refined its position. It no longer objects to the Proposed Allocation Methodology generally, but it argues that the Proposed Allocation Methodology produces an inequitable result when it is applied to the proceeds of the sale of the Bloom Lake mine and related assets to Québec Iron Ore Inc. and that it should be varied in that instance. It does not contest the repayment of the post-filing inter-company indebtedness and the payment of undisputed outstanding property taxes but argues that the payment that it receives should be greater.

ANALYSIS

1. Proposed Allocation Methodology generally

[12] The Proposed Allocation Methodology is intended to allocate all realizations and costs among the various CCAA Parties and, to the extent necessary, among various assets or asset categories.

[13] The Monitor has developed the Proposed Allocation Methodology on a principled basis, without reference to the result for any specific creditor. In other words, the Monitor developed rules that would be applied in the same way to each realization and cost as opposed to allocating each realization and cost on a case-by-case basis.

[14] Allocating realizations and costs on a case-by-case basis would inevitably lead to disputes as different creditors are treated differently. The better approach is to develop a methodology applicable to all situations.

[15] However, it is important to recognize that a general methodology may not work in all circumstances and that the parties have the right to challenge the general methodology if it produces an inequitable result in particular circumstances.

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[4] Notices of Objection were filed by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, the Union, Ville de Fermont, the Representative Employees, the Replacement Plan Administrator and the Superintendent of Pensions for Newfoundland and Labrador.

[16] The Court will review the Proposed Allocation Methodology in a general way in this section, and will review the particular application to the Bloom Lake mine proceeds in a separate section. The Court has the power to intervene, whether at the general level or in a specific matter, to ensure that the creditors are treated equitably.[5]

[17] To the extent that it is necessary to allocate the proceeds of a single transaction among different CCAA Parties (in the event of multiple vendors) or different assets or categories of assets (in the event that there are multiple assets or categories of assets and different secured creditors with claims against different assets or categories of assets), the Proposed Allocation Methodology uses as a starting point the contractual allocation of the purchase price among the vendors and among the assets.

[18] The contractual allocation of the purchase price is a reasonable starting point, on the assumption that it is an allocation done by an arm's length third party who has no interest in the allocation of the proceeds.

[19] However, the contractual allocation will be not be given the same weight if the creditor can demonstrate that (1) that the purchaser is not at arm's length, (2) that the purchaser has an interest in the allocation of the proceeds, either because it or a related party is a creditor or because it made a deal with a creditor, or (3) that the CCAA Parties negotiated the allocation.

[20] In the present matter, the Monitor testified that the purchasers were typically asked to provide allocations and that the vendors accepted the allocations without negotiation. In those circumstances, we can assume that the purchaser's allocation of the purchase price reflects the purchaser's assessment of the relative value of the assets purchased.

[21] However, even if the purchaser is an arm's length third party with no interest in the allocation of the proceeds, it will nevertheless be open to a creditor to demonstrate that a particular contractual allocation is not reasonable.

[22] Typically, there will be two ways to demonstrate that the purchaser's contractual allocation of the price is not reasonable (1) the purchaser had a reason to allocate the purchase price in a way that does not reflect its assessment of the relative value of the assets, or (2) the purchaser's assessment of the relative value of the assets is clearly wrong.

[23] The burden will be on the creditor challenging the contractual allocation. It will generally not be sufficient to simply say that the purchaser's allocation was tax-driven in the sense that the purchaser may want to allocate more or less of the purchase price to certain assets or categories of assets because of the tax treatment of certain categories of assets, first because there are always tax considerations and second because, even

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5 *Métaux Kitco inc. (Arrangement relatif à)*, 2016 QCCS 444, par. 48.

then, the allocation must be reasonable in order to withstand scrutiny by the taxation authorities.

[24] To establish that the purchaser's assessment of the relative value of the assets is clearly wrong, the creditor will have to demonstrate a significant departure from the relative value of the assets.

[25] For the non-transaction related realizations, the Methodology divides them into those specifically attributable to a CCAA Party (such as cash on hand at the commencement of the proceedings and accounts receivable collected), and those which are not (such as interest). Those which are specifically attributable to a CCAA Party are attributed to that party, and those which are not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party are allocated pro rata to the realizations. That seems reasonable.

[26] For costs, the approach is similar:

- Costs specifically attributable to an asset or asset category (e.g. storage fees) are applied to that asset or category;
- Costs specifically attributable to a CCAA Party (e.g. mine operating costs) are allocated to that CCAA Party; and
- Costs not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party (e.g. management and legal and professional fees) are allocated pro rata based on net realizations.

[27] The Monitor represented that the Proposed Allocation Methodology is consistent with the allocation methodology approved in the Timminco Limited and Bécancour Silicon Inc. CCAA proceedings.[6]

[28] For all of the foregoing reasons, the Court will approve the Proposed Allocation Methodology, subject to the objection by Ville de Fermont.

2. Proposed repayment and payments

[29] The CCAA Parties also ask the Court to authorize the repayment of certain inter-company funding and the payment of uncontested property taxes due.

[30] These conclusions are not contested by any creditor, except that Ville de Fermont suggests that more of its claim should be paid.

[31] The proposed repayment to Bloom Lake LP by CQIM relates to advances in the amount of approximately $4.1 million made by Bloom Lake LP to CQIM pursuant to the Bloom Lake Initial Order. The Court is satisfied that the Monitor holds sufficient funds to

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[6] Ontario Court File No.: CV-12-9539-00CL

repay those amounts and that it is appropriate to repay those amounts now to avoid further interest charges.

[32] The partial payment of property taxes relates to amounts that (1) are not contested,[7] (2) have priority, and (3) are not subject to any prior security including the potential deemed trusts relating to Pension claims.

[33] The Monitor explains that he will not know how much is payable until the Proposed Allocation Methodology is approved and the billing information is updated. He anticipates that there will be amounts payable by Bloom Lake LLP to Ville de Fermont and by CQIM to Ville de Sept-Îles.

[34] Given the preconditions to any such payment and given that the payment will be in the interest of the estate because interest will stop running, the Court will authorize the payments.

[35] It is in the interest of the estate that these amounts be paid or repaid notwithstanding any appeal. The Court will order provisional execution of this portion of its judgment.

3. Allocation of the Bloom Lake mine sale proceeds

[36] The Bloom Lake CCAA Parties sold the Bloom Lake mine and related assets to Québec Iron Ore Inc. on December 11, 2015. The Court issued an Approval and Vesting Order on January 27, 2016, and the transaction closed on April 11, 2016.

[37] The cash portion of the purchase price was $10.5 million. The purchaser also assumed certain liabilities. The Asset Purchase Agreement included at Schedule R an allocation of the cash portion of the purchase price as between the various sellers. At the request of the Monitor, the purchaser provided a more detailed allocation of the cash portion of the purchase price among the various assets or categories of assets.[8] The Monitor testified that the contractual allocation was accepted by the CCAA Parties without negotiation.

[38] Ville de Fermont did not contest the sale and it does not now contest the purchase price. Its contestation is limited to the contractual allocation as between three categories of assets in the total amount of $6.9 million:[9]

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7 There are substantial unpaid municipal taxes owed to Ville de Fermont, but, as described below, the municipal evaluations are challenged. As a result, the undisputed amount is only $3.4 million (see 36th Report, par. 45).

8 Exhibit OF-1.

9 *Ibid.*

Bloom Lake mine fixed assets (buildings and constructions on the site pertaining to the Mining Rights)	$1,500,000
Bloom Lake Mining Lease and Real Property Leases	$1,400,000
Bloom Lake Real Property Fermont housing	$4,000,000
TOTAL	$6,900,000

[39] The first two categories of assets, to which the purchaser allocated $2,900,000, represent the mine. The third category, Fermont housing, includes a property referred to as the "hotel" and 28 residences Fermont, divided as follows:[10]

"Hotel"	$2,909,489.77
28 residences (values varying between $15,718.95 and $56,168.43)	$1,090,510.23
TOTAL	$4,000,000

[40] The purchaser allocated the $4,000,000 among the residential properties pro rata to their municipal evaluations: the portion of the purchase price allocated to each residential property is equal to 15.8% of the municipal evaluation of that property.[11]

[41] Ville de Fermont argues that the contractual allocation of the $6.9 million between the mine and the residential properties is unreasonable and that the purchaser undervalued the mine. It argues that the Court should substitute an allocation of the $6.9 million which is proportional to the municipal evaluations of the properties:[12]

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10 *Ibid.*
11 *Ibid.*
12 Exhibit OF-2.

	Municipal evaluations	Allocation of price
Mine buildings	$314,710,000[13]	$6,324,370
Mine immoveable	$3,299,000[14]	$66,296
"Hotel"	$18,435,400[15]	$509,334
28 Residences	$6,909,800	
TOTAL	$343,354,200	$6,900,000

[42] The Monitor argued that it was reasonable for the purchaser to place relatively little value on the mine and more value on the residential properties, because the mine is more of a liability than an asset in that it is not operational and has costs of $1.5 million per month and significant environmental obligations. In any event, the Monitor argues that all parties agree that the residential properties are worth more than $4 million such that allocating $4 million to the residential properties cannot be unreasonable.

[43] The two positions lead to very different results. The taxes owing to Ville de Fermont on the mine are in the range of $16-18 million and the taxes owing on the residential properties are only $500,000-600,000. As a result, using the contractual allocation, Ville de Fermont receives $2.9 million from the mine and $500,000-600,000 from the residential properties, for a total of $3.4-3.5 million. Using Ville de Fermont's proposed allocation, it receives the full $6.9 million. In other words, Ville de Fermont receives an additional $3.4-3.5 million on its proposed allocation.

[44] As mentioned above, the purchaser was asked to provide the contractual allocation and it was accepted by the CCAA Parties without negotiation. There is no suggestion that the purchaser is not at arm's length or that the purchaser has any interest in the allocation of the proceeds. As a result, the Court will presume that the contractual allocation is reasonable and the burden is on Ville de Fermont to prove that it is not.

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13 Exhibit OF-3.
14 *Ibid*.
15 Exhibit OF-4.

[45] Ville de Fermont first suggests that the purchaser had an interest in skewing the contractual allocation to give less value to the mine and more value to the residential properties. It suggests that the purchaser was motivated by tax considerations – it would improve its position in a subsequent sale. However, there was no proof of this interest. Moreover, if, as the CCAA Parties suggest, the purchaser's assessment was that the houses were more likely to be sold and it was trying to reduce the capital gain on a subsequent sale of the houses, that would suggest that allocating more value to the houses was reasonable.

