

COURT FILE NUMBER 2101-05682

COURT COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH OF ALBERTA

JUDICIAL CENTRE CALGARY

PLAINTIFF ATB FINANCIAL

DEFENDANTS W.A. GRAIN HOLDINGS INC., 1309497 ALBERTA LTD. (o/a W.A. GRAIN & PULSE SOLUTIONS), NEW LEAF ESSENTIALS (WEST) LTD., NEW LEAF ESSENTIALS (EAST) LTD., and 1887612 ALBERTA LTD.

APPLICANT BDO CANADA LIMITED, in its capacity as receiver and manager of W.A. GRAIN HOLDINGS INC., 1309497 ALBERTA LTD. (o/a W.A. GRAIN & PULSE SOLUTIONS), NEW LEAF ESSENTIALS (WEST) LTD., NEW LEAF ESSENTIALS (EAST) LTD., and 1887612 ALBERTA LTD.

DOCUMENT **BRIEF OF THE RECEIVER**

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Justice Dario
 COM
 Sep 23, 2021



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A. INTRODUCTION

1. This Brief is submitted on behalf of BDO Canada Limited in its capacity as receiver (the “**Receiver**”) of the Debtors, W.A. Grain Holdings Inc., 1309497 Alberta Ltd. (o/a W.A. Grain & Pulse Solutions) (“**130 Alberta**”), New Leaf Essentials (West) Ltd., New Leaf Essentials (East) Ltd., and 1887612 Alberta Ltd. (collectively, “**WA Grain**” or the “**Debtors**”), in support of its application (the “**Application**”) for approval of the following:
 - (a) proposed sale transaction of 130 Alberta’s grain processing plant located in Bowden, Alberta (the “**Bowden Plant**”) pursuant to the terms of the Asset Purchase Agreement (the “**GFI APA**”)¹ between the Receiver and Global Food and Ingredients Inc. (“**GFI**”);
 - (b) proposed sale transaction of 130 Alberta’s grain processing plant and associated lands located in Bashaw, Alberta (the “**Bashaw Plant**”) pursuant to the terms of the Asset Purchase Agreement (the “**237 Alberta APA**”)² between the Receiver and 2371394 Alberta Ltd. (“**237 Alberta**”); and
 - (c) proposed sale transaction of 130 Alberta’s grain processing plants and associated lands located in Vanguard, Saskatchewan; Ponteix, Saskatchewan; and Pambrun, Saskatchewan (the “**Saskatchewan Plants**”) pursuant to the terms of the Asset Purchase Agreement (the “**GP Acres APA**”, and together with the GFI APA and 237 Alberta APA, the “**Proposed APAs**”)³ between the Receiver and GP Acres Grain Inc. (“**GP Acres**”).
2. In generating the offers for the Proposed APAs, the Receiver has complied with the Sale and Solicitation Process Order (the “**SSP Order**”), which was approved by this Honourable Court on June 10, 2021. Pursuant to the terms and timelines in the SSP Order, the Receiver marketed 130 Alberta’s grain processing plants located in Alberta and Saskatchewan and generated significant offers for their purchase. The Receiver

¹ Second Report of the Receiver, dated September 10, 2021 (“**Second Report**”), at Appendix A, and in full at Confidential Appendix 1.

² Second Report, at Appendix B, and in full at Confidential Appendix 3.

³ Second Report, at Appendix C, and in full at Confidential Appendix 5.

has satisfied all of the principles for approval of the Proposed APAs pursuant to *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair* (“**Soundair**”).⁴

3. All capitalized terms not otherwise defined herein shall have the meaning ascribed to them in the Second Report of the Receiver (the “**Second Report**”), dated September 10, 2021.

B. BACKGROUND

4. WA Grain purchased grain from producers or resellers for its processing plants located in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island. WA Grain would clean and process the grain products and then sell them across Canada, the United States, the Middle East and Asia. WA Grain’s grain products included green and yellow peas, chickpeas and lentils for human consumption and pet food.⁵
5. WA Grain owns and operates six grain processing plants in Vanguard, Saskatchewan; Ponteix, Saskatchewan; Pambrun, Saskatchewan; Bashaw, Alberta; Bowden, Alberta; and Slemon, Prince Edward Island (collectively, the “**Processing Plants**”).⁶
6. Other than the plant located in Prince Edward Island, the Processing Plants are regulated by the Canadian Grain Commission (the “**CGC**”). Through 130 Alberta, WA Grain held Primary Elevator Licences and Grain Dealer Licences issued by the CGC at each Processing Plant (collectively, the “**Grain Licences**”).⁷
7. On April 19, 2021, the CGC suspended all of the Grain Licences until April 30, 2021, restricting any movement of inventory onto or off of the Processing Plants and their respective grain elevators.⁸
8. On April 26, 2021, the Receiver was appointed the receiver and manager over all of the current and future assets, undertakings and properties of every nature and kind whatsoever, and wherever situate, including all proceeds thereof of the Debtors as set out in the April 26, 2021 receivership order of Justice Mah of the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench (the “**Receivership Order**”).⁹

⁴ *Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair* (1991), 83 DLR (4th) 76 (Ont CA) at paragraph 16 [TAB 1]

⁵ Second Report, at para 5.

⁶ Second Report, at para 5.

⁷ Second Report, at para 6.

⁸ Second Report, at para 7.

⁹ Second Report, at para 1.

9. On April 30, 2021, the CGC granted 130 Alberta, through the Receiver, short term Grain Licences allowing it to remove, but not accept, inventory at the Processing Plants regulated by the CGC. The CGC further stipulated, and the Receiver agreed, that the Receiver would maintain the proceeds for all inventory sold at any location, including third party locations, and elevators not regulated by the CGC, in a trust account.¹⁰

C. SALE AND SOLICITATION PROCESS

10. Pursuant to the Receivership Order, the Receiver is empowered and authorized to market, advertise, and sell the Debtors' assets with the approval of this Court.
11. On June 10, 2021, Justice Lema approved the SSP Order and the Receiver's proposed sale and solicitation process ("**SSP**"), which was intended to facilitate the sale or liquidation of all, or substantially all, of the Debtors' assets located in Alberta and Saskatchewan.¹¹
12. The SSP provided the following timeline:
 - (a) non-binding letters of intent were to be submitted to the Receiver by July 9, 2021;
 - (b) the Receiver would select Phase 2 Qualified Bidders by July 16, 2021; and
 - (c) Qualified Bidders were to submit offers by August 6, 2021.¹²
13. The Receiver implemented the SSP by:
 - (a) contacting 165 prospective purchasers to purchase, individually or together, the Bashaw Plant, the Bowden Plant and the Saskatchewan Plant;
 - (b) preparing and issuing an initial offering summary (the "**Teaser**");
 - (c) preparing and posting an advertisement notifying the public of the SSP in the national edition of *The Globe and Mail* on June 15, 2021;
 - (d) preparing a non-disclosure agreement ("**NDA**") and distributing a copy of the NDA to each prospective purchaser that requested additional information;

¹⁰ Second Report, at para 7.

¹¹ Second Report, at para 10.

¹² Second Report, at para 11.

- (e) reviewing 57 executed NDAs from prospective purchasers;
- (f) preparing and distributing a confidential information memorandum (“**CIM**”) to all parties who executed NDAs;
- (g) preparing an electronic data room to facilitate the due diligence process, which contained the Teaser and CIM, financial information related to the Processing Plants, plant-specific documents such as leases, appraisals and environmental site assessments, and a template agreement of purchase and sale;
- (h) solicited and assessed letters of intent (“**LOI**”) to determine which prospective purchasers would be invited to continue through the SSP and be deemed “Phase 2 Bidders”;
- (i) in evaluating the LOIs, the Receiver considered the proposed purchase price, conditions associated with the bid, factors that would affect certainty of closing the transaction, and the likelihood and timing of the proposed transactions;
- (j) coordinating site visits with Phase 2 Bidders;
- (k) assisting Phase 2 Bidders with completing their due diligence, including by coordinating meetings with Phase 2 Bidders and relevant stakeholders; and
- (l) reviewing and assessing binding Asset Purchase Agreements (“**APAs**”) received by August 6, 2021 (the “**Binding APA Deadline**”).¹³

(a) GFI APA

14. At the date of the Binding APA Deadline, GFI submitted the GFI APA,¹⁴ and the Receiver ultimately agreed to accept the GFI APA in light of the following factors:
- (a) GFI’s offer was the highest received for the Bowden Plant;
 - (b) the GFI APA was only conditional upon GFI entering into a satisfactory leasing agreement with the Town of Bowden and Court approval;

¹³ Second Report, at para 12.

¹⁴ Second Report, at para 13; redacted copy at Appendix “A” and full copy at Confidential Appendix 1.

- (c) before the Receiver accepted the GFI APA, GFI and the Town of Bowden confirmed they had agreed to GFI purchasing the lands from the Town of Bowden, and were working towards an agreement for purchase and sale that would be executed upon the closing of the GFI APA transaction;
- (d) GFI paid a significant deposit to the Receiver; and
- (e) ATB Financial (“**ATB**”), as the principal secured creditor with respect to the Bowden Plant, supports the Receiver’s recommendation to enter into the GFI APA, subject to the Court’s approval.¹⁵

(b) Bashaw APA

- 15. As it became apparent that the Bowden Plant and Bashaw Plant would be sold separately, the Receiver requested that prospective purchasers seeking to purchase both the Bowden Plant and Bashaw Plant allocate the price attributable to the Bashaw Plant.¹⁶
- 16. The Receiver also contacted a Phase 2 Bidder that was only interested in the Bashaw Plant, but who did not submit an APA by the Binding APA Deadline. The Receiver advised that if it was interested, to provide an APA with a purchase price and deposit as soon as possible.¹⁷ 237 Alberta provided the 237 Alberta APA and a deposit shortly thereafter.¹⁸
- 17. Upon review, the Receiver agreed to accept the 237 Alberta APA in light of the following factors:
 - (a) 237 Alberta’s offer was the highest and best offer received for the Bashaw Plant;
 - (b) the 237 Alberta APA was only conditional on the Court’s approval;
 - (c) 237 Alberta provided a significant deposit to the Receiver; and

¹⁵ Second Report, at para 14.

¹⁶ Second Report, at para 17.

¹⁷ Second Report, at para 18.

¹⁸ Second Report, at para 19; redacted copy at Appendix “B” and full copy at Confidential Appendix 3.

(d) ATB, as the principal secured creditor with respect to the Bashaw Plant, supports the Receiver's recommendation to enter into the 237 Alberta APA, subject to the Court's approval.¹⁹

(c) GP Acres APA

18. At the date of the Binding APA Deadline, GP Acres submitted an APA for the Saskatchewan Plants, with an allocation of price for the plants individually located in Pambrun, Saskatchewan; Ponteix, Saskatchewan; and Vanguard, Saskatchewan.²⁰
19. Upon review, the Receiver agreed to accept the GP Acres APA in light of the following factors:
- (a) GP Acres' offer was the highest and best received for the Saskatchewan Plants, collectively or independently;
 - (b) the GP Acres APA did not require the results or completion of a Phase II environmental assessment that was pending;
 - (c) the GP Acres APA was only conditional on the Court's approval;
 - (d) GP Acres paid a significant deposit to the Receiver; and
 - (e) the primary secured creditors, Farm Credit Canada ("FCC") and ATB, support the Receiver's recommendation to enter into the GP Acres APA, subject to the Court's approval.²¹

(d) Summary of Proposed APAs

20. All three Proposed APAs include the following:
- (a) all tangible personal property;
 - (b) the benefit of all assigned contracts, if any;
 - (c) the benefit of a real property lease, if applicable, or the transfer of real property;
- and

¹⁹ Second Report, at para 20.

²⁰ Second Report, at para 23; redacted copy at Appendix "C" and full copy at Confidential Appendix 5.

²¹ Second Report, at para 24.

(d) books and records, where available.²²

21. All Proposed APAs include a closing date of September 30, 2021 (the “**Closing Date**”), subject to the Court’s approval, and the balance of the purchase price is to be paid on the Closing Date.²³

D. ISSUE

22. The sole issue to be determined by this Honourable Court is whether the Proposed APAs should be approved.

E. LAW AND ARGUMENT

23. The Alberta Court of Appeal has recently confirmed the test in *Soundair* for whether a Court should approve an asset sale by a court-appointed receiver.²⁴
24. According to the Court in *1705221 Alberta Ltd. v Three M Mortgages Inc.* (“**170 Alberta**”), citing to *Soundair*, the test requires satisfaction of the following factors:
- (a) whether the Receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently;
 - (b) whether the interest of all parties have been considered, and not just the interests of the creditors;
 - (c) the efficacy and integrity of the process by which offers are obtained; and
 - (d) whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.²⁵
25. In *170 Alberta*, the Court further noted that when approving a sale recommended by a receiver, the Court “is not engaged in a perfunctory, rubberstamp exercise. But neither should a court reject a receiver’s recommendation on sale absent exceptional circumstances.”²⁶

²² Second Report, at para 30.

²³ Second Report, at para 31.

²⁴ *1705221 Alberta Ltd. v Three M Mortgages Inc.*, 2021 ABCA 144 [TAB 2].

²⁵ *170 Alberta*, at para 19 [TAB 2]; see also *Soundair*, at paragraph 16 [TAB 1].

²⁶ *170 Alberta*, at para 22 [TAB 2].

26. The Receiver submits that the Receiver has satisfied the foregoing *Soundair* considerations and the Proposed APAs should be approved. The Receiver will address each of these considerations individually.

(a) Receiver has made sufficient effort to obtain the best price

27. As noted in *Soundair*, when deciding whether the Receiver acted providently, the Court should examine the business judgment of the Receiver in light of the information the Receiver had when it agreed to accept an offer, and should be very cautious to decide the Receiver's conduct was improvident based on information that came to light after the Receiver's decision.²⁷

28. Further, in *Bank of Montreal v River Rentals Group Ltd. ("River Rentals")*, the Alberta Court of Appeal considered a number of additional factors to help determine if the receiver made sufficient efforts to obtain the best price:

- (a) whether the offer accepted is so low in relation to the appraised value as to be unrealistic;
- (b) whether the circumstances indicate that insufficient time was allowed for the making of bids;
- (c) whether inadequate notice of sale by bid was given; and
- (d) whether it can be said that the proposed sale is not in the best interest of either the creditors or the owner.²⁸

29. In *Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. v 1905393 Alberta Ltd.*, the Alberta Court of Appeal noted the same factors as *River Rentals* in response to an argument that the receiver's abbreviated sales process resulted in an offer that was unreasonably low in the circumstances.²⁹ However, the Court found that the receiver's decision to accept an offer out of its sales process was appropriate in the circumstances, noting:

The chambers judge was aware that the Receiver considered the risk of not accepting the approved offer to be significant. There was no assurance that a longer marketing period would generate a better offer and, in the interim, the

²⁷ *Soundair*, at paragraph 21 [TAB 1].

²⁸ *Bank of Montreal v River Rentals Group Ltd.*, 2010 ABCA 16, at para 13 ("*River Rentals*") [TAB 3].

²⁹ *Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. v 1905393 Alberta Ltd.*, 2019 ABCA 433, at para 8 ("*190 Alberta*") [TAB 4].

Receiver was incurring significant carrying costs. To ignore these circumstances would improperly call into question a receiver's expertise and authority in the receivership process and thereby compromise the integrity of a sales process and would undermine the commercial certainty upon which court-supervised insolvency sales are based.³⁰

30. In *190 Alberta*, the receiver engaged in a similar sales process as the SSP, which the Court of Appeal noted was extensive:

Even with an abbreviated period for submission of offers, the chambers judge reasonably concluded that the Receiver undertook an extensive marketing campaign, engaged a commercial realtor and construction consultant, and consulted and dialogued with the owner throughout the process, which process the appellants took no issue with, until the offers were received.³¹

31. Similarly, the SSP Order was not appealed, and the Receiver has not been advised of any concerns with its implementation of the SSP.
32. To engage with the factors in *River Rentals*: the accepted offers are a reasonable price in the circumstances; the number and quality of bids do not indicate there was insufficient time to submit bids; adequate notice of the bidding process was provided by the Receiver's public ad in *The Globe and Mail*, and as a result of the Receiver contacting 165 potential purchasers; and the Proposed APAs are in the best interests of the creditors and W.A. Grain. Both ATB and FCC support the Proposed APAs.³²
33. The Receiver submits that the evidence before this Court demonstrates that the first consideration under *Soundair* has been satisfied and the Receiver has obtained the best price possible in the circumstances and as evidenced by the Proposed APAs.

(b) The interests of all parties

34. Pursuant to *Soundair*, the primary interest in a court-approved asset sale is that of the creditor of the debtor, but it is not the only or overriding consideration.³³ Other persons whose interests require consideration include purchasers who have bargained at length and at their own expense.³⁴ This was confirmed in *170 Alberta*, where the Court considered that the successful bidder had negotiated an offer to purchase in good

³⁰ *190 Alberta*, at para 14 [TAB 4].

³¹ *190 Alberta*, at para 17 [TAB 4].

³² Second Report, at paras 14(e), 20(d), and 24(e).

³³ *Soundair*, at para 39 [TAB 1].

³⁴ *Soundair*, at para 40 [TAB 1].

faith over a year before the appeal was heard, and who continued to live with uncertainty.³⁵

35. According to *170 Alberta*, with reference to *Soundair*, it was important to consider the successful bidder's interests to avoid undermining the integrity of receivership proceedings:

I have decided this appeal in the way I have in order to assure business people who deal with court-appointed receivers that they can have confidence that an agreement which they make with a court-appointed receiver will be far more than a platform upon which others may bargain at the court approval stage. I think that persons who enter into agreements with court-appointed receivers, following a disposition procedure that is appropriate given the nature of the assets involved, should expect that their bargain will be confirmed by the court.³⁶

36. The Receiver submits that the Purchase Contracts benefit the interests of the creditors, as well as the good faith interests of the Purchasers, and approving the Purchase Contracts maintains the integrity of the receivership process.

(c) The efficacy and integrity of the sales process by which the offer was obtained

37. If the Receiver's primary concern is protecting the interests of creditors, its secondary concern is the commercial efficacy and integrity of the process by which the sale is effected.³⁷
38. The Court in *Soundair* also confirmed it is "neither logical nor practical" to compare current results to what might have been recovered in some other set of circumstances.³⁸
39. In *170 Alberta*, the Court considered this factor in light of the fact the receiver had already obtained an order approving a sales process. The Court noted that in that application, the receiver satisfied its efforts to engage an appraiser to value the lands, determine the best sales process, and why it recommended its selected listing agent.³⁹

³⁵ *170 Alberta*, at para 42 [TAB 2].

³⁶ *170 Alberta*, at para 42 [TAB 2], citing to *Soundair*, at para 69 [TAB 1].

³⁷ *Soundair*, at para 42 [TAB 1].

³⁸ *Soundair*, paragraph 45 [TAB 1].

³⁹ *170 Alberta*, at para 43 [TAB 2].

40. The Court in *170 Alberta* went on to reject the argument that the marketing process was rushed, noting the receiver fielded inquiries from 15 interest parties, toured the lands with three interested parties, posted signs visible from the highway, and ensured the listing was posted on the listing agent's website. In light of these efforts, the Court in *170 Alberta* held,

Marketing an asset is an unpredictable exercise. It is pure speculation that a longer marketing period would have generated additional, let alone better, offers.

We are not persuaded that the integrity of the sale process was compromised.⁴⁰

41. Similarly, the Receiver has followed the terms of the SSP Order, and undertaken significant efforts to market the Alberta and Saskatchewan Processing Plants.⁴¹
42. In the present circumstances, the SSP Order was approved by this Honourable Court, and at the time of its approval, no party objected in any way to how it was carried out.
43. As noted by the Court in *Grant Forest Products Inc., Re*, it is well established in insolvency law in Canada that once a process has been put in place by court order for the sale of assets of a failing business, that process should be honoured, except in extraordinary circumstances.⁴²
44. The Receiver submits that the Court should protect the integrity of the SSP approved in this case and approve the Proposed APAs that were generated through the SSP.

(d) There was no unfairness in the process

45. In deciding whether the process by which the Receiver obtained an offer was fair, courts typically avoid delving “into the minutia of the process or of the selling strategy adopted by the receiver”,⁴³ but are still responsible for making the final determination of whether the process was fair.

⁴⁰ *170 Alberta*, at paras 44-45 [TAB 2].

⁴¹ Second Report, at para 12.

⁴² *Grant Forest Products Inc., Re*, 2010 ONSC 1846, at paragraph 29 [TAB 5].

⁴³ *Soundair*, at para 49 [TAB 1].