[46] Ville de Fermont also suggests that the contractual allocation may be intended to help the purchaser with its challenge of the municipal evaluation of the mine. Again there is no proof of any such intent. Further, whether the purchaser allocates $2.9 million or $6.3 million of the purchase price to the mine will not likely make much difference when it is attempting to reduce the municipal evaluation from $318,009,000 to $50,000,000.

[47] The principal argument put forward by Ville de Fermont is that the allocation should be proportional to the municipal evaluations.[16]

[48] It is clear that the municipal evaluation of the mine bears little relationship with its current value. The municipal evaluation of the mine is $318,009,000. Ville de Fermont defended the municipal evaluation, arguing that it represented only 15% of the total amount invested of $2 billion. However, the amount invested is not necessarily the same as value. The mine, together with the residential properties, sold for a total of $6.9 million after a sale process. That must be taken to be the current market value of the properties. The purchaser allocated $2.9 million of the price to the mine and Ville de Fermont argues that it should be $6.3 million. Whether the mine is worth 1% of its municipal evaluation or 2%, it is clear that the municipal evaluation does not reflect the value of the mine.

[49] Further, the municipal evaluation of the mine is contested. The CCAA Parties seek to reduce the municipal evaluation of the mine properties from a total of $318,009,000 to $105,000,000 for 2013-14-15 and to $50,000,000 for 2016-17-18. That challenge is being continued by the purchaser. The CCAA Parties also seek a reduction of the municipal evaluation of the hotel from $12,786,600 to $6,393,000 in 2013-14-15, and the purchaser seeks a reduction from $18,435,400 to $2,500,000 in 2016-17-18.[17] The CCAA Parties and the purchaser do not seek any reduction for the houses.

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[16] The *Skeena* case cited by Ville de Fermont does not support its position. In that case, the City of Prince Rupert, as secured creditor for unpaid property taxes, objected to the allocation of costs to the unsold property based on its appraised value, because the appraisal (which was substantially lower than the municipal evaluation) overstated the value of the property (*New Skeena Forest Products Inc.* v. *Kitwanga Lumber Co.*, 2005 BCCA 192, par. 250.

[17] Exhibit OF-8.

[50] The CCAA Parties put forward arguments as to why they contest the municipal evaluation of the mine: the evaluation was established in 2011 and was not adjusted since then to take into account changes in the price of iron ore; and the evaluation was increased by $140 million because of Phase II, which was never completed. Moreover, as set out above, the mine is not operational, and has costs of $1.5 million per month and significant environmental liabilities.

[51] The Court can only conclude that the municipal evaluation of the mine is not a reliable indication of its value.

[52] In any event, Ville de Fermont does not argue that the mine is worth $318 million. In arguing for a pro rata allocation, Ville de Fermont is arguing instead for the notion of relative evaluations: if the mine is worth only 2% of its municipal evaluation, then the residential properties should be worth only 2% of their municipal evaluations.

[53] This argument carries more weight when the properties are more similar. In fact, in its contractual allocation, the purchaser applied the notion of proportionality to the residential properties: they were each allocated 15.8% of their municipal evaluations.

[54] However, in principle, the factors that determine the value of a mine (quantity of remaining iron ore, price of iron ore, operating costs) are very different from the factors that determine the value of a house (characteristics of the house and the local housing market). The value of one need not track the other.

[55] Ville de Fermont argued that the local housing market was closely tied to the mine: if the mine reopens, the residential properties have value, but if the mine does not reopen, the residential properties are worth nothing since there is no demand for them. As a result, Ville de Fermont argues that either both the mine and the residential properties have value or neither has value. In either event, Ville de Fermont argues that the residential properties cannot be worth more than the mine.

[56] This led to a debate between the two witnesses as to the potential market for the residential properties if the mine does not reopen. The Monitor testified that the residential properties have value even if the mine stays shut, because the Fire Lake North project is only 40 kilometres away and the government has announced that the road link to Fermont is being improved. The evaluator for Ville de Fermont testified that the Fire Lake North project will not create a demand for housing in Fermont: it is 90 kilometres away on a bad road, there are already 140 housing units in Fire Lake, and Arcelor purchased the Mont Wright camp which has additional residential units.

[57] This proof is inconclusive. In the absence of better proof, Ville de Fermont has not satisfied its burden of showing that the contractual allocation is unreasonable. As a result, the objection of Ville de Fermont will be dismissed, and the Proposed Allocation Methodology will be approved without any modification.

FOR THESE REASONS, THE COURT:

[58] **GRANTS** the CCAA Parties' Motion for the Issuance of an Order Approving the Allocation Methodology and Other Relief (#516).

[59] **APPROVES** the following allocation methodology, including the purchase price allocations in the purchase and sale transactions approved by the Court:

(a) Realizations from transactions would be allocated amongst specific assets and specific CCAA Parties as set out in each transaction agreement, which, in each case, are the allocations proposed by an arm's length purchaser;

(b) Non-transaction related realizations specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated to that CCAA Party. For example cash on hand at the commencement of the CCAA Proceedings and collection of accounts receivable;

(c) Non-transaction related realizations not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated pro-rata based on total realizations. For example, interest on funds held by the Monitor;

(d) Costs specifically attributable to an asset or asset category would be applied to that asset or category. For example, railcar storage fees would be applied against railcar proceeds;

(e) Costs specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated to that CCAA Party. For example, Bloom Lake mine and Wabush Mine direct operating costs would be allocated to BLLP and to Wabush Mine JV respectively;

(f) Costs not specifically attributable to a CCAA Party would be allocated pro-rata based on net realizations after specifically attributable costs. For example, costs of management and legal and professional costs. Within this category, legal and professional fees billed on the Bloom Lake accounts will be allocated amongst the Bloom Lake CCAA Parties, legal and professional fees billed on the Wabush accounts will be allocated amongst the Wabush CCAA Parties and legal and professional fees billed on the joint Bloom/Wabush accounts will be allocated amongst all of the CCAA Parties; and

(g) As the Wabush Mines joint venture is not a legal entity, it does not have assets and liabilities in its own right. Accordingly any realizations and costs notionally allocated to Wabush Mines in the foregoing steps would be

allocated to the joint venturers, WICL and WRI, based on their respective joint venture interests.

[60] **PERMITS** the repayment of approximately $4.1 million advanced by Bloom Lake LP to CQIM since the start of the CCAA Proceeding.

[61] **PERMITS** the payment on account of outstanding property taxes owed by the CCAA Parties for any portion of the outstanding property taxes that are not in dispute or otherwise contested, provided that:

(a) there exists no competing claim which may rank equal or higher to the outstanding property taxes pursuant to a security or priority (including the Pension Claims at stake in the Monitor's Motion for Directions with respect to Pension Claims); and

(b) the proceeds of sale available further to the application of the allocation methodology are sufficient to do so.

[62] **ORDERS** the provisional execution of conclusions 60 and 61 of this Judgment, notwithstanding any appeal and without the necessity of furnishing any security.

[63] **WITHOUT COSTS.**

_____

Stephen W. Hamilton, J.S.C.

Mtre Bernard Boucher
BLAKE, CASSELS & GRAYDON
For the Petitioners

Mtre Roger P. Simard
DENTONS
For Cliffs Quebec Iron Mining ULC

Mtre Sylvain Rigaud
NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT CANADA
For the Monitor

Mtre Gabriel Serena
Mtre Denis Cloutier
Mtre Jean-François Delisle
CAIN LAMARRE
For Ville de Fermont

Mtre Richard Laflamme
STEIN MONAST
For Ville de Sept-Îles

Mtre Daniel Boudreault
PHILION LEBLANC BEAUDRY AVOCATS
For Syndicat des métallos, sections locales 6254 et 6285

Mtre Edward Béchard-Torres
IRVING MITCHELLE KALICHMAN
For Her Majesty in Right of Newfoundland and Labrador, as represented by the Superintendent of pensions

Date of hearing: June 26, 2017

ONGLET 6

May 2014

SUPERIOR COURT

(Commercial Division)

CANADA
PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC
DISTRICT OF MONTRÉAL
No. 500-11-
DATE: ●

PRESIDING : THE HONOURABLE ……., J.S.C.

IN THE MATTER OF ●:

●

Debtor

-and-

●

THE LAND REGISTRAR FOR THE LAND REGISTRY OFFICE FOR THE REGISTRATION DIVISION OF ● (Québec)/ THE LAND REGISTRAR FOR THE LAND REGISTRY OFFICE OF ● (Rest of Canada) / THE REGISTRAR OF THE REGISTER OF PERSONAL AND MOVABLE REAL RIGHTS (Québec)

Mis-en-Cause

-and-

●

[Petitioner][1]

-and-

●

[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]

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[1] Under section 243(1) of the BIA, the sale of assets of an insolvent debtor by the receiver may be ordered at the request of the secured creditor. In such a case, the secured creditor would be the petitioner.

APPROVAL AND VESTING ORDER[2] - [3]

[1] **ON READING** the **[Debtor/Petitioner/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]'**s *Motion for the Issuance of an Approval and Vesting Order* (the "**Motion**"), the affidavit and the exhibits in support thereof, as well as the Report of the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** dated ● (the "**Report**");

[2] **SEEING** the service of the Motion[4];

[3] **SEEING** the submissions of **[Debtor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]**'s attorneys and the submissions of ●;

[4] **SEEING** that it is appropriate to issue an order approving the transaction(s) (the "**Transaction**") contemplated by the agreement entitled ● (the "**Purchase Agreement**") by and between **[Debtor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** (the **"Vendor"**), as vendor, and ● (the "**Purchaser**"), as purchaser, copy of which was filed as Exhibit R-● to the Motion, and vesting in the Purchaser the assets described in the Purchase Agreement (the "**Purchased Assets**")[5].

WHEREFORE THE COURT:

[5] **GRANTS** the Motion;

SERVICE

[6] **ORDERS** that any prior delay for the presentation of this Motion is hereby abridged and validated so that this Motion is properly returnable today and hereby dispenses with further service thereof.

[7] **PERMITS** service of this Order at any time and place and by any means whatsoever.

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2 A blacklined version must to be included with the Motion

3 This Model Authorization and Vesting Order (the "**Model Order**") is an order authorizing an insolvent debtor under Court protection (whether under the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* ("**BIA**") or the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* ("**CCAA**")) or a receiver appointed under s. 243 of the BIA to enter into a transaction for the sale of its assets and vesting the purchased assets in the purchaser, free and clear of any liens, charges, hypothecs or other encumbrances.

4 The Motion should be served on all persons having an economic interest in the Purchased Assets, unless circumstances warrant a different approach. Counsel should be prepared to provide proof of service to the Court. The practice in Quebec is to implead (as mis-en-cause) and serve the proceedings requesting the issuance of an authorization and vesting orders on the land registry named in the orders sought and on the Register of personal and movable real rights, as the case may be. The practice of impleading the registries concerned does not appear to be followed in Canadian provinces outside of Quebec, however, such that preliminary inquiries with the registries concerned are recommended before serving any proceedings on land or other registries outside of Quebec.