46. In *Soundair*, the Court examined the Receiver’s negotiations to determine if there was evidence of any prejudice to the interested parties, and ultimately concluded the negotiations were fair.⁴⁴
47. The Receiver submits that it has acted reasonably, prudently, fairly and not arbitrarily in entering into the Proposed APAs. In support of its recommendation that the Court approve the Proposed APAs, the Receiver notes the following factors:
- (a) the Processing Plants were widely marketed pursuant to the Court-approved SSP;
 - (b) the offers from GFI, 237 Alberta and GP Acres (collectively, the “**Purchasers**”) are unconditional, except for obtaining Court approval, and the GFI condition of obtaining a lease with the Town of Bowden is satisfied by the proposed agreement for GFI to purchase the lands from the Town of Bowden;
 - (c) the offers from the Purchasers were the highest offers received for the respective grain processing plants, and the Receiver is of the view that they will result in the highest return to the stakeholders;
 - (d) the Purchasers each provided significant deposits; and
 - (e) ATB supports all Proposed APAs, and FCC supports the GP Acres APA.⁴⁵
48. The Receiver maintains there was no unfairness to any parties in the Court-approved process it followed, and the Proposed APAs ought to be approved.
49. Accordingly, and based upon the foregoing, the Receiver submits that all aspects of the *Soundair* principles have been satisfied in the present circumstances. The Receiver has undertaken extensive and lengthy efforts to market and sell the EQPI Properties.

⁴⁴ *Soundair*, at para 55 [TAB 1].

⁴⁵ Second Report, at para 33.

F. RELIEF REQUESTED

50. The Receiver respectfully requests that this Honourable Court approve the Proposed APAs, and grant the form of Sale Approval and Vesting Orders submitted by the Receiver.

ALL OF WHICH IS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 15th day of September 2021.

MLT AIKINS LLP

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kaitlin Ward", is written over a horizontal line.

Ryan Zahara/Kaitlin Ward
Counsel for BDO Canada Limited, in its capacity as
Receiver

LIST OF AUTHORITIES

<i>Royal Bank of Canada v Soundair Corp.</i> (1991), 83 DLR (4 th) 76 (Ont CA)	TAB 1
<i>1705221 Alberta Ltd v Three M Mortgages Inc.</i> , 2021 ABCA 144	TAB 2
<i>Bank of Montreal v River Rentals Group Ltd.</i> , 2010 ABCA 16	TAB 3
<i>Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. v 1905393 Alberta Ltd.</i> , 2019 ABCA 433	TAB 4
<i>Grant Forest Products Inc., Re</i> , 2010 ONSC 1846	TAB 5

TAB 1

1991 CarswellOnt 205
Ontario Court of Appeal

Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.

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

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

Goodman, McKinlay and Galligan J.J.A.

Heard: June 11, 12, 13 and 14, 1991

Judgment: July 3, 1991

Docket: Doc. CA 318/91

Counsel: *J. B. Berkow* and *S. H. Goldman* , for appellants Canadian Pension Capital Limited and Canadian Insurers' Capital Corporation.

J. T. Morin, Q.C. , for Air Canada.

L.A.J. Barnes and *L.E. Ritchie* , for plaintiff/respondent Royal Bank of Canada.

S.F. Dunphy and *G.K. Ketcheson* , for Ernst & Young Inc., receiver of respondent Soundair Corporation.

W.G. Horton , for Ontario Express Limited.

N.J. Spies , for Frontier Air Limited.

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

Headnote

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

Court considering its position when approving sale recommended by receiver.

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

Held:

The appeal was dismissed.

Per Galligan J.A.: When a court appoints a receiver to use its commercial expertise to sell an airline, it is inescapable that it intends to rely upon the receiver's expertise and not upon its own. The court should be reluctant to second-guess, with the benefit of hindsight, the considered business decisions made by its receiver.

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

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

The court must exercise extreme caution before it interferes with the process adopted by a receiver to sell an unusual asset. It is important that prospective purchasers know that, if they are acting in good faith, bargain seriously with a receiver and enter into an agreement with it, a court will not lightly interfere with the commercial judgment of the receiver to sell the assets to them. Per McKinlay J.A. (concurring in the result): It is most important that the integrity of procedures followed by court-appointed receivers be protected in the interests of both commercial morality and the future confidence of business persons in their dealings with receivers. In all cases, the court should carefully scrutinize the procedure followed by the receiver. While the procedure carried out by the receiver in this case was appropriate, given the unfolding of events and the unique nature of the asset involved, it may not be a procedure that is likely to be appropriate in many receivership sales.

Per Goodman J.A. (dissenting): It was imprudent and unfair on the part of the receiver to ignore an offer from an interested party which offered approximately triple the cash down payment without giving a chance to the offeror to remove the conditions or other terms which made the offer unacceptable to the receiver. The offer accepted by the receiver was improvident and unfair insofar as two creditors were concerned.

Appeal from order approving sale of assets by receiver.

Galligan J.A. :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 Over a period of several weeks following that order, negotiations directed towards the sale of Air Toronto took place between the receiver and Air Canada. Air Canada had an agreement with the receiver that it would have exclusive negotiating rights during that period. I do not think it is necessary to review those negotiations, but I note that Air Canada had complete

access to all of the operations of Air Toronto and conducted due diligence examinations. It became thoroughly acquainted with every aspect of Air Toronto's operations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (1) Did the receiver act properly when it entered into an agreement to sell Air Toronto to OEL?
- (2) What effect does the support of the 922 offer by the secured creditors have on the result?

13 I will deal with the two issues separately.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Its decision was made as a matter of business judgment *on the elements then available to it*. It is of the very essence of a receiver's function to make such judgments and in the making of them to act seriously and responsibly so as to be prepared to stand behind them.

If the court were to reject the recommendation of the Receiver in any but the most exceptional circumstances, it would materially diminish and weaken the role and function of the Receiver both in the perception of receivers and in the

perception of any others who might have occasion to deal with them. It would lead to the conclusion that the decision of the Receiver was of little weight and that the real decision was always made upon the motion for approval. That would be a consequence susceptible of immensely damaging results to the disposition of assets by court-appointed receivers.

[Emphasis added.]

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

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

[Emphasis added.]

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

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

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

24 I now turn to consider whether the price contained in the OEL offer was one which it was provident to accept. At the outset, I think that the fact that the OEL offer was the only acceptable one available to the receiver on March 8, 1991, after 10 months of trying to sell the airline, is strong evidence that the price in it was reasonable. In a deteriorating economy, I doubt that it would have been wise to wait any longer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Emphasis added.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Consideration of the Interests of all Parties

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

40 In my opinion, there are other persons whose interests require consideration. In an appropriate case, the interests of the debtor must be taken into account. I think also, in a case such as this, where a purchaser has bargained at some length and doubtless at considerable expense with the receiver, the interests of the purchaser ought to be taken into account. While it is not explicitly stated in such cases as *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg*, supra, *Re Selkirk* (1986), supra, *Re Beauty Counsellors*, supra, *Re Selkirk* (1987), supra, and (*Cameron*), supra, I think they clearly imply that the interests of a person who has negotiated an agreement with a court-appointed receiver are very important.

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

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

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

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

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

In that connection I adopt the principles stated by Macdonald J.A. of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court (Appeal Division) in *Cameron v. Bank of N.S.* (1981), 38 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1, 45 N.S.R. (2d) 303, 86 A.P.R. 303 (C.A.), where he said at p. 11:

In my opinion if the decision of the receiver to enter into an agreement of sale, subject to court approval, with respect to certain assets is reasonable and sound under the circumstances at the time existing it should not be set aside simply because a later and higher bid is made. To do so would literally create chaos in the commercial world and receivers and purchasers would never be sure they had a binding agreement. On the contrary, they would know that other bids could be received and considered up until the application for court approval is heard — this would be an intolerable situation.

While those remarks may have been made in the context of a bidding situation rather than a private sale, I consider them to be equally applicable to a negotiation process leading to a private sale. Where the court is concerned with the disposition of property, the purpose of appointing a receiver is to have the receiver do the work that the court would otherwise have to do.

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

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

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

[Emphasis added.]

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

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

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

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

4. Was there unfairness in the process?

49 As a general rule, I do not think it appropriate for the court to go into the minutia of the process or of the selling strategy adopted by the receiver. However, the court has a responsibility to decide whether the process was fair. The only part of this

process which I could find that might give even a superficial impression of unfairness is the failure of the receiver to give an offering memorandum to those who expressed an interest in the purchase of Air Toronto.

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

51 The offering memorandum had not been completed by February 11, 1991. On that date, the receiver entered into the letter of intent to negotiate with OEL. The letter of intent contained a provision that during its currency the receiver would not negotiate with any other party. The letter of intent was renewed from time to time until the OEL offer was received on March 6, 1991.

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

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

54 Moreover, I am not prepared to find that 922 was in any way prejudiced by the fact that it did not have an offering memorandum. It made an offer on March 7, 1991, which it contends to this day was a better offer than that of OEL. 922 has not convinced me that if it had an offering memorandum, its offer would have been any different or any better than it actually was. The fatal problem with the first 922 offer was that it contained a condition which was completely unacceptable to the receiver. The receiver, properly, in my opinion, rejected the offer out of hand because of that condition. That condition did not relate to any information which could have conceivably been in an offering memorandum prepared by the receiver. It was about the resolution of a dispute between CCFL and the Royal Bank, something the receiver knew nothing about.

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

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

57 It is my opinion that there is no convincing proof that if an offering memorandum had been widely distributed among persons qualified to have purchased Air Toronto, a viable offer would have come forth from a party other than 922 or OEL.

Therefore, the failure to provide an offering memorandum was neither unfair, nor did it prejudice the obtaining of a better price on March 8, 1991, than that contained in the OEL offer. I would not give effect to the contention that the process adopted by the receiver was an unfair one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree.

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

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

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

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

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

determinative. Because, in this case, the receiver acted properly and providently, I do not think that the views of the creditors should override the considered judgment of the receiver.

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

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

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

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

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

69 In its factum, the receiver pointed out that, because of greater liabilities imposed upon private receivers by various statutes such as the *Employment Standards Act*, R.S.O. 1980, c. 137, and the *Environmental Protection Act*, R.S.O. 1980, c. 141, it is likely that more and more the courts will be asked to appoint receivers in insolvencies. In those circumstances, I think that creditors who ask for court-appointed receivers and business people who choose to deal with those receivers should know that if those receivers act properly and providently, their decisions and judgments will be given great weight by the courts who appoint them. I have decided this appeal in the way I have in order to assure business people who deal with court-appointed receivers that they can have confidence that an agreement which they make with a court-appointed receiver will be far more than a platform upon which others may bargain at the court approval stage. I think that persons who enter into agreements with court-appointed receivers, following a disposition procedure that is appropriate given the nature of the assets involved, should expect that their bargain will be confirmed by the court.

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

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

McKinlay J.A. :

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

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

Goodman J.A. (dissenting):

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

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

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

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

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

I have come to the conclusion that knowledgeable creditors such as the Royal Bank would prefer the 922 offer even if the other factors influencing their decision were not present. No matter what adjustments had to be made, the 922 offer results

in more cash immediately. Creditors facing the type of loss the Royal Bank is taking in this case would not be anxious to rely on contingencies especially in the present circumstances surrounding the airline industry.

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

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

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

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

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

82 It is my further view that any negotiations which took place between the only two interested creditors in deciding to support the approval of the 922 offer were not relevant to the determination by the presiding judge of the issues involved in the motion for approval of either one of the two offers, nor are they relevant in determining the outcome of this appeal. It is sufficient that the two creditors have decided unanimously what is in their best interest, and the appeal must be considered in the light of that decision. It so happens, however, that there is ample evidence to support their conclusion that the approval of the 922 offer is in their best interests.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

101 On or before December 1990, CCFL advised the receiver that it intended to make a bid for the Air Toronto assets. The receiver, in August of 1990, for the purpose of facilitating the sale of Air Toronto assets, commenced the preparation of

an operating memorandum. He prepared no less than six draft operating memoranda with dates from October 1990 through March 1, 1991. None of these were distributed to any prospective bidder despite requests having been received therefor, with the exception of an early draft provided to CCFL without the receiver's knowledge.

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

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

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

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

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

107 By letter dated March 1, 1991, CCFL advised the receiver that it intended to submit a bid. It set forth the essential terms of the bid and stated that it would be subject to customary commercial provisions. On March 7, 1991 CCFL and Air Canada, jointly through 922, submitted an offer to purchase Air Toronto upon the terms set forth in the letter dated March 1, 1991. It included a provision that the offer was conditional upon the interpretation of an inter-lender agreement which set out the relative distribution of proceeds as between CCFL and the Royal Bank. It is common ground that it was a condition over which the receiver had no control, and accordingly would not have been acceptable on that ground alone. The receiver did not, however, contact CCFL in order to negotiate or request the removal of the condition, although it appears that its agreement with OEL not to negotiate with any person other than OEL expired on March 6, 1991.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If he meant by "acceptable in form" that it was acceptable to the receiver, then obviously OEL had the unfair advantage of its lengthy negotiations with the receiver to ascertain what kind of an offer would be acceptable to the receiver. If, on the other hand, he meant that the 922 offer was unacceptable in its form because it was conditional, it can hardly be said that the OEL offer was more acceptable in this regard, as it contained a condition with respect to financing terms and conditions "*acceptable to them*."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appeal dismissed.

TAB 2

2021 ABCA 144
Alberta Court of Appeal

1705221 Alberta Ltd v. Three M Mortgages Inc

2021 CarswellAlta 968, 2021 ABCA 144

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

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

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

Heard: April 1, 2021

Judgment: April 21, 2021

Docket: Edmonton Appeal 2003-0076AC, 2003-0077AC

Counsel: D.R. Bieganek, Q.C., for Appellant, 1705221 Alberta Ltd

K.A. Rowan, Q.C., for Respondents, Three M Mortgages Inc and Avatex Land Corporation

K.G. Heintz, for Respondents, Todd Oeming, Todd Oeming as the Personal Representative of the Estate of Albert Oeming, and the Estate of Albert Oeming

M.J. McCabe, Q.C., for Interested Party, BDO Canada Limited

B.G. Doherty, for Interested Party, Shelby Fehr

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Insolvency

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency

Appeal from the Judgment by The Honourable Mr. Justice D.R. Mah Dated the 28th day of February, 2020 Filed on the 2nd day of March, 2020 (Docket: 1603 02314)

Per curiam:

Overview

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

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

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

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

Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Decision of the Chambers Judge

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Soundair Test

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

- i. Whether the Receiver has made a sufficient effort to get the best price and has not acted improvidently;
- ii. Whether the interests of all parties have been considered, not just the interests of the creditors of the debtor;
- iii. The efficacy and integrity of the sale process by which offers are obtained; and
- iv. Whether there has been unfairness in the working out of the process.

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

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

i. Sufficient Efforts to Sell

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Phase 2- Solicit Offers from Buyers (option to use template prior to bid date);

- Phase 3- Selection of preferred Buyer(s):
 - Potential to short list and request improved resubmission.

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

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

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

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

35 In this instance, it appears the chambers judge declined to consider 170's third offer in his determination of whether the sale to Fehr should be approved. On the present facts, we see no error in this approach. The Fehr offer was significantly better than 170's second offer and clearly reasonable given that it exceeded the appraised value of the lands. We are satisfied the Receiver demonstrated reasonable efforts to market the lands and did not act improvidently. Its acceptance of the Fehr offer was reasonable in the circumstances and unassailable.

ii. Whether the Interests of All Parties Have Been Considered

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

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

38 We equally do not purport to define or delineate the scope of "party" for the purposes of determining whether a receiver has met the *Soundair* test. Under the current state of the law, what is and is not a "party" has yet to be resolved with absolute precision and clarity. Its definition is a matter of importance in the functionality of the four factors, and the conduct of receivership

proceedings generally, and deserves proper debate best reserved for another day. As noted, the specific facts of this case have obviated the need to definitively and directly address this question.

39 Nonetheless, it is helpful to examine the policy reasons why a prospective purchaser's ability to challenge a sale approval application should be closely circumscribed. As noted by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Skyepharma PLCv*, the prospective purchaser has no legal or proprietary right in the lands being sold. Normally, an examination of the sale process and whether the Receiver has complied with the *Soundair* principles, is focussed on those with a direct interest in the sale process, primarily the creditors.

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

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

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

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

iii. The Efficacy and Integrity of the Sale Process

43 In obtaining an order approving the sale process, the Receiver satisfied the court of its efforts to engage an appraiser to value the lands for sale. The Receiver also satisfied the court of its efforts to determine the best sale process and why it was recommending Avison Young from the list of four realtors submitting proposals. As we have indicated, the marketing proposal outlined by Avison Young was followed.

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

TAB 3

2010 ABCA 16
Alberta Court of Appeal

Bank of Montreal v. River Rentals Group Ltd.

2010 CarswellAlta 57, 2010 ABCA 16, [2010] A.J. No. 12, 184 A.C.W.S. (3d)
686, 18 Alta. L.R. (5th) 201, 469 A.R. 333, 470 W.A.C. 333, 63 C.B.R. (5th) 26

Bank of Montreal (Not a Party To the Appeal / Plaintiff) and River Rentals Group Ltd., Taves Contractors Ltd. and McTaves Inc. (Respondent / Defendant) and Hutterian Brethren Church of Codesa (Appellant / Other) and Bill McCulloch and Associates Inc. (Respondent / Other) and Don Warkentin (Respondent / Other)

Ronald Berger, Patricia Rowbotham JJ.A., R. Paul Belzil J. (ad hoc)

Heard: January 7, 2010

Judgment: January 18, 2010

Docket: Edmonton Appeal 0903-0191-AC, 0903-0236-AC

Counsel: D.R. Bieganek for Respondent, River Rentals Group, Taves Contractors Ltd., McTaves Inc., Bill McCulloch and Associates Inc.

G.D. Chrenek for Appellant, Hutterian Brethren Church of Codesa

T.M. Warner for Respondent, Don Warkentin

Subject: Corporate and Commercial; Insolvency

Headnote

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

Court-appointed receiver of group of companies called for offers to purchase property — Tender closing date was May 7 — H offered \$2,205,000 — W tendered offer of \$2,100,000 on understanding that he would receive possession of property in fall — On May 21, W learned that he would get possession of property earlier and increased bid to \$2,300,000 — Receiver brought application to approve sale of property to H — Chambers judge granted order extending deadline to submit revised offers to purchase property, with submissions restricted to H and W — During extension period, W submitted highest bid — Chambers judge granted order directing that property be sold to W — H appealed — Appeal allowed — Chambers judge erred in principle and on insufficient evidence ordered that property be subject of extended re-tendering process — Chambers judge made no finding that price in H's offer was so unreasonably low as to demonstrate that receiver was improvident in accepting it — Chambers judge did not consider interests of H as highest bidder nor interests of others who made compliant bids — There was no cogent evidence before chambers judge of any unfairness to W — Chambers judge's order conferred advantage upon W who then knew price that had previously been offered by H.

APPEAL by bidder from orders extending deadline to submit revised offers to purchase property and approving sale of property to another bidder.

Per curiam:

1 At the hearing of this appeal, we announced that the appeal is allowed with reasons to follow.

2 Bill McCulloch and Associates Inc. is the court-appointed Interim Receiver and/or Receiver Manager of the corporate Respondents ("the Taves Group") by order dated March 5, 2009. Prior to that date, the Receiver had become Trustee in Bankruptcy of the Taves Group.

3 The Receiver issued an information package and called for offers to purchase the assets of the Taves Group which included a property known as the Birch Hills Lands. The call for offers was dated April 17, 2009. The deadline for submission of offers was on or before May 7, 2009 (the tender closing date).

4 On June 2, 2009, the Receiver brought an application before Wachowich C.J.Q.B. to approve the sale of the Birch Hills Lands to the Appellant. The Appellant's offer was \$2,205,000. An appraisal concluded that the most probable sale price was \$1,560,000. Counsel for the Receiver explained that "the Receiver did effect wide advertizing in local and national newspapers. Sent out 160 tender packages and made the tender package available on the Receiver's website." (A.B. Record Digest, 3/30-33)

5 Fifteen offers were received on the Birch Hills Lands, six of which were for the entirety of the parcel.

6 In his submission to the Chief Justice, counsel for the Receiver stated:

Now, what we have advised the party that we're looking to accept is that we can't put them in possession yet until the Court approves the offer. That has caused some angst given the time of year and it is agricultural land, but we're not in a position to put people on the land before we get court approval to do so. So — and that's fine, they're still — they're still at the table so we're good with that.

The offer that the Receiver is recommending acceptance of is — was from the Hutterite Church of Codesa. That offer was for \$2,205,000 ... the offer is very significant ... it was an excellent offer.