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

SALE APPROVAL

[8] **ORDERS AND DECLARES** that the Transaction is hereby approved, and the execution of the Purchase Agreement by the Vendor is hereby authorized and approved, with such non-material alterations, changes, amendments, deletions or additions thereto as may be agreed to but only with the consent of the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]**.

EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTATION

[9] **AUTHORIZES** the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** and the Purchaser to perform all acts, sign all documents and take any necessary action to execute any agreement, contract, deed, provision, transaction or undertaking stipulated in the Purchase Agreement (Exhibit R-●) and any other ancillary document which could be required or useful to give full and complete effect thereto.

AUTHORIZATION

[10] **ORDERS** and **DECLARES** that this Order shall constitute the only authorization required by the Vendor to proceed with the Transaction and that no shareholder or regulatory approval, if applicable, shall be required in connection therewith.

VESTING OF PURCHASED ASSETS (choose A or B whether Purchased Assets are only located in Quebec (A) or also outside of Quebec (B)

[11] **A - ORDERS** and **DECLARES** that upon the issuance of a **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]**'s certificate substantially in the form appended as **Schedule "A"** hereto (the "**Certificate**"), all rights, title and interest in and to the Purchased Assets shall vest absolutely and exclusively in and with the Purchaser, free and clear of and from any and all claims, liabilities (direct, indirect, absolute or contingent), obligations, prior claims, right of retention, charges, hypothecs, deemed trusts, judgments, writs of seizure or execution, notices of sale, contractual rights relating to the Property, encumbrances, whether or not they have been registered, published or filed and whether secured, unsecured or otherwise (collectively, the "**Encumbrances**"[6]), including without limiting the generality of the foregoing all Encumbrances created by order of this Court and all charges, or security evidenced by registration, publication or filing pursuant to the *Civil Code of Québec* in movable / immovable property, excluding however, the permitted encumbrances and restrictive covenants listed on **Schedule "B"** hereto (the "**Permitted Encumbrances**") and, for greater certainty, **ORDERS** that all of the Encumbrances affecting or relating to the Purchased Assets, other than the Permitted Encumbrances, be cancelled and discharged as against the Purchased Assets, in each case effective as of the applicable time and date of the Certificate.

[11] - **B - ORDERS** and **DECLARES** that upon the issuance of a **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]**'s certificate substantially in the form appended as

[6] The "Encumbrances" being vested out may, in some cases, include ownership claims, where ownership is disputed and the dispute is brought to the attention of the Court. Such ownership claims would, in that case, still continue as against the net proceeds from the sale of the claimed asset. Similarly, other rights, titles or interests could also be vested out, if the Court is advised what rights are being affected, and the appropriate persons are served.

Schedule "A" hereto (the "**Certificate**"), all rights, title and interest in and to the Purchased Assets shall vest absolutely and exclusively in and with the Purchaser, free and clear of and from any and all claims, liabilities (direct, indirect, absolute or contingent), obligations, interests, prior claims, security interests (whether contractual, statutory or otherwise), liens, charges, hypothecs, mortgages, pledges, deemed trusts, assignments, judgments, executions, writs of seizure or execution, notices of sale, options, adverse claims, levies, rights of first refusal or other pre-emptive rights in favour of third parties, restrictions on transfer of title, or other claims or encumbrances, whether or not they have attached or been perfected, registered, published or filed and whether secured, unsecured or otherwise (collectively, the "**Encumbrances**"), including without limiting the generality of the foregoing all charges, security interests or charges evidenced by registration, publication or filing pursuant to the Civil Code of Québec, the **[Province(s)]** Personal Property Security Act, or any other applicable legislation providing for a security interest in personal or movable property, excluding however, the permitted encumbrances, easements and restrictive covenants listed on Schedule "B" hereto (the "**Permitted Encumbrances**") and, for greater certainty, **ORDERS** that all of the Encumbrances affecting or relating to the Purchased Assets, other than the Permitted Encumbrances, be expunged and discharged as against the Purchased Assets, in each case effective as of the applicable time and date of the Certificate.

[12] **ORDERS** and **DECLARES** that upon the issuance of the Certificate, the rights and obligations of the Vendor under the Agreements listed on **Schedule "C"** hereto (the "**Assigned Agreements**") are assigned to the Purchaser **[and ORDERS that all monetary defaults of the Debtor in relation to the Assigned Agreements – other than those arising by reason only of the insolvency of the Debtor, the commencement of proceedings under the [BIA/CCAA] or the failure to perform non-monetary obligations - shall be remedied on or before ●].**

[13] **DECLARES** that upon issuance of the Certificate, the Transaction shall be deemed to constitute and shall have the same effect as a sale under judicial authority as per the provisions of the *Code of Civil Procedure* and a forced sale as per the provisions of the *Civil Code of Quebec*. **[This paragraph is only required when the sale is done by a Receiver]**

[14] **ORDERS and DIRECTS** the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** to serve a copy of this Order to every party to the Assigned Agreements.

[15] **ORDERS and DIRECTS** the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** to file with the Court a copy of the Certificate, forthwith after issuance thereof**.**

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CANCELLATION OF SECURITY REGISTRATIONS[789]

For Quebec Property:

[16] ***ORDERS*** *the Land Registrar of the Land Registry Office for the Registry Division of ●, upon presentation of the Certificate in the form appended as Schedule "**A**" and a certified copy of this Order accompanied by the **required** application for registration and upon payment of the prescribed fees, to publish this Order and (i) to make an entry on the Land Register showing the Purchaser as the owner of the immovable property identified in Schedule "●" hereto (the "**Quebec Real Property**") and (ii) to cancel any and all Encumbrances on Quebec Real Property (other than Permitted Encumbrances), including, without limitation, the following registrations published at the said Land Registry Office:*

- **[provide details of security/encumbrances to be discharged]**

[17] ***ORDERS*** *the Quebec Personal and Movable Real Rights Registrar, upon presentation of the required form with a true copy of this Order and the Certificate, to **[reduce the scope of]** or **[strike]** the registrations number* **[provide details of security/encumbrances to be discharged]** *in connection with the Purchased Asset in order to allow the transfer to the Purchaser of the Purchased Assets free and clear of such registrations.*

For Ontario Property:

[18] ***ORDERS*** *that upon registration in the Land Registry Office*

(a) ***[NTD: For Land Titles System]:*** *for the Land Titles Division of ● of an Application for Vesting Order in the form prescribed by the Land Registration Reform Act (Ontario), including a law statement confirming that the Certificate has been filed, the Land Registrar is hereby directed to enter the Purchaser as the owner of the subject real property identified in **Schedule "●"** (the "**Ontario Real Property**") hereto in fee simple, and is hereby directed to delete and expunge from title to the ● ● Real Property all of the Encumbrances, which for the sake of clarity do not include the Permitted Encumbrances listed on Schedule B;*

(b) ***[NTD: For Land Registry System]:*** *for the Registry Division of ● of a Vesting Order in the form prescribed by the Land Registration Reform Act (Ontario), including a law statement confirming that the Certificate has been filed, the Land*

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7 This Model Order provides a model for Quebec Courts to effect the vesting of assets in the Province of Quebec as well as in other Canadian provinces. In each province other than Quebec, the provisions of the Model Order dealing with registration of title and the discharge of encumbrances will have to be adjusted to refer to the appropriate registry and related offices and the appropriate terminology. Province-specific orders are identified in this Model Order. While the Model Order contains proposed language, verifications with lawyers in the relevant jurisdiction is advisable.

8 Land registries in both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada may be consulted prior to the issuance of a vesting order so as to validate the language of the proposed orders relating to said land registries. This procedure, known as a "pre-validation procedure" in Quebec, is recommended so as to ensure that the vesting order is properly registered without undue delay after its issuance.

9 The registration of a vesting order with a land registry may be subject to statutory delays. For instance, in Quebec, land registrars require the expiry of the delay for appeal before a judgment cancelling a registration can be published.

Registrar is hereby directed to record such Vesting Order in respect of the subject real property identified in ***Schedule "●"*** *(the "* ***Ontario Real Property****"), which for the sake of clarity do not include the Permitted Encumbrances listed on Schedule B;*

[19] ***[NTD: For Movable Assets]: ORDERS*** *that upon the issuance of the Certificate, the Vendor shall be authorized to take all such steps as may be necessary to effect the discharge of all Encumbrances registered against the Purchased Assets, including filing such financing change statements in the Ontario Personal Property Registry ("****OPPR****") as may be necessary, from any registration filed against the Vendor in the OPPR, provided that the Vendor shall not be authorized to effect any discharge that would have the effect of releasing any collateral other than the Purchased Assets, and the Vendor shall be authorized to take any further steps by way of further application to this Court.*

For British Columbia Property:

[20] ***[NTD: For Immovable Assets]: ORDERS*** *the British Colombia Registrar of Land Titles (the "****BC Registrar****"), upon the registration in the Land Title Office for the Land Title District of ● of a certified copy of this Order, together with a letter from* ***[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor's counsel]****, solicitors for the* ***[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]****, authorizing registration of this Order,*

*(a) to enter the Purchaser as the owner of the lands, as identified in Schedule "●" hereto (the "****BC Real Property****"), together with all buildings and other structures, facilities and improvements located thereon and fixtures, systems, interests, licenses, rights, covenants, restrictive covenants, commons, ways, profits, privileges, rights, easements and appurtenances to the said hereditaments belonging, or with the same or any part thereof, held or enjoyed or appurtenant thereto, in fee simple in respect of the BC Real Property; and*

(b) having considered the interest of third parties, to discharge, release, delete and expunge from title to the BC Real Property all of the registered Encumbrances except for those listed in Schedule "●".

[21] ***[NTD: For Immovable Assets]: DECLARES*** *that it has been proven to the satisfaction of this Court on investigation that the title of the Purchaser in and to the BC Real Property is a good, safe holding and marketable title and directs the BC Registrar to register indefeasible title in favour of the Purchaser as aforesaid.*

[22] ***[NTD: For Movable Assets]: ORDERS*** *that upon the issuance of the Certificate, the Vendor shall be authorized to take all such steps as may be necessary to effect the discharge of all Encumbrances registered against the Purchased Assets, including filing such financing change statements in the British Columbia Personal Property Security Registry (the "****BC PPR****") as may be necessary, from any registration filed against the Vendors in the BC PPR, provided that the Vendors shall not be authorized to effect any discharge that would have the effect of releasing any collateral other than the Purchased Assets, and the Vendors shall be authorized to take any further steps by way of further application to this Court.*

For New Brunswick Property:

[23] ***[NTD: For Immovable Assets]: ORDERS*** *that upon registration in the Land Registry Office for the Registry Division of ● of an Application for Vesting Order in the form prescribed by the Registry Act (New Brunswick) duly executed by the* ***[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]****, the Land Registrar is hereby directed to enter the Purchaser as the owner of the subject real property identified in* ***Schedule "●"*** *(the "****NB Real Property****") in fee simple, and is hereby directed to delete and expunge from title to the NB Real Property, all of the Encumbrances, other than the Permitted Encumbrances.*

[24] ***[NTD: For Movable Assets]: ORDERS*** *that upon the issuance of the Certificate, the Vendor shall be authorized to take all such steps as may be necessary to effect the discharge of all Encumbrances registered against the Purchased Assets, including filing such financing change statements in the New Brunswick Personal Property Registry (the "****NBPPR****") as may be necessary, from any registration filed against the Vendor in the NBPPR, provided that the Vendor shall not be authorized to effect any discharge that would have the effect of releasing any collateral other than the ● Assets, and the Vendor shall be authorized to take any further steps by way of further application to this Court.*

****

NET PROCEEDS

[25] **ORDERS** that the net proceeds[10] from the sale of the Purchased Assets (the "**Net Proceeds**") shall be remitted to the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** and shall be distributed in accordance with applicable legislation.

[26] **ORDERS** that for the purposes of determining the nature and priority of the Encumbrances, the Net Proceeds from the sale of the Purchased Assets shall stand in the place and stead of the Purchased Assets, and that upon payment of the Purchase Price (as defined in the Purchase Agreement) by the Purchaser, all Encumbrances except for the Permitted Encumbrances shall attach to the Net Proceeds with the same priority as they had with respect to the Purchased Assets immediately prior to the sale, as if the Purchased Assets had not been sold and remained in the possession or control of the person having that possession or control immediately prior to the sale.

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

[27] **ORDERS** that, pursuant to sub-section 7(3)(c) of the *Canada Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* or any similar provision of any applicable provincial legislation, the Receiver is authorized and permitted to disclose and transfer to the Purchaser all human resources and payroll information in the Company's records pertaining to the Debtor's past and current employees, including personal information of those employees listed on Schedule "●" to the Purchase Agreement. The Purchaser shall maintain and protect the privacy of such information and shall be

[10] The Motion and related draft order should identify the disposition costs and any other costs which should be paid from the gross sale proceeds, to arrive at "Net Proceeds".

entitled to use the personal information provided to it in a manner which is in all material respects identical to the prior use of such information by the Debtor;[11] **[NOTE: It is desirable to obtain specific evidence in order to convince the Tribunal of the necessity of this clause]**;

VALIDITY OF THE TRANSACTION

[28] **ORDERS** that notwithstanding:

(i) the pendency of these proceedings;

(ii) any petition for a receiving order now or hereafter issued pursuant to the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* ("**BIA**") and any order issued pursuant to any such petition; or

(iii) the provisions of any federal or provincial legislation;

the vesting of the Purchased Assets contemplated in this Order, as well as the execution of the Purchase Agreement pursuant to this Order, are to be binding on any trustee in bankruptcy that may be appointed, and shall not be void or voidable nor deemed to be a preference, assignment, fraudulent conveyance, transfer at undervalue or other reviewable transaction under the BIA or any other applicable federal or provincial legislation, as against the Vendor, the Purchaser **[or the Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]**.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

[29] **DECLARES** that, subject to other orders of this Court, nothing herein contained shall require the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** to occupy or to take control, or to otherwise manage all or any part of the Purchased Assets. The **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** shall not, as a result of this Order, be deemed to be in possession of any of the Purchased Assets within the meaning of environmental legislation, the whole pursuant to the terms of the **[BIA/CCAA]**;

[30] **DECLARES** that no action lies against the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** by reason of this Order or the performance of any act authorized by this Order, except by leave of the Court. The entities related to the **[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** or belonging to the same group as the Receiver shall benefit from the protection arising under the present paragraph;

GENERAL

[31] **ORDERS AND DECLARES** that the Transaction is exempt from the application of the *Bulk Sales Act* (Ontario).**[NOTE: It is desirable to obtain specific evidence in order to convince the Tribunal of the necessity of this clause] [Ontario - Adapt for other *common law* Provinces where applicable]**

[11] This paragraph may not be necessary depending on the nature of the Purchased Assets.

[32] **ORDERS** that the Purchaser or the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** shall be authorized to take all steps as may be necessary to effect the discharge of the Encumbrances.

[33] **ORDERS** that the Purchase Agreement be kept confidential and under seal until the earlier of a) the closing of the Transaction; or b) further order of this Court.

[34] **DECLARES** that this Order shall have full force and effect in all provinces and territories in Canada;

[35] **DECLARES** that the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** shall be authorized to apply as it may consider necessary or desirable, with or without notice, to any other court or administrative body, whether in Canada, the United States of America or elsewhere, for orders which aid and complement the Order and, without limitation to the foregoing, an order under Chapter 15 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, for which the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** shall be the foreign representative of the Debtor. All courts and administrative bodies of all such jurisdictions are hereby respectfully requested to make such orders and to provide such assistance to the **[Vendor/Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]** as may be deemed necessary or appropriate for that purpose;

[36] **REQUESTS** the aid and recognition of any court or administrative body in any Province of Canada and any Canadian federal court or administrative body and any federal or state court or administrative body in the United States of America and any court or administrative body elsewhere, to act in aid of and to be complementary to this Court in carrying out the terms of the Order;

[37] **ORDERS** the provisional execution of the present Order notwithstanding any appeal and without the requirement to provide any security or provision for costs whatsoever;

THE WHOLE [WITH/WITHOUT] COSTS.

_____

●, J.S.C.

●

Attorneys for ●

SCHEDULE "A"

DRAFT CERTIFICATE OF THE [RECEIVER/ TRUSTEE/MONITOR]

CANADA

PROVINCE OF QUEBEC
DISTRICT OF MONTRÉAL

S U P E R I O R C O U R T
Commercial Division

File: No: 500-11-●

IN THE MATTER OF ●:

●

Debtor

-and-

●

[Petitioner]

-and-

●

[Receiver/Trustee/Monitor]

●

CERTIFICATE OF THE [RECEIVER/TRUSTEE/MONITOR]

RECITALS:

WHEREAS on ●, the Superior Court of Quebec (the "**Court**") issued a ● order (the "● **Order**") pursuant to the ● (the "**Act**") in respect of ● (the "**Petitioners**"); **[NTD: refer to BIA notice of intention/proposal if applicable]**

WHEREAS pursuant to the terms of the **[● Order/NOI]**¶, ● (the "**[Receiver/Trustees/Monitor]**") was named **[Receiver/Trustees/Monitor]** of the Petitioner; and

WHEREAS on ●, the Court issued an Order (the "**Vesting Order**") thereby, *inter alia*, authorizing and approving the execution by the Petitioner of an agreement entitled ● *Agreement* (the "**Purchase Agreement**") by and between ●, as vendor (the "**Vendor**") and ●

as purchaser (the "**Purchaser**"), copy of which was filed in the Court record, and into all the transactions contemplated therein (the "**Transaction**") with such alterations, changes, amendments, deletions or additions thereto, as may be agreed to with the consent of the **[Receiver/Trustees/Monitor]**.

WHEREAS the Vesting Order contemplates the issuance of this Certificate of the **[Receiver/Trustees/Monitor]** once the (a) the Purchase Agreement has been executed and delivered; and (b) the Purchase Price (as defined in the Purchase Agreement) has been paid by the Purchaser; and (c) and all the conditions to the closing of the Transaction have been satisfied or waived by the parties thereto.

THE [RECEIVER/TRUSTEES/MONITOR] CERTIFIES [THAT IT HAS BEEN ADVISED BY THE VENDOR AND THE PURCHASER AS TO] THE FOLLOWING:

(a) the Purchase Agreement has been executed and delivered;

(b) the Purchase Price (as defined in the Purchase Agreement) payable upon the closing of the Transaction and all applicable taxes have been paid; and

(c) all conditions to the closing of the Transaction have been satisfied or waived by the parties thereto.

This Certificate was issued by the **[Receiver/Trustees/Monitor]** at ____ **[TIME]** on _____ **[DATE].**

● in its capacity as ●, and not in its personal capacity.

Name: _____

Title: _____

*****

SCHEDULE "B"

PERMITTED ENCUMBRANCES

SCHEDULE "C"

ASSIGNED AGREEMENTS

ONGLET 7

Par. 45-46,
71 & 72

CITATION: Aquino v. Aquino, 2021 ONSC 7797
COURT FILE NO.: CV-19-00613382-00CL
DATE: 20211125

SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE - ONTARIO

RE: JOHN AQUINO, Applicant

AND:

RALPH AQUINO and 2241036 ONTARIO INC., Respondents

BEFORE: Cavanagh J.

COUNSEL: *Andrew W. MacDonald*, for moving party, The Globe and Mail Inc.

David Ullman, *Stephen Gaudreau*, and *Alan D. Gold* for responding party John Aquino

Sharon Kour for Ralph Aquino and Steven Aquino

Evan Cobb for Ernst & Young Inc., Monitor for Bondfield Construction Company Ltd.

Domenic Magisano for Crowe Soberman Inc., Receiver of 2241036 Ontario Inc.

HEARD: May 13, 2021; additional written submissions on July 26, 2021

ENDORSEMENT

Introduction

[1] The moving party, The Globe and Mail, moves for an order setting aside the Order of Conway J. dated May 24, 2019 which sealed certain materials so that they are added to the public court file and are made accessible to the public.

[2] John Aquino opposes the motion and submits that the sealing order was properly made and should not be set aside or varied.

[3] For the following reasons, I conclude that the Order of Conway J. sealing certain materials should be set aside.

Factual Background

The Underlying Proceeding

[4] The underlying proceeding was commenced on or about January 28, 2019 by John Aquino as an application to wind up and liquidate 2241036 Ontario Inc. ("224 Ontario"), a single-purpose real estate holding entity of which he is a 50% shareholder. John's application was commenced after he was removed as President of Bondfield in October 2018 and replaced by his brother, Steven Aquino.

[5] On or about March 2, 2019, Ralph Aquino, a respondent and John's father, brought a cross-application for, among other things, an order removing John as a shareholder and director of 224 Ontario.

[6] I refer to John Aquino, Steven Aquino and Ralph Aquino as "John", "Steven", and "Ralph" to avoid confusion and for convenience.

[7] On March 18, 2019, Steven swore a supplementary affidavit (the "Supplementary Affidavit") containing invoices relating to Bondfield Construction Company Limited, including its affiliates and subsidiaries (the "Bondfield Group"), and its vendors and contractors. The Bondfield Group is a business owned and operated by the Aquino family, and was a leading design-build and general construction company providing services to both public and private sector clients, including many public-private partnerships.