(A.B. Record Digest, 5/46 -6/19)

7 In considering other tenders with respect to other portions of the property of the Taves Group, the Chief Justice expressed his views regarding the importance of adhering to the integrity of the tender process:

You know, we ran a tender process, tender process is meant to be — there are certain rules. It is like, you do not change the rules of baseball or football during the middle of the game. This is the same thing except in this particular case the Court is prepared to exercise the — its inherent jurisdiction to extend the time in Mr. Taves' position. But I — you know, I could be the person who says no, Mr. Taves, you were late, I am sorry. Next time use Fed Ex.(Appeal Record Digest, 12/11-19)

And further:

We could be coming back right and left. I am inclined, you know, to grant the applications as submitted on these tenders because the tender process was followed properly. That was the market at the time, this is the people that — this is how they bid. You know, circumstances change and when circumstances change, somebody is the beneficiary of it, some — somebody is the loser on this. But the rules were adhered to and having the rules adhered to if, you know — if you want to — if you want to go to the Court of Appeal after the order is entered and say to the Court of Appeal, guess what, oil is now at \$90, we want this one resubmitted. And if those five people are wise enough to accept that argument, then good luck to you but — but you know, I am inclined to say we follow a process, the law has to be certain. The law has to be definite. This is what we did and we complied.(Appeal Record Digest, 12/40-13/8)

8 One of the persons who had tendered an offer to purchase the Birch Hills Lands was the Respondent Don Warkentin. Counsel for the guarantor, Mr. Orrin Toews, addressed the Court. He explained that Mr. Warkentin had submitted an offer of \$2.1 million "on the understanding that he would be receiving possession of the property sometime in the fall." Counsel further explained that "I believe it was the Receiver while during the initial auction, that it was brought to his attention on May 21st that he would in fact get possession of the property much earlier than he was anticipating. And on that basis he increased his bid by 200,000 which brings his offer to 2.3 million dollars cash." (A.B. Record Digest, 13/27-36) He submitted that Mr. Warkentin's offer be accepted.

9 In response, counsel for the Receiver advised the Court that he had been in written communication with counsel for Mr. Warkentin "and there was no indication in that correspondence that he thought he would get [possession of the lands] in the

fall." (Appeal Record Digest, 14/18-20) He added: "I think the tender package is clear that the way it was supposed to close is after the appeal periods on any order has expired. ... So how anybody could reasonably conceive that possession wouldn't be granted until the fall based on that escapes me." (Appeal Record Digest, 14/20-25) He further added: "But the bottom line was at the time tenders closed, Mr. [Warkentin]'s offer was found wanting." (Appeal Record Digest, 14/36-38)

10 On the basis of that information, the Court ruled as follows:

Well, you know, rather than adjourning it to hear from Mr. Carter, what I am — what I am inclined to do with that piece of property, because of — is — because of an uncertainty as to occupation, dates of occupation or potential lease or whatever it may be, it is too late to put in the crop right now anyway so — ... Retender on this one and make it clear in the tender.

(Appeal Record Digest, 15/7-19)

11 Wachowich, C.J. then granted an order extending the deadline to submit revised offers to purchase the Birch Hills Lands; with submissions restricted to the Appellant and Warkentin. During this extension period, Warkentin submitted a bid higher than the Appellant's. The Appellant did not increase its original offer. Subsequently, on June 17, 2009, Wachowich, C.J. granted an order directing that the Birch Hills Lands be sold to Warkentin. An application by the Appellant to reconsider the June 17, 2009 order was dismissed. The Court also granted a stay order for parts of the June 2 order and the entirety of its June 17 order, pending the determination of the appeal of the June 2 order. The Appellant appealed the June 2 order on July 22, 2009; and appealed the June 17 order on August 13, 2009 (the appeals were consolidated on August 20, 2009).

12 On applications by a Receiver for approval of a sale, the Court should consider whether the Receiver has acted properly. Specifically, the Court should consider the following:

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

Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp. (1991), 4 O.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.) at para. 16

13 The Court should consider the following factors to determine if the Receiver has acted improvidently or failed to get the best price:

- (a) whether the offer accepted is so low in relation to the appraised value as to be unrealistic;
- (b) whether the circumstances indicate that insufficient time was allowed for the making of bids;
- (c) whether inadequate notice of sale by bid was given; or
- (d) whether it can be said that the proposed sale is not in the best interest of either the creditors or the owner.

Cameron v. Bank of Nova Scotia (1981), 45 N.S.R. (2d) 303 (N.S. C.A.)

Salima Investments Ltd. v. Bank of Montreal (1985), 65 A.R. 372 (Alta. C.A.) at para. 12.

14 The central issue in this appeal is whether the chambers judge, mindful of the record before him, should have permitted rebidding and whether he should have thereafter entertained and accepted the higher offer of \$2.51 million plus GST tendered by Mr. Warkentin during the extension period.

15 The relevance of higher offers after the close of process was considered by the Ontario Court of Appeal in *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.*, *supra*. Upon review of the jurisprudence, the Court stated at para. 30:

What those cases show is that the prices in other offers have relevance only if they show that the price contained in the offer accepted by the receiver was so unreasonably low as to demonstrate that the receiver was improvident in accepting it. ...

16 The chambers judge made no such finding. Indeed, he made no assessment whatever of the conduct of the Receiver. The only evidence before the Court at the June 2, 2009 application was the Receiver's fifth report and the affidavit of Orrin Toews who proffered no evidence that the Receiver acted improvidently in accepting the offer of the Appellant.

17 Moreover, the June 2, 2009 order neither considers the interests of the Appellant as the highest bidder nor the interests of others who made compliant, but unsuccessful, bids to purchase the Birch Hills Lands pursuant to the call for offers.

18 This Court has consistently favoured an approach that preserves the integrity of the process. See *Salima Investments Ltd.*, *supra*, and *Royal Bank v. Fracmaster Ltd.*, 1999 ABCA 178, 244 A.R. 93 (Alta. C.A.).

19 That was also the view of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court (Appeal Division) in *Cameron v. Bank of Nova Scotia*, *supra*, at para. 35:

In my opinion if the decision of the receiver to enter into an agreement of sale, subject to court approval, with respect to certain assets is reasonable and sound under the circumstances at the time existing it should not be set aside simply because a later and a higher bid is made. To do so would literally create chaos in the commercial world and receivers and purchasers would never be sure they had a binding agreement. On the contrary, they would know that other bids could be received and considered up until the application for court approval is heard - this would be an intolerable situation. ...

20 In addition, there was no cogent evidence before the chambers judge of any unfairness to Warkentin. On the contrary, the impugned order of June 2 conferred an advantage upon Warkentin who then knew the price that had previously been offered by the Appellant when re-tendering his offer.

21 In cases involving the Court's consideration of the approval of the sale of assets by a court-appointed Receiver, decisions made by a chambers judge involve a measure of discretion and "are owed considerable deference". The Court will interfere only if it concludes that the chambers judge acted unreasonably, erred in principle, or made a manifest error.

22 In our opinion, the chambers judge erred in principle and on insufficient evidence ordered that the property in question be the subject of an extended re-tendering process. The appeal is allowed. An order will go setting aside paras. 26 through 32 of the June 2, 2009 and the June 17, 2009 orders, and approving the tender of the Appellant on the terms and conditions upon which the Receiver originally sought approval.

Appeal allowed.

TAB 4

2019 ABCA 433
Alberta Court of Appeal

Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc v. 1905393 Alberta Ltd

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

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

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

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

Counsel: D.M. Nowak, J.M. Lee, Q.C., for Respondent, Pricewaterhousecoopers Inc. in its capacity as receiver of 1905393 Alberta Ltd.

D.R. Peskett, C.M. Young, for Appellants

C.P. Russell, Q.C., R.T. Trainer, for Respondent, Servus Credit Union Ltd.

S.A. Wanke, for Respondent, Ducor Properties Ltd.

S.T. Fitzgerald, for Respondent, Northern Electric Ltd.

H.S. Kandola, for Respondent, Fancy Doors & Mouldings Ltd.

Subject: Civil Practice and Procedure; Insolvency

Headnote

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

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

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

Per curiam:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appeal dismissed.

TAB 5

2010 ONSC 1846
Ontario Superior Court of Justice [Commercial List]

Grant Forest Products Inc., Re

2010 CarswellOnt 2445, 2010 ONSC 1846, 67 C.B.R. (5th) 258

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

AND IN THE MATTER OF A PLAN OF COMPROMISE OR ARRANGEMENT OF GRANT FOREST PRODUCTS
INC., GRANT ALBERTA INC., GRANT FOREST PRODUCTS SALES INC. and GRANT U.S. HOLDINGS GP

C. Campbell J.

Heard: February 1, 8, 2010

Judgment: March 30, 2010

Docket: CV-09-8247-00CL

Counsel: Sean Dunphy, Kathy Mah for Monitor

Daniel Dowdall, Jane O'Dietrich for Applicants, Grant Forest Products Inc., Grant Alberta Inc., Grant Forest Products Sales Inc., Grant U.S. Holdings GP

Kevin McElcheran for Toronto-Dominion Bank, Agent for First Lien Lenders

Fred Myers, Joe Pasquariello for Bank of New York Mellon, Agent for SLL

Sheryl Seigel for Georgia-Pacific LLC

Richard Swan for Peter Grant Sr.

Aubrey Kauffman for Independent Directors of Grant Forest Products Inc.

Subject: Insolvency; Corporate and Commercial

Headnote

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act — Arrangements — Approval by court — Miscellaneous Applicants, being GFP Inc., its parent company, its Canadian subsidiaries, G U.S., and its related entities, obtained protection under Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) — Applicants had two levels of primary secured debt owed to FLL and SLL — GFP Inc. and G U.S. were in default under FLL agreement, and G U.S. was in default under SLL agreement — Applicants engaged financial advisor to advise on options to address debt position and locate investors or sell business, and marketing process was created — Bid of GP LLC, purchaser, was accepted and purchase and sale agreement was finalized — GFP Inc. et al. brought application to seek approval of sale and vesting order to complete transfer of control to purchaser — SLL opposed approval of transaction — Application granted — Once process put in place by Court Order for sale of assets of failing business, process should be honoured excepting extraordinary circumstances — Numerous parties participated over number of months in complex process designed to achieve not only maximum value of assets of business, but to ensure its survival as going concern for benefit of many stakeholders — To permit invitation to reopen process not only would have destroyed integrity of process, but likely would have doomed transaction that had been achieved.