[8] In addition to the invoices and information relating to the Bondfield Group, the Supplementary Affidavit also makes reference to certain surreptitiously recorded recordings and transcripts. The Supplementary Affidavit states that the audio files "are currently being transcribed by a certified reporting service". The Supplementary Affidavit states: "our lawyers are requesting a sealing order in this proceeding because the dissemination of the issues herein may have an impact on the Bondfield Group."

[9] The Supplementary Affidavit was served on John's counsel based on the parties' agreement that it would be confidential pending a sealing order.

[10] The Globe and Mail has reported on the activities of and events surrounding Bondfield and related companies over the last several years.

[11] This reporting began after Bondfield underwent a period of rapid expansion in 2014 and 2015, when it was awarded five public infrastructure contracts by the Crown agency Infrastructure Ontario with a total value of $844.3 million, including a redevelopment project at Toronto's Saint Michael's Hospital ("SMH").

[12] John was Bondfield's President and CEO during its period of expansion.

[13] In 2015 and 2016, The Globe and Mail published a series of articles about the procurement process that led to Bondfield being awarded the SMH project, including regarding a

potential conflict of interest related to certain business ties between John Aquino and a senior executive at SMH.

[14] Over time, Bondfield ran into difficulties on numerous projects and, by September 2018, construction was delayed on at least nine of its public infrastructure projects, and at least three other Bondfield contracts had been terminated.

[15] In March 2019, Bondfield and certain related companies (the "Bondfield Group") commenced an application under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* ("*CCAA*").

[16] On April 3, 2019, Ernst & Young Inc. was appointed Monitor of the Bondfield Group.

[17] In the Bondfield *CCAA* proceeding, forensic investigations of the books and records of the Bondfield Group have been judicially authorized and undertaken.

[18] The Bondfield Group's financial difficulties and the forensic investigations into its books and records have led to numerous court proceedings, including transfer at undervalue applications decided by Dietrich J. relating to false invoicing schemes. As reported in The Globe and Mail lawsuits have also been commenced against two of Bondfield's auditors in connection with alleged fraud at Bondfield.

[19] In addition, Zurich Insurance Co. Ltd. ("Zurich") has commenced an action seeking rescission of surety bonds worth hundreds of millions of dollars that it issued in connection with the SMH project, alleging that during the procurement process, John Aquino and the senior SMH executive "were colluding to ensure that [Bondfield] would submit an artificially low bid."

The May 24, 2019 Sealing Order of Conway J.

[20] On April 2, 2019, Conway J. made an endorsement in respect of a case conference to be held that states:

> CC scheduled before me on April 15/19 2 HRS – 10 am - confirmed. Directions provided to counsel Re delivery of certain materials directly to me (OH – Judges Admin) on April 12/19 for consideration at the CC.

[21] John filed a Notice of Motion dated April 29, 2019 for a motion for an order sealing the Materials. The Notice of Motion requests an Order sealing the Supplementary Affidavit, "the audio files and/or recordings, and the transcripts of the audio files referred to in the Supplementary Affidavit" pending the determination of the Application or further order of the Court.

[22] On April 30, 2019, Conway J. made a further endorsement: "Motion for sealing order to be heard by me on May 17 – 1 HR confirmed".

[23] By letter dated May 21, 2019, counsel for John Aquino wrote to Justice Conway and provided a form of order for execution and he offered to attend before her on May 24, 2019 to speak to the matter.

[24] On May 24, 2019, counsel for John appeared before Conway J. No other counsel attended. A factum had been filed stating that the respondents filed the supplementary affidavit of Steven Aquino and various recordings and transcripts, which the applicant seeks to have sealed.

[25] No notice was given to *The Globe and Mail* or other media of the application for the Sealing Order prior to its issuance.

[26] On May 24, 2019 when the Sealing Order was made, counsel for John Aquino appeared before Conway J. On that day, Conway J. issued an endorsement that reads:

> All parties have agreed that the Supp Aff of S. Aquino sworn March 18/19 & Recordings and Transcripts be sealed pending further court order. The Monitor of Bondfield has reviewed the form of order & does not oppose. I am satisfied that the parties have agreed that these materials were to be treated as confidential and that it includes TP information that they identify as confidential. I am satisfied that the Sierra Club test is met & that only a specific restricted part of the court file is subject to this sealing order on the basis of the parties' agt re confidentiality. OTG as signed by me. This is all subject to further order as provided in para 3 of the order.

[27] The Sealing Order reads:

> **THIS MOTION** made by the Applicant for an Order sealing the Supplementary Affidavit of Steven Aquino, sworn March 18, 2019 ("**Supplementary Affidavit**") and certain recordings and transcripts referred to therein ("**Recordings and Transcripts**"), was heard this day at 330 University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario.
>
> **ON READING** the Affidavit of John Aquino, sworn January 29, 2019, the Supplementary Affidavit, the Reply Affidavit of John Aquino, sworn April 29, 2019, and the affidavit of Alexandra Teodorescu , sworn May 13, 2019, and on being advised that this form of Order has been reviewed by the Monitor in the Bondfield CCAA Proceedings (**Court File No. CV-19-615560-00CL**) (the "**Monitor**") and on hearing the submissions of counsel for the Applicant, and all other counsel present as set out on the counsel slip, and no one appearing for any other person although duly served as appears from the affidavit of service of Ariyana Botejue, filed,
>
> **SEALING OF MATERIALS**

1. **THIS COURT ORDERS** that the Supplementary Affidavit and the Recordings and Transcripts (collectively, the "Materials") be sealed, kept confidential and not form part of the public record, but rather be placed, separate and apart from all other contents of the Court file, in a sealed envelope attached to a notice which sets out the title of these proceedings and a statement that the contents are subject to a sealing order.

2. **THIS COURT ORDERS** the nothing in this Order shall prevent the Monitor or any person currently in possession of the Materials from reviewing and investigating the Materials and the matters set out therein, from providing the Materials to any governmental authority or from filing the Materials in the Bondfield CCAA Proceeding or any other proceeding on a confidential basis pending an Order of the Court in the Bondfield CCAA Proceeding, or other proceeding, as to the sealing of the Materials in such proceeding.

3. **THIS COURT ORDERS** that, this Order may be varied and the sealing of the Materials lifted in whole or in part, on reasonable notice to the parties, by and Order of a Judge of the Commercial List.

[28] According to the Sealing Order, Conway J. reviewed three publicly-filed affidavits before ordering that the materials be sealed:

a) the Affidavit of John Aquino sworn January 29, 2019;

b) the Reply Affidavit of John Aquino sworn April 29, 2019; and

c) the Affidavit of Alexandra Teodorescu sworn May 13, 2019.

[29] In his Reply Affidavit, John states that counsel for the Respondents has produced several hours of recordings and transcripts in which Steven purported to record conversations with him without his knowledge or permission. John states in his affidavit that the recordings appear to deal with alleged accounting issues related to Bondfield. John expresses his view in the affidavit that the recordings "to the extent they are accurate (which is not admitted) are irrelevant to this proceeding and I have not made any serious effort to review or consider them at this time in any detail". He states that to the extent he has reviewed the recordings "I note that in the recordings Steven badgers me to try to elicit incriminating statements, but in fact the only succeeds in extracting various contradictory answers which are proof of nothing other than his illicit agenda and the level of deceit he is prepared to engage in for his purposes". John states in the Affidavit that the recordings "did not accurately reflect the full extent of the conversations that took place in the relevant time period between myself, Steven and Ralph" and that he believes "that the recordings may

have been edited or tampered with so that parts of the conversations have been edited out". John states that he is asking his counsel to seek to have the tapes sealed, and that a March 19 email from his counsel sets out the reasoning for this request.

[30] The March 19, 2019 email is from John's counsel to counsel for Ralph (and Steven) and is marked "With Prejudice". In this email, John's counsel asks counsel for Ralph and Steven to withdraw the affidavit in its entirety and advises that if counsel intends to proceed with the affidavit, John's counsel will provide written reply materials and cross-examine Steven on the allegations, "all of which will become part of the public record". John's counsel states "I know you intend to seek a sealing order, which we may not necessarily oppose, but I think you can be pretty certain that the Globe and Mail (who are following this matter) will be successful [in] opposing a sealing order on the basis of the public interest in this matter".

[31] On May 13, 2019, a lawyer in the firm representing John swore an affidavit to attach "[t]he complete email chain in relation to sealing the Supplemental Affidavit of Steven Aquino, sworn March 18, 2019, and related recordings and transcripts" because the chain attached to John's reply affidavit was incomplete. This email correspondence indicates that the recordings and transcripts in issue were made available to John and his counsel on March 21, 2019, after a confidentiality undertaking was provided. Counsel for Steven and Ralph indicated in an email dated March 21, 2019 that they would be including the transcripts in a supplementary affidavit.

References to Sealing Order in other proceedings

[32] On the day the Sealing Order was issued, the Monitor filed its Second Report in the Bondfield CCAA proceeding. In this Report, referred to Steven's March 18, 2019 affidavit and states that "the information in the March 18 Affidavit is directly relevant to the above-noted investigation [forensic investigations into the Bondfield Group], and that the Monitor is of the view that the information disclosed in this affidavit increases the urgency of advancing with Phase II of the investigation".

[33] Hainey J. authorized the Phase II Investigation on May 30, 2019.

[34] In October 2019, the Monitor issued its Phase II Investigation Report which is publicly accessible. Based on the Phase II Investigation, Hainey J. authorized the Monitor to commence an application against John and others to seek the recovery of amounts paid by the Bondfield Group to certain suppliers over the years. The Monitor alleged that John and others had perpetrated a false invoicing scheme involving transactions that constituted transfers at undervalue under s. 96 of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* (the "TUV Application").

[35] After the Sealing Order was granted, it was continued on consent of the parties, as set out in an Endorsement of Justice Conway dated October 8, 2019.

[36] The Sealing Order was considered by Hainey J. on August 26, 2020. On that day, Hainey J. made an endorsement in which he gave directions with respect to the application. In his

endorsement, Hainey J. referred to the Sealing Order and wrote that this affidavit "may be provided by the Monitor to the parties to this Application, to the Trustee in Bankruptcy of the Forma-Con entities, the parties to the Trustee's companion Application, to Zurich Insurance and Bridging Finance provided that such parties execute non-disclosure agreements to maintain the confidentiality of this affidavit". Justice Hainey wrote in his endorsement that this direction does not vary the Sealing Order and is subject to any further order that may be made by Justice Conway.

[37] No separate sealing order was made in the TUV application.