Bankruptcy and insolvency --- Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act — General principles — Jurisdiction — Court Applicants, being GFP Inc., its parent company, its Canadian subsidiaries, and G U.S. and its related entities, obtained protection under Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) when stay of proceedings was granted — Applicants had two levels of primary secured debt owed to FLL and SLL — GFP Inc. and G U.S. were in default under FLL agreement, and G U.S. was in default under SLL agreement — Applicants engaged financial advisor to advise on options to address debt position and locate investors or sell business, marketing process was created — Bid of GP LLC was accepted and purchase and sale agreement was finalized — Transaction required that security granted in favour of FLL and SLL be released and discharged upon closing of transaction — FLL's position was that only way transaction could be accomplished at proposed price was by creating tax

benefits arising from proposed structure that would include transfer of G U.S. interests as partnership interests, rather than direct transfer of assets of G U.S. — FLL brought motion to add additional applicants — Motion granted — SLL opposed motion to add applicants and approve sale on basis that such relief would have had effect of mandatory order against U.S. parties which would extinguish U.S. security over U.S. realty and personalty — Issues raised by SLL were inextricably linked to restructuring of applicants and completion of transaction and as such were appropriate for consideration by Court — Transaction would not have been possible without tax advantages that were available as result of transaction form — Submissions that entire transaction was flawed because it resulted in transfer of some assets in U.S. without sale process envisaged in U.S. Bankruptcy Code, would have been triumph of form over substance — Relief sought was not merely device to sell U.S. assets from Canada, it was unified transaction, each element of which was necessary and integral to its success, it was Canadian process.

APPLICATION by insolvent seeking approval to complete transfer of control to purchaser; MOTION by creditor to add applicants.

C. Campbell J.:

Reasons for Decision

1 This Application seeks approval of the Sale transaction and a Vesting Order to complete the transfer of the control of the business of Grant Forest Products Inc. to the purchaser Georgia-Pacific. The transaction is the culmination of the marketing process under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. C-36, as amended ("CCAA"), authorized by an order of this Court dated June 25, 2009.

2 Approval of the transaction is opposed by the Second Lien Lenders ("SLL")¹ under an Inter-Creditor Agreement (the "ICA") of which Grant Forest is a party, on the basis that this Court does not have jurisdiction to, in effect, convey real property assets located in the United States.

3 An adjournment of the approval motion sought by the largest shareholder of Grant Forest, seeking time for improvement of expressions of interest by others into bids, was not granted. Consideration of the issues raised on this motion requires analysis of the many similarities and few differences between the restructuring and insolvency processes in Canada and the United States in cross-border transactions.

4 For reasons that follow, I am satisfied that this Court does have jurisdiction and it is appropriate to approve this complicated transaction. In order to deal with the objections raised, it is necessary to outline the transaction in some detail, the particulars of which are summarized in the Sixth Report of the Monitor.

5 Grant Forest Products Inc. ("GFP"), an Ontario company, and certain of its subsidiaries are privately owned corporations carrying on an Oriented Strand Board manufacturing business from facilities located in Canada and the United States. The most common uses of the companies' products are sheathing in the walls, floors and roofs in the construction of buildings and residential housing.

6 Two GFP mills are located in Ontario, one in Alberta (50% with Footner Forest Products) and two in the counties of Allendale and Clarendon in South Carolina.

7 The U.S. mills are owned indirectly through one of the Applicants, being the Grant Partnership registered in the state of Delaware. At present, due to decreased demand, only one Ontario mill and the Allendale mill in South Carolina are operating.

8 The Applicants, being the parent GFP, its Canadian subsidiaries Grant Alberta Inc. and Grant Forest Product Sales Inc., together with Grant U.S. holdings GP ("Grant U.S. Partnership") and its related entities, obtained protection under the CCAA on June 25, 2009, when a stay of proceedings was granted and Ernst and Young Inc. ("E&Y") was appointed Monitor. The Order also approved the continuation of the engagement of a chief restructuring advisor.

9 The Applicants have two levels of primary secured debt. The total debt obligations are comprised of the following facilities:

First Lien Creditor Agreement

10 As at May 31, 2009, the First Lien Lenders ("FLL")² were owed the principal amount of \$399 million plus accrued interest of approximately \$5.3 million pursuant to a credit agreement dated October 26, 2005 and amended March 21, 2007. An additional \$8.7 million was owed to one or more of the FLL pursuant to interest rate swap agreements the liability of which was secured to the FLL Agent.

Second Lien Creditor Agreement

11 The bank of New York Mellon ("BNY") as successor is the Agent for the SLL, to whom as of May 31, 2009 was owed the principal amount of approximately \$150 million plus accrued interest of approximately \$42 million pursuant to a credit agreement dated as of March 21, 2007 as amended as of April 30, 2009. GFP and the Grant U.S. Partnership are the borrowers under the FLL Agreement with all related entities as guarantors of the FLL indebtedness. The Grant U.S. Partnership is the borrower under the SLL Agreement with all related entities as guarantors of the SLL debt.

12 GFP and the Grant U.S. Partnership are in default under the FLL Agreement and the Grant U.S. Partnership is in default under the SLL Agreement. Both the FLL and SLL Agents hold various security in Canada over each of their respective property and assets.

Inter-Creditor Agreement

13 The Applicants together with the entities related to the Grant U.S. Partnership, the FLL and SLL are parties to an Agreement dated March 21, 2007, which among other things deals with the relationship between the FLL security and the SLL security. Both the FLL and the SLL rely on this Agreement in respect of the issue as between them, which affects priority over assets.

The Marketing Process

14 Prior to the filing that gave rise to the initial order, the Applicants had engaged a financial advisor and an investment banking firm to advise on capital and strategic options to address the Applicants' debt position and liquidity needs and to locate investors or sell the business. While this process did not result in a transaction that could be implemented, the Applicants were of the view that the business could be sold as a going concern or they could sponsor a plan of arrangement to be consummated in CCAA proceedings. The Initial Order, which has not been objected to since being granted on June 25, 2009, contained a six page elaborate "Investment Offering Protocol" to provide interested parties with the opportunity to offer to purchase the business and operations in whole or in part as a going concern or to offer to sponsor a plan of arrangement of the Applicants or any of them.

15 The three phases of the marketing process are described in detail in paragraphs 35 to 47 of the Sixth Report of the Monitor. The process, which commenced in July 2009, involved contact with 91 potentially interested parties, narrowed to 13 who responded with expressions of interest, with eight parties invited to phase Two to conduct further due diligence.

16 At this phase, the interested parties were provided access to the Applicants' facilities, advised of the bid process and had until August 30, 2009 to submit revised proposals. This was subsequently extended to September 11, 2009 in order to accommodate due diligence requirements, plant tour schedules and management meetings with the eight interested parties who were to submit revised proposals on or before September 11, 2009.

17 As reported by the Monitor, two of the bids were inferior by their terms or consideration and three were within a similar range. As a result of due diligence items and closing conditions which risked the completion of the transaction, revised bids were extended to October 2, 2009 for the three interested parties.

18 As of October 16, 2009, 66 2/3% of the FLL debt and the Independent Directors Committee voted in favour of the selection of the Georgia-Pacific bid, one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers of tissue, packaging, paper pulp and building products, to proceed to Phase Three.

19 As reported in the Fifth Report of the Monitor dated November 26, 2009, SLL who were prepared to agree to certain confidentiality provisions were apprised on October 15 of the status of the marketing process.

20 An exclusivity agreement was reached with Georgia-Pacific on October 20, 2009, which required the Applicants to refrain from seeking bids, responding to or negotiating with any party other than Georgia-Pacific with respect to the items included in the bid of Georgia-Pacific during a period of exclusivity which extended through a series of extensions to January 8, 2010, when the parties finalized a purchase and sale agreement that is in the material filed with the Court.

21 I accept the conclusion of the Monitor as set out in paragraph 56 of the Sixth Report:

56. It is the Monitor's view that the Marketing Process included a structured, fair, wide and effective canvassing of the market as demonstrated by the following:

a. contact by the Investment Offering Advisor of 91 interested parties comprising both financial and strategic parties located in North America, South America, Europe and Asia;

b. the execution of 32 NDAs by interested parties who were then granted access to review the Data Room and the subsequent submission of 13 EOIs at the end of *Phase I*;

c. the EOIs of eight interested parties that were invited to participate in *Phase II* provided a value range which was market derived and tested, and as such, supported the conclusion that the consideration included in Georgia Pacific's bid reflected fair value;

d. of the eight interested parties that were invited to *Phase II*, five submitted improved bids in respect of consideration and/or closing conditions at the close of *Phase II* and of the three interested parties that were invited through to *Phase IIb*, each party again improved its bid in terms of consideration and/or closing conditions at the end of *Phase IIb*.

e. the selection of Georgia Pacific to negotiate a PSA was based on a thorough analysis of all of the financial and commercial terms presented in all of the bids, was recommended by the Monitor and the CRA and was approved by the First Lien Lenders Steering Committee and the Independent Directors Committee; and

f. the Second Lien Lenders were consulted, and their views and questions were taken into account in the final selection of Georgia Pacific.

22 This approval motion was originally returnable on February 1, 2010; it was adjourned to allow the parties to respond to two additional motions. The first, brought on behalf of the FLL, seeks to add as "Additional Applicants" the U.S. entities directly related to the Grant U.S. Partnership, "Grant NewCo LLC" and various Georgia-Pacific Canadian and U.S. entities.

23 The second motion, on behalf of the SLL, was to adjourn or dismiss the Approval Vesting motion on the basis that this Court did not have jurisdiction to deal with the assets in the United States that are the subject of the transaction and such assets would have to be dealt with under Chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware.

24 On February 1 and on the adjourned date of February 8, counsel for Peter Grant Senior sought a further adjournment to enable consideration of a recently received "offer." In its Seventh Report the Monitor reported on receipt of a letter which expressed interest in the Applicants' assets by a new "bidder." In its Report, the Monitor advised that in its opinion, the expression of interest could be considered as no more than that and reported that it did not comply with the Investment Offering Protocol.

25 Counsel for the SLL sought and was granted access to the correspondence but Mr. Grant was not, due to his involvement in a bid as per the terms of the Investment Offering Protocol.

26 On February 5, with knowledge of the position taken by the SLL and the specifics of the Georgia-Pacific agreement, another expression of interest was received by the Monitor and brought to the attention of the Court. This expression of interest from a previous "bidder" whose bid was rejected, sought to amend its previous position to accommodate the concern that the SLL had with respect to the Georgia-Pacific agreement.

27 The Court ruled that both of these expressions were no more than invitations to negotiate. In neither case by their terms were they intended to create binding obligations until definitive agreements were reached.

28 The Applicants and those parties supporting the Georgia-Pacific agreement urged that the integrity of the process would be compromised if further consideration were given to nothing more than expressions of interest.

29 It is now well established in insolvency law in Canada that once a process has been put in place by Court Order for the sale of assets of a failing business, that process should be honoured, excepting extraordinary circumstances.

30 In *Tiger Brand Knitting Co., Re*, [2005] O.J. No. 1259 (Ont. S.C.J.), I noted at para. 31 that integrity of "process is integral to the administration of statutes such as the BIA and CCAA."

31 The leading case in Ontario, which confirms the importance of integrity of process, is *Royal Bank v. Soundair Corp.* (1991), 7 C.B.R. (3d) 1 (Ont. C.A.), a decision of the Court of Appeal for Ontario. At issue was the power of the Court to review a decision of a receiver to approve one offer over another for the sale of an airline as a going concern. In reinforcing the importance of integrity of process, the Court quoted from Anderson J. in *Crown Trust Co. v. Rosenberg* (1986), 60 O.R. (2d) 87 (Ont. H.C.) at p. 92 adopted the following:

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.

32 In this case, numerous parties participated over a number of months in a complex process designed to achieve not only maximum value of the assets of the business, but to ensure its survival as a going concern for the benefit of many of the stakeholders.

33 I am satisfied that to permit an "invitation" to reopen that process not only would destroy the integrity of the process, but would likely doom the transaction that has been achieved.

Motion to Add Applicants

34 The motion brought by the FLL Agent to add additional applicants was supported by the original Applicants, the purchasers and the Monitor, and opposed by the SLL as part of the objection to jurisdiction of this Court. The purpose of adding Additional Applicants was said to be necessary to make the transaction effective.

35 The transaction with Georgia-Pacific contemplates the transfer of certain assets that are on terms as set out in the Agreement between GFP and related Canadian entities, and to the Canadian purchaser (a Georgia-Pacific subsidiary) with the claims of any person against such transferred assets attaching to the net proceeds received from the sale of such transferred assets.

36 Additionally, the transaction contemplates that the partnership interests in Grant U.S. Partnership will be surrendered and cancelled. Grant U.S. Partnership will issue new partnership interests to the Georgia-Pacific U.S. purchaser vehicle and the additional purchaser.

37 The aggregate consideration being paid by the Canadian purchaser for the transferred assets and the U.S. purchasers for the Grant U.S. Partnership interests is \$403 million, subject to adjustment.

38 Through the U.S. purchasers' acquisition of the purchasers' partnership interests, the U.S. purchasers will acquire Grant U.S. Partnership, Southeast, Clarendon, Allendale, U.S. Sales, Newco. It is urged that through this structure the Applicants will maximize the value of their assets.

39 The agreement and transaction require that the security previously granted by the applicable U.S. applicants (the "Additional Applicants") in favour of the FLL and SLL and the indebtedness and liability of the applicable Additional Applicants to them and the Lenders under the FLL Agreement and the SLL Agreement be released and discharged upon closing of the transaction.

40 The position of the FLL, supported by the Applicants and the Monitor, is that the only way in which the transaction can be accomplished with the price that the FLL and the Applicants are prepared to accept is with the proposed structure that would include a transfer of the Grant U.S. Partnership interests as partnership interests, rather than a direct transfer of the assets of Grant U.S. Partnership.

41 The FLL, the Applicant and the Purchasers urge that without the tax benefit that arises from the proposed structure, the Agreement of Purchase and Sale with Georgia-Pacific would not have been completed.

Position of SLL

42 The position of the SLL, both in opposing the motion to add Additional Applicants and opposing Approval of the Sale, is that the relief sought is overly broad, inappropriate and would have the effect of mandatory orders against U.S. parties which would extinguish U.S. security over U.S. realty and personalty. The effect of the extinguishment is to absolve FLL of all forms of liability when it is neither a CCAA debtor nor an officer of this Court.

43 It is urged that there is no jurisdiction on which the FLL can seek an unlimited judicial release. The FLL cannot add the SLL as a party for any purpose that is to seek avoiding prior scrutiny in the U.S. courts of the merits of its actions and of the U.S. affiliates of the Original Applicants and the SLL.³

44 The SLL Agent asserts that the effect of the Application is to ask this Court, in the guise of a motion in a CCAA proceeding concerning Canadian debtors, to allow it on behalf of U.S. FLL to sue U.S. defendants for a final declaration of right and a mandatory injunction under the Inter-Creditor Agreement that is governed by U.S. law and U.S. choice of forum.

45 This is said to occur without delivering any originating process or meeting tests for the exercise of jurisdiction of this Court over U.S. parties concerning U.S. property. SLL submits that the FLL failed to provide any of the legal and procedural safeguards required by the Rules of Civil Procedure to any foreign or proposed defendant.

46 It is further urged that the ICA specifically provides the FLL with rights only upon the sale of assets under section 363 of the U.S. bankruptcy code. Therefore, it is submitted, a motion in a CCAA proceeding by the Original Applicants is not an appropriate forum for the resolution of the interpretation of a contract between the U.S. non-parties that is to be decided under U.S. law.

47 The SLL also complain that engaging the term "center of main interest" with respect to the U.S. affiliates is not a relevant question for this Court. Rather, it is a transparent attempt to pre-empt a U.S. court from making a determination required under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, which may affect the standard of review afforded by the U.S. court upon any recognition proceedings that the original Applicants may choose to bring before the U.S. court in the future.

48 Finally, it is suggested that what the FLL Agent seeks is contrary to the principles of comity and the common law principle that a court should decide only matters properly before it and necessary to its own decision.

49 The evidence before the Court is that on completion of the transaction, there will be a shortfall to the FLL on their debt and likely no recovery by the SLL on their debt. The SLL suggest that a separate auction sale of the U.S. mills might achieve a better price for these assets. There is no evidence before the Court to back up this assertion.

Inter-Creditor Agreement

50 The ICA, which was entered into as of March 21, 2007, binds the GFP group of companies, including Grant U.S. Partnership as well as the FLL and the SLL. The FLL and the SLL rely on the Agreement in support of their respective positions.

51 The stated purpose of the Agreement was to induce the FLL to consent to GFP incurring the second lien obligations and to induce the FLL to extend credit for the benefit of GFP.

52 By its terms and the definition of "bankruptcy code" in the ICA, the parties recognized that the Canadian statutes, being the CCAA and the BIA, as well as the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, might apply.

53 Counsel for the SLL relies on clause 9.10 of the ICA definition of "Applicable Law," which provides: "this agreement and the rights and obligations of the parties hereunder shall be governed by, and shall be construed and enforced in accordance with, the laws of the state of New York."

54 Accordingly, it is argued on behalf of the SLL that this Court should not have regard to any issues as between the FLL and SLL, but rather leave those to be litigated as between those parties in the State of New York.

55 The position of the FLL is that a Court having jurisdiction over insolvency of a Canadian entity might well be required to have regard to the ICA in dealing with legitimate and appropriate insolvency remedies in Canada. In this regard, counsel notes that clause 9.7 of the ICA identifies New York as a "non-exclusive" venue for disputes involving the Agreement.

56 The position of the Applicants and those supporting the ICA is that this Court is being asked to consider and approve a restructuring transaction in a process that has been overseen by this Court, and which includes, *inter alia*, a comprehensive marketing process involving an Ontario Court-appointed officer. This process has always expressly included the Applicants and their subsidiaries and the business that the integrated corporate group operated in North America from headquarters situated in Ontario.

57 The Applicants submit it is appropriate for this Court to deal with issues raised under the ICA between the FLL and SLL, where that is incidental to approval of this Canadian restructuring transaction.

58 I am satisfied that the issues raised by the SLL are inextricably linked to the restructuring of the Applicants and the completion of the transaction and as such are appropriate for consideration by this Court.

59 I am satisfied that, by operation of the Credit Agreement and ICA, the FLL are entitled to exercise their remedies, which they propose to do in this motion by adding the Additional Applicants as CCAA Applicants. They may then release their security over the assets to be transferred in connection with the exercise of their remedies and by doing so, the security of the SLL over the Transferred Assets is automatically and simultaneously released.

60 I am satisfied that the transaction, whereby Canadian assets are transferred to a Canadian Georgia-Pacific subsidiary and the assets of the essentially GFP-owned partnership interests in Grant U.S. Partnership are transferred to a newly created U.S. partnership by Georgia-Pacific, would not have been possible without the tax advantages that are available as a result of the form of this transaction.

61 To suggest, as does the submission of the SLL, that the entire transaction is flawed because the effect is a transfer of some assets in the United States without the sale process envisaged in section 363 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, would be a triumph of form over substance.

62 I accept that the effect of the transaction may indirectly be a transfer of U.S. real property assets and the release of a security over them of the SLL. The effect of the transaction is such that the claims of local creditors of the business of the U.S. mills remain unaffected. The Court was not apprised of any ordinary creditor other than the SLL that would be so affected.

Comity and U.S. Chapter 15

63 Counsel for the SLL Agent objected to the use by the Applicants of the term COMI (being Center Of Main Interest) in respect of this CCAA Application.

64 I accept that the term COMI has only been formally recognized in amendments to the CCAA, which came into effect in September 2009 after the filing of this Application. The term has gained recognition in the last few years as cross-border insolvencies have increased, particularly with the use of flexibility of the CCAA.

65 Comity, as expressed by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Morguard Investments Ltd. v. De Savoye*⁴, is "the recognition which one nation allows within its territory to the legislative, executive or judicial acts of another nation." Comity balances "international duty and convenience" with "the rights of (a nation's) own citizens... who are under the protection of its laws."⁵

66 Without in any way intending to intrude on the law of another jurisdiction, it is appropriate to have a look at the plain wording of the ICA.

67 It is to be noted that there is no evidence put forward by the SLL Agent to suggest that the position of the FLL in respect of the ICA is incorrect. The only response from the SLL Agent is that the matter is not for this Court.

68 The suggestion by the SLL is that the effect of the Order sought is to vest title in U.S. assets. The FLL assert that all that is being done is the enforcement of their secured creditor remedies and release of their security, which under the ICA has the effect of releasing the security of the SLL.

69 The FLL submit that Section 3.1 of the ICA recognizes the broad remedies available to the FLL to enforce their security, using all the remedies of a secured creditor under the Bankruptcy Laws of the U.S. including the CCAA, without consultation with the SLL. The submission is further that the SLL are bound by any determination made by the FLL to release its security. The SLL is to provide written confirmation on the FLL becomes the agent of the SLL for that purpose.

70 The relevant sections of the ICA are set out in Appendix A hereto. As noted above, the position of the FLL is that they are exercising contractual remedies under the ICA.

71 For the SLL, the argument is that this Court should not interfere with the obligation of the FLL to commence proceedings in the appropriate jurisdiction (New York) to enforce its obligations against the SLL. Neither the SLL nor the FLL has commenced New York actions.

72 I am satisfied that this Court does have jurisdiction to provide the relief requested, which is the product of the marketing process that was not only approved by this Court, but not objected to by any party when it was initiated.⁶

73 I do not accept the submission on behalf of the SLL that "the proposed CCAA proceedings for the U.S. Affiliates are not proper CCAA proceedings at all, but are merely proposed as a mechanism for Canadian vesting of U.S. assets."