[38] On March 19, 2021, Dietrich J. released her decision in the TUV Application (and in a parallel application) and made a number of findings including that John "exercised total control over the false invoicing schemes, in respect of which he tacitly acknowledged his wrongdoing". This decision has been appealed.

Contents of Court File and Statement of Agreed Facts

[39] When this motion first came before me, I granted an adjournment so that the parties could inspect the court file to determine what materials had been sealed and were the subject of the Sealing Order.

[40] On the return of the motion, the moving party and John Aquino submitted a Statement of Agreed Facts by which they agreed, for purposes of this motion only, that the following facts may be accepted by the Court as true without the necessity of tendering evidence as proof:

(1) On April 21, 2021, counsel to John Aquino emailed counsel to Ralph and Steven Aquino to inquire whether they recalled how the sealed materials were filed:

> Further to my voicemail just now and the recent correspondence with the Globe, after reviewing the record we are not aware of any affidavit attaching the recordings and transcript having been filed with the Court. Are you aware of one, and if so, can you send it to us with the confirmation of filing?

(2) On April 21, 2021, Sharon Kour, counsel to Ralph and Steven Aquino, by reply email advised as follows:

> I understand that a brief containing excerpts of the transcript was provided to the Court. The attached endorsement Justice Conway from the appearance on April 2, 2019, at which counsel for John Aquino were present, indicates Justice Conway provided directions to counsel regarding the delivery of confidential materials to her.
>
> I understand the brief of excerpts was walked up to Judge's reception and delivered to Justice Conway there. I am not aware if the materials would have made it into the Court file.

Attached at Tab 1 is a copy of the email chain dated April 21, 2021.

(3) On April 22, 2021, at the return of the Globe and Mail Inc.'s motion to set aside or vary the sealing order of Justice Conway dated May 24, 2019 (the "Sealing Order"), Justice Cavanagh granted an adjournment of the motion in order for the parties to inspect the sealed Court file (the "Seal Court File") to determine what documents were filed pursuant to the Sealing Order.

(4) Both counsel to the Globe and Mail Inc. and counsel to John Aquino inspected the Seal Court File.

(5) The Sealed Court File contains the following:

a) The Supplementary affidavit of Steven Aquino dated May 18, 2019, with Exhibits A to F.

b) "Excerpts from Transcripts" dated April 11, 2019, filed by Brauti Thorning LLP.

(6) For greater clarity, the Sealed Court File and the public court file do not contain the following materials:

(a) Any tape recordings;

(b) Complete transcripts of the tape recording; or,

(c) An affidavit appending the "Excerpts from Transcripts".

[41] In my reasons, I refer to the "Excerpts from Transcripts" described in paragraph 5(b) of the Statement of Agreed Facts as "Excerpts".

Evidence filed by John in response to this motion

[42] In response to this motion, John delivered the affidavit of an articling student for John's lawyer in respect of criminal matters which states that John is the subject of an ongoing investigation with respect to alleged improprieties in connection with his involvement at the Bondfield Construction Company, including allegations made against him by Steven and Ralph. John also delivered the affidavit of a legal assistant to the lawyers who are his counsel of record in the within application who appended as exhibits to her affidavit a copies of the transcripts from the examinations of Steven and Ralph in the Bondfield *CCAA* proceeding and a copy of the Endorsement of Justice Conway dated May 24, 2019.

Analysis

[43] The moving party submits that John has failed to meet the high burden that rests on a party seeking a sealing order and that the Sealing Order should be set aside.

Test for a Sealing Order

[44] After this motion was argued, the Supreme Court of Canada released its decisions in *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 SCC 25 and *MediaQMI v. Kamel*, 2021 SCC 23. I received additional written submissions from the parties in respect of these decisions.

[45] In *MediaQMI*, an order was made sealing an entire court file in a civil action alleging misappropriation of funds by the respondent. MediaQMI, a newspaper publishing company, filed a motion to unseal the court file in order to have access to the court record including any exhibits. The hearing of the motion was postponed and, in the interim period of time, the action was discontinued. The claimant tried to retrieve the exhibits it had filed, but the court staff could not find them. The respondent to the civil proceeding applied to the court for certain relief and, at the *in camera* hearing, counsel for the claimant made an oral request to retrieve the exhibits. The application judge ordered that the court file be unsealed and, with regard to the oral request to retrieve the exhibits, the application judge, relying on an article in the Quebec *Code of Civil Procedure*, authorized the claimant to retrieve the exhibits because the proceeding had been terminated by a discontinuance. The claimant retrieved the exhibits the next day. MediaQMI appealed the decision and asked the Court to order the claimant to provide a copy of the exhibits to them.

[46] Côté J., writing for the majority, concluded, at para. 48:

> Article 11 C.C.P. gives the public the right to have access to court records with the documents and exhibits they contain at the time they are consulted, subject to exceptions for confidential information. It gives "access to exhibits" only to the extent that they are in the record. Where parties are slow to retrieve their exhibits at the end of a proceeding, the exhibits will remain accessible to the public until they have been retrieved from the record or destroyed by the court clerk. But once the exhibits have been retrieved or destroyed, the public no longer has access to them.

[47] Côté J. concluded, at para. 72, that MediaQMI cannot obtain a copy of the exhibits that were in the court record at the time its "Motion to unseal" was filed.

[48] In *Sherman Estate*, a prominent couple was found dead in their home. The deaths had no apparent explanation and generated intense public interest. The estate trustees sought to stem the intense press scrutiny prompted by the events by seeking sealing orders of the probate files. The application judge sealed probate files, concluding that the harmful effects of the sealing orders were substantially outweighed by the salutary effects on privacy and physical safety concerns. The Court of Appeal allowed the appeal and lifted the sealing orders, concluding 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.

[49] Kasirer J. writing for the Court, provides an overview of the importance of the open court principle, and the circumstances where a restriction on the open court principle may be justified, at paras. 1-3:

> 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 court, all of which helps make the justice system fair and accountable.
>
> 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.
>
> Notwithstanding this presumption, exceptional circumstances do arise where competing interests justify a restriction on the open court principle. Where a discretionary order limiting constitutionally-protected openness is sought - for example, a sealing order, a publication ban, 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.

[50] Kasirer J., at para. 38, re-cast the test for discretionary limits on presumptive court openness as had been set out in *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, 2002 SCC 41:

> 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 [citation omitted].

[51] John makes two main submissions in opposition to this motion. First, he submits that the Excerpts are not properly part of the court file and should never have been accepted for filing, such that they should not be made publicly available. Second, he submits that he has established that setting aside the Sealing Order would pose a serious risk to an important public interest that outweighs the open court principle.

Are the "Excerpts" properly in the Court file?

[52] John relies on the fact that prior to the hearing of this motion, it was discovered that the sealed documents in the court file contained only the Supplementary Affidavit of Steven Aquino and the Excerpts. Importantly, despite what the parties had initially thought, Steven never filed the underlying tape recordings, complete transcripts of the tape recordings, or an affidavit appending the Excerpts. The Excerpts were delivered to Justice Conway by hand at or just before a case conference.

[53] John relies on *MediaQMI* to support his submission that, at the very least, there can be no order to "unseal", or grant access to, the underlying tape recordings or the complete transcripts of the tape recordings as they are not included in the sealed documents in the court file.

[54] John also relies on *MediaQMI* in support of its submission that on a motion to unseal documents in a court file, the Court must carefully consider what documents are part of the court record.

[55] John submits that the Excerpts were filed without an affidavit swearing to the truth and the contents of the transcripts. He submits that the Excerpts should never have been accepted for filing in their current form, and are not evidence of anything, and ought not to be part

of the court record. John submits that, as such, the Excerpts should not be made available by the Court to the media or anyone.

[56] I do not accept this submission. The Excerpts were provided to Justice Conway for her use on the hearing of John's motion for a sealing order. John's counsel attended on the motion and could have asked to inspect the materials that had been hand delivered to Conway J. and objected to their filing. The Excerpts were sealed and placed in the court file. The fact that the Excerpts may not constitute admissible evidence in a judicial proceeding does not lead to the conclusion that they should not have been accepted for filing or that they are not properly part of the Court file, as John submits.

[57] The Excerpts were filed in the Court file and properly form part of the Court file.

Has John established that unsealing the Court file poses a serious risk to an important public interest in preventing harm to a personal interest in protecting privacy and dignity?

[58] John relies on *Sherman Estate* in support of his submission that preventing harm to a personal interest in protecting privacy and dignity can be an important public interest which overrides the open court principle. John cites the following passage from the decision of Kasirer J., at para. 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 in the underlying value of individual dignity, but is also tailored to preserve the strong presumption of openness.

[59] John submits that the continuation of sealing of the Excerpts is supported by the principles in *Sherman Estate* for several reasons:

a) The Excerpts are of surreptitiously recorded private conversations of a private citizen, selected by an opponent to cast his character in an unfairly jaundiced light;

b) The Excerpts contain untested, unattested to and unproven but highly sensitive and potentially damaging alleged statements;

c) John had a reasonable expectation that his private family communications would not be recorded without his consent, which was not sought or given;

d) John was not the entity who filed the materials which are sealed. He did not have the opportunity to consider whether or not to share this information with the Court.

e) The Excerpts are wholly irrelevant to the issue of the litigation, whether or not John is or is not a 50% shareholder of certain companies.

[60] In *Sherman Estate*, the Court, at para. 46, disagreed with the submission that "an unbounded interest in privacy qualifies as an important public interest under the test for discretionary limits on court openness". However, the Court recognized that "in some of its manifestations, privacy does have social importance beyond the person most immediately concerned", and that the recognition by the Supreme Court of Canada of the public importance of privacy in various settings "sheds light on why the narrower aspect of privacy related to the protection of dignity is an important public interest". The Court accepted, at para. 47, that "[p]ersonal concerns that relate to aspects of the privacy of an individual who is before the courts can coincide with a public interest in confidentiality". The Court held, however, at para. 49, that "the public importance of privacy cannot be transposed to open courts without adaptation", and "[o]nly specific aspects of privacy interests can qualify as important public interests under *Sierra Club*".

[61] The Court, at para. 55, held that in reconciling the "dual imperatives" of preserving a "modicum of privacy" and of open courts, 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".

[62] The Court in *Sherman Estate* went on to address how to answer this question, and held that caution is required in deploying the concept of the "public importance of privacy" in the test for discretionary limits on court openness. The Court accepted, at para. 56, that "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". Kasirer J., at paras. 57-58 quoted the statement of Dickson J., as he then was, in *Attorney General of Nova Scotia v. MacIntyre*, [1982] 1 S.C.R. 175, at p. 185, that "[a]s a general rule the sensibilities of the individuals involved are no basis for exclusion of the public from the judicial proceedings", and affirmed that "[w]hile 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".