74 The relief sought is not merely a device to sell U.S. assets from Canada. This is a unified transaction, each element of which is necessary and integral to its success. It is properly a Canadian process.

75 There are many instances in which Canadian courts have granted vesting orders in relation to assets situated in the United States. Some of the orders are referred to in the factum of the FLL, including *Re Maax Corporation et al.*,⁷ *Re Madill Equipment Canada*,⁸ *Re ROL Manufacturing (Canada) Ltd.*,⁹ *Re Biltrite Rubber Inc.*¹⁰ and *Re Pope and Talbot, Inc. et al.*¹¹

76 Decisions on both sides of the border have recognized that the United States and Canada have a special relationship that allows bankruptcy and insolvency matters to proceed with relative ease when assets lie in both territories. As the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York acknowledged in ABCP's *Metcalfe & Mansfield Alternative Investments, Re* [, Doc. 09-16709 (U.S. Bankr. S.D. N.Y. January 5, 2010)]¹² both systems are rooted in the common law and share similar principles and procedures. Bankruptcy proceedings in the United States acknowledge international proceedings and work alongside, rather than over, foreign matters. Chapter 15 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code exemplifies this in its foreign bankruptcy proceedings: "the court should be guided by principles of comity and cooperation with foreign courts."¹³

77 In the cross-border case of *Muscletech Research & Development Inc., Re*,¹⁴ COMI was found to be in Canada despite factors indicating the U.S. would also be a suitable jurisdiction. Particularly, most of the creditors were located in the U.S., as was the revenue stream. Most of the major decisions regarding the company were made in Canada, its directors and officers were located in Ontario, banking was done in Ontario, etc. Justice Farley noted the positive relationship between Canada and the U.S. and credited this relationship to the adherence to comity and common principles. Judge Rakoff, presiding over the Chapter 15 proceedings, agreed with Farley J.'s endorsement, specifically noting that the factors outlined in the Canadian endorsement persuaded him over the factors in favour of U.S. COMI. Farley J. noted at paragraph 4 of his endorsement, and Judge Rankoff implicitly agreed, that "the courts of Canada and the U.S. have long enjoyed a firm and ongoing relationship based on comity and commonalities of principles as to, *inter alia*, bankruptcy and insolvency."

78 As noted by counsel for the SLL at paragraph 44 of their factum:

Courts routinely enforce Canadian judgments in bankruptcy, respecting our similar common law traditions including our respect for comity and restraint. In enforcing the decision of this Honourable Court in *Metcalfe & Mansfield Alternative Investments et al.*, ("ABCP") the US Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York, wrote:

The U.S. and Canada share the same common law traditions and fundamental principles of law. Canadian courts afford creditors a full and fair opportunity to be heard in a manner consistent with standards of U.S. due process. U.S. federal courts have repeatedly granted comity to Canadian proceedings. *United Feature Syndicate, Inc. v. Miler Features Syndicate, Inc.*, 216 F. Supp. 2d 198, 212 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) ("There is no question that bankruptcy proceedings in Canada—a sister common law jurisdiction with procedures akin to our own—are entitled to comity under appropriate circumstances.") (internal quotation marks and citations omitted); *Tradewell, Inc. v. American Sensors Elecs., Inc.*, No. 96 Civ. 2474(DAB), 1997 WL 423075, at *1 n.3 (S.D.N.Y. 1997) ("It is well-settled in actions commenced in New York that judgments of the Canadian courts are to be given effect under principles of comity.") (internal quotation marks and citation omitted); *Cornjeldv. Investors Overseas Servs., Ltd.*, 471 F. Supp. 1255, 1259 (S.D.N.Y. 1979) ("The fact that the foreign country involved is Canada is significant. It is well-settled in New York that the judgments of the Canadian courts are to be given effect under principles of comity. Trustees in bankruptcy appointed by Canadian courts have been recognized in actions commenced in the United States. More importantly, Canada is a sister common law jurisdiction with procedures akin to our own, and thus there need be no concern over the adequacy of the procedural safeguards of Canadian proceedings.") (internal quotation marks and citations omitted)¹⁵

79 *MAAX Corporation (MAAX)* provides some assistance on the U.S. treatment to CCAA proceedings in asset sales. The salient elements in *MAAX* included the fact that the sale was conducted prior to entering CCAA protection, only the Canadian entity ultimately sought protection under the Act and no concurrent U.S. proceedings were initiated at first. The *MAAX* companies operated extensively in the U.S. and internationally, and were eventually brought into the U.S. via Chapter 15. The Canadian court approved the move into the U.S. and granted the sale. While there were some operating companies based almost solely in the U.S. (opening bank accounts to qualify under the CCAA, as was done in the present case), the U.S. Bankruptcy Court looked at the entity as a whole and granted the petition.¹⁶ The American court approved of a flexible approach to the U.S. asset sale, allowing it to go forward without a competitive bidding process, stalking horse or auction.

80 One of the essential features of the orders sought is the requirement that recognition be sought and obtained in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, pursuant to Chapter 15 of that Code, of the Orders sought in this Court, including the adding of Additional Applicants.

81 I am satisfied that if there is a valid objection by the SLL, it is appropriately made in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court at a hearing to recognize this Order. I do not accept the proposition that this Court, by making the Order sought, would usurp a determinative review by the U.S. Court should it be found necessary.

82 Given the purpose and flexibility of the CCAA process, it is consistent with the jurisdiction of this Court to add the Additional Applicants for the appropriate purpose of facilitating and implementing the entire transaction, which is approved.

Conclusion

83 For the foregoing reasons, I am satisfied:

1. That it is not appropriate to re-open the Marketing Process;
2. That this Court does have jurisdiction to consider a sale transaction that incidentally does affect assets of a Canadian company in the United States;
3. That in all the circumstances it is appropriate to approve the proposed transaction.

Appendix A

Applicable Provisions of the Inter-Creditor Agreement

Section 3.1

Until the Discharge of First Lien Obligations has occurred, whether or not any Insolvency or Liquidation Proceeding has been commenced by or against the Company or any other Grantor, subject to Section 3.1(a)(1), the First Lien Collateral Agent and the other First Lien Claimholders shall have the right to enforce rights, exercise remedies (including set-off and the right to credit bid their debt) and make determinations regarding the release, disposition, or restrictions with respect to the Collateral without any consultation with or the consent of the Second Lien Collateral Agent or any other Second Lien Claimholder...

Section 5.1 (a)

If in connection with the exercise of the First Lien Collateral Agent's remedies in respect of the Collateral provided for in Section 3.1, the First Lien Collateral Agent, for itself or on behalf of any of the other First Lien Claimholders, releases any of its Liens on any part of the Collateral or releases any Grantor from its obligations under its guaranty of the First Lien Obligations in connection with the sale of the stock, or substantially all the assets, of such Grantor, then the Liens, if any, of the Second Lien Collateral Agent, for itself or for the benefit of the Second Lien Claimholders, on such Collateral, and the obligations of such Grantor under its guaranty of the Second Lien Obligations, shall be automatically, unconditionally and simultaneously released...

...The Second Lien Collateral Agent, for itself or on behalf of any such Second Lien Claimholders, promptly shall execute and deliver to the First Lien Collateral Agent or such Grantor such termination statements, releases and other documents as the First Lien Collateral Agent or such Grantor may request to effectively confirm such release.

Section 5.1 (c)

Until the Discharge of First Lien Obligations occurs, the Second Lien Collateral Agent, for itself and on behalf of the Second Lien Claimholders, hereby irrevocably constitutes and appoints the First Lien Collateral Agent and any officer or

agent of the First Lien Collateral Agent, with full power of substitution, as its true and lawful attorney-in-fact with full irrevocable power and authority in the place and stead of the Second Lien Collateral Agent or such holder or in the First Lien Collateral Agent's own name, from time to time in the First Lien Collateral Agent's discretion, for the purpose of carrying out the terms of this Section 5.1, to take any and all appropriate action and to execute any and all documents and instruments which may be necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Section 5.1 , including any endorsements or other instruments of transfer or release.

Order accordingly.

Footnotes

- 1 The appearing party on this motion is the Agent for the Second Lien Lenders, also referred to in the materials as Second Lien Creditors, hereinafter SLL.
- 2 Like the Second Lien Lenders, the First Lien Lenders appeared formally by their Agent, were sometimes referred to as the First Lien Creditors and will be hereinafter referred to as the FLL.
- 3 It is to be noted that there is no existing U.S. action of which the Court was made aware by either the SLL or the FLL.
- 4 [1990] 3 S.C.R. 1077 (S.C.C.) at 1096
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Supplemental Initial Order, at paragraphs 8 and 24, Motion Record of the First Lien Lenders' Agent, at pages 10 and 18
- 7 *Re Maax Corporation*, unreported, Orders of the Superior Court of Quebec, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tabs 1a-c; Order by the US Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware Granting Recognition and Related Relief, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tab 1d.
- 8 *Re Madill Equipment Canada*, Case No. 08-41426, Distribution and Vesting Orders of the Supreme Court of British Columbia; Order of the US Bankruptcy Court (Western District of Washington at Tacoma) Granting Motion Authorizing Sale of Assets, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tab 2.
- 9 *Re. ROL Manufacturing (Canada) Ltd., et al.*, unreported, Order of the Quebec Superior Court (Commercial Division) Approving the Sale of the PSH Division, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tab 3a; Order of the US Bankruptcy Court, Southwestern District of Ohio, Authorizing and Approving Sale of PSH Division, TD Supplemental Brief of Authorities, Tab 3c.
- 10 *Re Biltrite Rubber Inc.*, Case No. 09-31423 (MAW), Sale Approval and Vesting Order and Distribution Order of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, TD Supplemental Brief of Authorities, Tabs 4a-b; Order of the US Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Ohio Western Division Enforcing the Orders of the Ontario Court, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tab 4c.
- 11 *Re. Pope and Talbot, Inc. et al.*, Case No. 08-11933 (CSS), Orders of the US Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, TD Supplementary Brief of Authorities, Tab 5.
- 12 United States Bankruptcy Court, Case No. 09-16709, January 5, 2010, Martin Glenn J.
- 13 *Metcalfe* at 18
- 14 (2006), 19 C.B.R. (5th) 54 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) (*Muscletech*), titled *Re RSM Richter Inc. v. Aguilar*, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 57595 (S.D.N.Y.) (*Re RSM Richter*)
- 15 See footnote 12, *supra*.
- 16 *In re MAAAX Corp., et al.*, No. 08-11443 (Bankr. D. Del. Aug. 6, 2008)

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