[63] Kasirer J. explained that in assessing whether there is a serious risk to an important public interest, the focus should be "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." One must not simply invoke an important interest, but must overcome the presumption of openness by showing a serious risk to this interest on the facts of a given case, a burden which "constitutes the true initial threshold on the person seeking to restrict openness". Kasirer J. held, at para. 62, that an important

public interest concerned with the protection of dignity should be understood to be seriously at risk only exceptionally, and in limited cases.

[64] John submits that the information in the Excerpts is directly related to issues in dispute in ongoing criminal investigations and civil proceedings and that setting aside the Sealing Order would hinder his ability to make a full answer and defence to the criminal proceedings or to present his case as a civil litigant. John submits that if the documents from the sealed Court file are obtained from Steven and provided to the moving party, the prejudicial effect of publication would be diminished because the information would not seem to the public as if it was coming from the Court. I do not accept that this distinction justifies overriding the open court principle. The moving party, in publishing information concerning the content of the Court file, would have obligations of fairness in its reporting, including not to mischaracterize the Excerpts as somehow bearing the Court's stamp of legitimacy.

[65] On the evidence before me, there are no criminal charges that have been brought against John that are pending. If criminal charges are brought, it is open to John to seek restrictions on publication of information to protect his *Charter* rights.

[66] I do not accept that the fact that the Excerpts relate to issues in civil litigation is sufficient to establish a serious risk to an important public interest. In this respect, I rely on *Fairview Donut Inc. v. The TDL Group Corp.*, 2010 ONSC 789, where Strathy J., as he then was, at para. 48, approved the observation of Nordheimer J., as he then was, in *Lederer v. 372116 Ontario Ltd. (c.o.b. Hemispheres International Manufacturing Co.)* (2000), 50 O.R. (3d) 282 (ONSC) that "litigation frequently involves disclosure of sensitive, embarrassing and sometimes prejudicial information, but the principle of open justice admits of limited exceptions".

[67] Although the Excerpts are portions of transcripts of allegedly recorded telephone calls and are not accompanied by an affidavit attesting to their accuracy, the fact that materials in a court file may not qualify as admissible evidence does not, in my view, justify a sealing order to protect the materials from public view. As I have noted, John brought the motion for an order sealing the Supplementary Affidavit of Steven sworn March 18, 2019 that refers to existence of audio recordings of conversations with John which are being transcribed. John's counsel appeared before Conway J. when the Sealing Order was obtained, after the Excerpts had been hand delivered to Conway J. to be used at the motion. It was open to John's counsel to find out what materials had been provided to the court for his motion and to object to the filing of these materials if he thought they should not be filed.

[68] In this case, various allegations against John in relation to his role with and actions taken in connection with the Bondfield Group are already in the public domain through court proceedings and public reporting. In *Sherman Estate*, the Court held, at para. 81, that it is appropriate to consider the extent to which the information is already in the public domain. Although the Court noted that the fact that some information is publicly available does not preclude further harm to the privacy interest by additional dissemination, I take the fact

that there has already been significant information concerning the subject matter of the Excerpts made available to the public as a factor that weighs against the conclusion that unsealing the Excerpts poses a serious risk to an important public interest.

[69] The assertion that unsealing the Excerpts may lead to disclosure of information that is disadvantageous or distressing to John, or that such disclosure may cast John's character in an unfair light and harm his reputation, is insufficient, on the evidence before me, to establish a risk to the narrow interest in privacy concerned with the protection of human dignity that qualifies as a public interest.

Has John established that the fact that the parties agreed that the Materials in respect of which the Sealing Order was sought would be kept confidential justifies the Sealing Order?

[70] John submits that Conway J. properly considered the relevant factors when the Sealing Order was made. One of these considerations was that the parties agreed to have the Materials sealed.

[71] In *Hollinger Inc. v. The Ravelston Corporation Limited*, 2008 ONCA 207, Juriansz J.A., dissenting in part, addressed the argument that the parties' wishes should influence whether a sealing order is made:

> In this case, to the extent Hollinger and the Blacks agreed the *Mareva* file should remain sealed because of the potential prejudicial effect on Mr. Black's criminal trial or because the material had been filed on an ex parte motion, these factors had already been considered by the motion judge. If these factors could provide a basis to keep the material sealed they would do so independently of the parties' wishes for confidentiality. Here, there was no suggestion of any additional reason why the parties' wishes should outweigh the open court principle. I agree with the remark of Farley J. that "Sealing orders cannot be granted merely because the parties involved agreed to have the material sealed – or 'withdrawn': *Stelco Inc. (Re)*, 2006 CanLII 1774 ()N SC), [2006] O.J. No. 277, 17 C.B.R. (5th) 95 (S.C.J.).
>
> In my view, in this case there was no basis for attaching weight to the parties' wish for confidentiality is a factor independently of the others the motion judge identified and considered.

[72] The fact that parties agree that information or documents is confidential and should not be available to the public if filed in court proceedings is clearly insufficient to justify an order sealing such documents and limiting the open court principle. If this were the case, the open-court principle could be readily circumvented by parties wishing to protect documents and information from public scrutiny.

[73] In his factum, John submits that there is nothing which prevents the moving party from speaking to Steven about the materials or from obtaining the materials from Steven directly. It appears that John does not rely on a private agreement that the materials should be kept confidential to support his submissions that the Sealing Order should not be set aside.

Has John established that the rights of third parties justifies continuation of the Sealing Order?

[74] John also submits that the rights of third parties should be considered in deciding whether or not materials in a court file should be sealed. John submits that the sealed materials contain information about third-party companies who are not parties to the litigation and whose confidential business information would be disclosed if the sealing order is lifted.

[75] The burden is on John to establish that the requirements for a sealing order are met. John points generally to the Excerpts and submits that the references in the Excerpts to third parties is sufficient to rebut the presumption of open courts and justify continuation of the Sealing Order. I disagree. John has not provided evidence that is sufficient to establish that there are interests of third parties that may be affected if the Sealing Order is set aside that are such that the strong presumption of open courts is rebutted.

Has John established that setting aside the Sealing Order poses a serious risk to an important public interest in the court not allowing itself give access to the media to scandalous and irrelevant materials?

[76] John submits that there is an important public interest in the court not allowing itself to be a clearinghouse or pathway for scandalous and irrelevant materials to be funnelled to the media without consequence to the filing party. He submits that Conway J. knew the character of the information and dealt with it appropriately in a manner which supports public faith in the administration of justice, which is an important public interest.

[77] I do not accept this submission. In *Sherman Estate*, at para. 1, the Court described the press as "the eyes and ears of the public" and confirmed that the press is free to inquire and comment on the workings of the courts.

[78] The media has full access to publicly available court files, some of which contain materials that, if disseminated widely, may harm the interests and reputations of citizens. This, however, is a necessary consequence of the open court principle. Kasirer J. held in *Sherman Estate*, at para. 1, that by protecting the open court principle, the Court enhances the fairness and accountability of the justice system.

Should the Court order alternative measures?

[79] John submits that, if the Sealing Order is not to be left in place, the Court should order alternative measures and (a) review the sealed materials, including the Excerpts, in detail and redact the portions that will irreparably harm John's dignity; and/or (b) the issue a publication ban on the materials and lift the Sealing Order.

[80] Each of these alternative measures would, in my view, impermissibly limit the open court principle. Such measures may be appropriate in some case, but John has not established on the record before me that either measure should be employed on this motion.

Conclusion

[81] The Sealing Order expressly provides that it may be varied and that it may be set aside in whole or in part by an Order of a Judge of the Commercial List. The submissions made by the moving party on this motion were not made to Conway J. when the Sealing Order was granted. The Sealing Order was made before the decision in *Sherman Estate* was released in which the Supreme Court of Canada gave significant guidance on how a request for an order limiting the open court principle should be considered, particularly where privacy interests are raised.

[82] I conclude that John has failed to establish that unsealing the Court file poses a serious risk to an important public interest. John has failed to rebut the strong presumption in favour of open courts. The Sealing Order should be set aside.

Disposition

[83] For the foregoing reasons, the Order of Conway J. dated May 24, 2019 is set aside and the documents that are subject to the Sealing Order are accessible to the public.

[84] If the parties are unable to resolve costs, they may make written submission according to a timetable to be agreed upon by counsel and provided to me for approval.

Cavanagh J.

Date: November 25, 2021

ONGLET 8

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Law of Canada, 4th Edition § 7:61

Bankruptcy and Insolvency Law of Canada, 4th Edition
The Honourable Mr. Justice Lloyd W. Houlden, Mr. Justice Geoffrey B. Morawetz, Dr. Janis P. Sarra

Part I. The Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act

Chapter 7. Part VI Bankrupts

III. Sections 161 to 167

§ 7:61. Sealing Orders

Generally, the court will not make sealing orders in bankruptcy proceedings. The courts operate on the "open courts" principle, unless expressly limited by statute. The applicant bears the burden to establish that the order is necessary to prevent a serious risk to the proper administration of justice, or to the public interest in the confidentiality of an important commercial interest, because reasonable alternative measures will not prevent the risk. The court will examine statutory language to determine any scope or limits on disclosure or public access; examine the context in which application for sealing is brought; assess whether the risk in question is real and substantial and poses a serious threat to the proper administration or justice or public interest; consider whether there are any reasonable alternatives to sealing; and if sealing, consider how to limit the scope and length of time of sealed information as much as possible.

The Supreme Court of Canada has held that confidentiality of commercial information in context of judicial proceedings "should only be granted when such an order is necessary in order to prevent a serious risk to an important interest, including a commercial interest, in the context of litigation because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent the risk; and the salutary effects of the confidentiality order, including the effects on the right of civil litigants to a fair trial, outweigh its deleterious effects, including the effects on the right to free expression, which in this context includes the public interest in open and accessible court proceedings". The Court held that the risk in question must be real and substantial, in that the risk is well grounded in the evidence, and poses a serious threat to the commercial interest in question. In order to qualify as an "important commercial interest", the interest in question cannot merely be specific to the party requesting the order; the interest must be one that can be expressed in terms of public interest in confidentiality. The Court held that "reasonably alternative measures" requires the judge to consider not only whether reasonable alternatives to a confidentiality order are available, but also to restrict the order as much as is reasonably possible while preserving the commercial interest in question: Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance) (2002), 2002 CarswellNat 822, 2002 CarswellNat 823, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.).

In *Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd*, the Supreme Court of Canada held that "In any constitutional climate, the administration of justice thrives on exposure to light—and withers under a cloud of secrecy. That lesson of history is enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* Section 2(b) of the *Charter* guarantees, in more comprehensive terms, freedom of communication and freedom of expression. These fundamental and closely related freedoms both depend for their vitality on public access to information of public interest. What goes on in the courts ought therefore to be, and manifestly is, of central concern to Canadians". The Court held that court proceedings are presumptively "open" in Canada and public access will be barred only when the appropriate court, in the exercise of its discretion, concludes that disclosure would subvert the ends of justice or unduly impair its proper administration: Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. v. Ontario (2005), 2005 CarswellOnt 2613, 2005 CarswellOnt 2614, [2005] 2 S.C.R. 188 (S.C.C.).

Where there was a request for a permanent sealing order of financial materials and forecasting in an insolvency restructuring proceeding, the Ontario Superior Court held that the court must always be vigilant in maintaining the principle of ensuring that the interests of justice and public awareness and scrutiny ability be maintained by having an open court system. Sealing orders cannot be granted merely because the parties involved agree to have material sealed or "withdrawn". The court held that if the

material is not relevant, then it has no juridical purpose. It should not, *ab initio*, have been included in the application record. Curtailment of public accessibility can only be justified where there is present the need to protect social values of superordinant importance. Here, the debtor had presented no evidence that having the blacked out material would cause any harm to it or to anyone privy to it. The blacked out material was never used, but once submitted to the court, the only principled basis for sealing it would be that it was truly irrelevant. In making that determination, the court should take an expansive view of relevance in order to safeguard the principle of openness of court. As the parties know more about the case, relevance becomes more focused. The court rejected permanent seal, but ordered a full unredacted copy of such affidavit should be made available for the public record: Re Stelco Inc. (2006), 2006 CarswellOnt 407, [2006] O.J. No. 277, 17 C.B.R. (5th) 95 (Ont. S.C.J. (Commercial List)).

Where a Chief Financial Officer refused an examination under s. 163, Justice Pepall of the Ontario Superior Court held that the provisions of s. 163 reflect a policy of public access, public scrutiny, and transparency. Relying on the tests set out in Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance) (2002), 2002 CarswellNat 822, 2002 CarswellNat 823, 2002 SCC 41 (S.C.C.), the court declined to grant the order. The court noted that no criminal charges had been laid, nor was there any evidence of a criminal investigation. A sealing order is contrary to the spirit and intent of Parliament and the principle of open courts. Furthermore, the trustee is obliged to fulfill its duties and report to the inspectors and the court, and a sealing order would inappropriately fetter its ability to do so: Re Rieger Printing Ink Co. (2009), 2009 CarswellOnt 959, 51 C.B.R. (5th) 85, 94 O.R. (3d) 440 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

The Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench granted authority to the receiver to sell the land, buildings and related equipment of the debtor. In doing so, the court also commented on the appropriate disclosure of confidential reports. Justice Chartier made the decision in light of the decision of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. v. Sierra Club of Canada, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.), as well as other authorities. Chartier J. found that the remaining redacted portions contained sensitive commercial information that would put the receiver at a disadvantage should the present sale not close. It followed that such disclosure could affect the interests of the creditors whose interests were central in these proceedings. Chartier J. further found that the salutary effects of non-disclosure of the redacted material outweighed the deleterious effects on the rights and interests of the applicants to have access to that material. In analyzing the law pertaining to offers, Chartier J. referenced Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp., 1991 CarswellOnt 205, 4 O.R. (3d) 1, 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1, [1991] O.J. No. 1137 (Ont. C.A.), and held that the receiver had made a sufficient effort to get the best price and had not acted improvidently. Justice Chartier also noted that the court should consider the interests of all parties, and here, concluded that there had been no unfairness in the working out of the process. In the result, Chartier J. was satisfied that the sales process conducted by the receiver and the agreement that had been submitted for court approval satisfied the principles set out in the *Soundair* decision. Chartier J. found that the receiver had acted reasonably, prudently and fairly; the sale agreement was approved and the requested vesting order was granted: Royal Bank of Canada v. Keller & Sons Farming Ltd., 2016 CarswellMan 346, 39 C.B.R. (6th) 29, 2016 MBQB 77 (Man. Q.B.). In dismissing an appeal from this judgment, the Manitoba Court of Appeal held that when reviewing a sale by a court-appointed receiver, among other duties, the court should be concerned primarily with protecting the interests of the creditors. However, it is also an important consideration that the sale process should be fair and equitable, and the interests of all parties be taken into account; this includes the interests of the unsecured creditors. There is no question that it is the responsibility of the court to ensure the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained, and to ensure that there has been no unfairness in the working out of that process. In this case, however, the offer to pay unsecured creditors over time out of future profits was not realistic when the best possible offer would nonetheless result in a shortfall to secured creditors. Given the outstanding amounts owing to the secured creditors, and the amounts that would be generated from the sale of assets, there was inevitably a significant shortfall, and as a result, the secured creditors are the only parties with a material and direct commercial interest in the proceeds of the sale. Thus, it was reasonable for the receiver not to take into account the portion of the offer dealing with unsecured creditors: Royal Bank of Canada v. Keller & Sons Farming Ltd., 2016 CarswellMan 147, 39 C.B.R. (6th) 219, 2016 MBCA 46 (Man. C.A.).

The Ontario Superior Court of Justice granted a sealing order with respect to an amended settlement agreement and portions of the monitor's report. Counsel to the objecting parties had executed a confidentiality agreement and had reviewed the materials. The Court held that stakeholders could not receive the confidential information if they did not sign the confidentiality agreement: Re Crystallex International Corp., 2019 CarswellOnt 679, 2019 ONSC 408 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]). For a discussion of this judgment, see § 22:3 “Jurisdiction of Courts—Sealing Orders”.

The Alberta Court of Appeal allowed the appeal from the chambers judge's decision vacating an earlier order and approving an agreement between the receiver and a nominee of the main secured creditor for the purchase of the debtor's assets. The appeal was brought by the guarantors. The guarantors successfully argued on appeal that mutual mistake was not established on the record and that the receiver had not adhered to the *Soundair* principles. The Court also commented on the need for transparency: Jaycap Financial Ltd v. Snowdon Block Inc. (2019), 2019 CarswellAlta 160, 68 C.B.R. (6th) 7, 2019 ABCA 47 (Alta. C.A.).

The Ontario Superior Court of Justice dismissed a motion brought by the *CCAA* debtor for a sealing order of certain material in the monitor's report. Justice Hainey noted that the debtor's *CCAA* proceedings have been ongoing for more than eight years, during which time the sole business activity has been pursuing, and now enforcing, its claim against Venezuela for having unilaterally rescinded its gold mining operation contract. The arbitration award and related judgment enforcing the arbitration award are now final. Justice Hainey added that it was significant that the monitor did not fully support the debtor's request for a sealing order. Section 10(3) of the *CCAA* governs the issue of whether there should be a sealing order, and the tests in Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance), 2002 CarswellNat 822, 2002 SCC 41, [2002] S.C.J. No. 42, 287 N.R. 203, (*sub nom. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. v. Sierra Club of Canada)* [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.), specify that in order to grant a sealing order, the court must be satisfied that a) the sealing order is necessary to prevent a real and substantial serious risk to an important commercial interest, well-grounded in the evidence; b) there must be no other reasonable alternative to the sealing order and the order, if granted, must be restricted as much as reasonably possible; and c) the salutary effects of the sealing order must outweigh its deleterious effects including its effect on the open-court principle. The onus is on the debtor to satisfy the court that the criteria are met. The Court was unable to conclude that disclosure of the information would be harmful to the debtor's commercial interests: Re Crystallex International Corporation, 2020 CarswellOnt 9120, 2020 ONSC 3434 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

Justice Koehnen of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice was satisfied that a sealing order met the requirements set out in *Sherman Estate v. Donovan*, 2021 CarswellOnt 8339, 2021 SCC 25 (S.C.C.), noting the following: “Disclosing the confidential information protects a serious public interest, namely the interest of the two stakeholders to receive as much for their assets as possible. If that information were disclosed and the current proposal did not proceed, publication of the information could impair the value that the shareholders are able to receive for their assets in any subsequent transaction. The extent of the sealing is limited purely to the commercial terms on which the assets are being sold. The benefits of sealing that information outweigh the harm that would be caused if it were publicly disclosed”: Randhawa v. Randhawa, 2021 CarswellOnt 14685, 2021 ONSC 7065 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]).

The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) held that the open court principle represents a central feature of a liberal democracy that helps make the justice system fair and accountable, protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression, and it is essential to the proper functioning of Canadian democracy. The SCC affirmed Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance), 2002 CarswellNat 822, 2002 SCC 41, [2002] S.C.J. No. 42, [2002] 2 S.C.R. 522 (S.C.C.) and further strengthened the tests, finding there is a strong presumption in favour of open courts, and it is a high bar for an applicant to establish that the benefits of an order restricting openness outweigh its negative effects. The SCC affirmed the *Sierra Club* two-step inquiry involving the necessity and proportionality of the proposed order; however, it clarified that the test rests upon three core prerequisites that a person or party seeking such a limit must show: they must establish that court openness poses a serious risk to an important public interest; the order sought is necessary to prevent this serious risk to the identified interest because reasonably alternative measures will not prevent this risk; and, 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, properly be ordered, such that openness can be shown to meaningfully strike at the individual's biographical core in a manner that threatens their integrity: Sherman Estate v. Donovan, 2021 CarswellOnt 8339, 2021 SCC 25, [2021] S.C.J. No. 25 (SCC).

Relying on Sherman Estate v. Donovan, 2021 CarswellOnt 8339, 2021 SCC 25, [2021] S.C.J. No. 25 (SCC), the Ontario Superior Court of Justice granted a motion brought by a national newspaper to set aside a sealing order. Justice Cavanagh held that the excerpts were filed in the court file and properly form part of the court file. Justice Cavanagh did not accept that the fact that the excerpts related to issues in civil litigation was sufficient to establish a serious risk to an important public interest.

On the evidence, there were no criminal charges that had been brought against "J" that were pending and if criminal charges are brought, it would be open for him to seek restrictions on the publication of information to protect his *Charter* rights. Justice Cavanagh held that the assertion that unsealing the excerpts may lead to disclosure of information that was disadvantageous or distressing to J, or that such disclosure may cast J's character in an unfair light and harm his reputation, was insufficient, on the evidence, to establish a risk to the narrow interest in privacy concerned with the protection of human dignity that qualifies as a public interest. Justice Cavanagh also held that the fact that the parties agreed that information would be kept confidential does not justify a sealing order, as the open court principle could be readily circumvented by parties wishing to protect documents and information from public scrutiny. Justice Cavanagh concluded that J had failed to establish that unsealing the court file posed a serious risk to an important public interest and had failed to rebut the strong presumption in favour of open courts: Aquino v. Aquino, 2021 CarswellOnt 17491, 2021 ONSC 7797 (Ont. S.C.J.).

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