No. S-226670
Vancouver Registry

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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

AND

IN THE MATTER OF THE *BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT*, S.B.C. 2002, C. 57, AS AMENDED AND THE *BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT*, S.N.B. 1981, C. B-9.1, AS AMENDED

AND

IN THE MATTER OF A PLAN OF COMPROMISE AND ARRANGEMENT OF TREVALI MINING CORPORATION AND TREVALI MINING (NEW BRUNSWICK) LTD.

PETITIONERS

RESPONDING APPLICATION RECORD

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Date and time of application: October 6, 2022 at 9:00 AM
Place of application: Virtual
Time estimate: 20 minutes
Application Record prepared by: Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP

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INDEX

3

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PETITIONERS

APPLICATION RESPONSE
(CCAA Shareholder Representation)

Application Response of: the Trevali Mining Corporation board of directors (the "**Board**").

THIS IS A RESPONSE TO the Notice of Application of Michael Demmer, Rodney Brunk, Tim Kempter, and William Williamson (collectively, the "**Ad Hoc Committee of Trevali Shareholders**" or "**Applicants**") dated August 25, 2022.

Part 1: ORDERS CONSENTED TO

The Board consent to the granting of **NONE** of the orders set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of the Notice of Application.

Part 2: ORDERS OPPOSED

The Board opposes the granting of **ALL** of the orders set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of the Notice of Application.

Part 3: ORDERS ON WHICH NO POSITION IS TAKEN

The Monitor takes no position on the granting of the orders set out in the following paragraphs

of Part 1 of the Notice of Application: **NONE**.

Part 4: FACTUAL BASIS

A. Background

1. On August 19, 2022, Trevali Mining Corporation ("**Trevali**") and Trevali Mining (New Brunswick) Ltd. (the "**Petitioners**") were granted an initial order (the "**Initial Order**") by the Supreme Court of British Columbia to commence proceedings ("**CCAA Proceedings**") under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, RSC 1985, c C-36, as amended (the "**CCAA**").

2. The Initial Order appointed FTI Consulting Canada Inc. as Monitor in the CCAA Proceedings (the "**Monitor**") and established a stay of proceedings (the "**Stay of Proceedings**") in favour of the Applicants until August 29, 2022. The Stay of Proceedings has since been extended until and including October 6, 2022 by an Amended and Restated Initial Order (the "**ARIO**") granted by this Honourable Court on August 29, 2022.

3. On September 14, 2022, the Petitioners obtained an order from this Court (the "**SISP Order**") approving procedures for a sales and investment solicitation process (the "**SISP**") and a sales agent agreement (the "**Sales Agent Agreement**") between the Trevali corporations and National Bank Financial Inc. (the "**Sales Agent**") and granting a charge to secure the Sales Agent's fees (the "**Sales Agent Charge**").

4. On September 14, 2022, the Petitioners obtained an order from this Court (the "**KERP Order**") approving a key employee retention plan (the "**KERP**") and granting a charge over the Applicants' property in favour of certain KERP employees as security for the amounts payable under the KERP in the amount of US $800,000 (the "**KERP Charge**").

5. On September 29, 2022, the Petitioners filed a Notice of Application returnable October 11, 2022 seeking an extension of the Stay of Proceedings.

B. The Representative Counsel Application

6. The Applicants of the within application are the Ad Hoc Committee of Trevali Shareholders, composed of three individuals who purportedly represent the interests of common shareholders of Trevali.

7. In the Representative Counsel Application, the Ad Hoc Committee of Trevali Shareholders seek an order that, among other things:

   (a) the Ad Hoc Committee of Trevali Shareholders (the "**CCAA Representatives**") be appointed to represent the interests of all common shareholders of Trevali, with exceptions, as of the close of trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange on April 14, 2022 and/or August 15, 2022 ("**Trevali Shareholder Class**") in these CCAA Proceedings with respect to any claims against Trevali and/or its current and/or former directors and officers arising out of or relating to their transactions in common shares of Trevali;

   (b) the law firm of KND Complex Litigation ("**KND**") be appointed as Counsel to the CCAA Representatives in these CCAA Proceedings; and

   (c) KND be authorized to collaborate with other counsel as necessary or desirable to give effect to the sought Order and take all steps and to do all acts necessary or desirable to carry out the terms of the sought Order

   (the "**CCAA Representation Order**").

8. In the Representative Counsel Application, the Ad Hoc Committee of Trevali Shareholders refer to a proposed multijurisdictional class proceeding related to claims for the alleged violation of securities laws (the "**Proposed Securities Class Action**"). The Proposed Securities Class Action is intended to be brought against the Board, including current and former directors.

Part 5: LEGAL BASIS

A. This Court has discretion to appoint representative counsel

9. Section 11 of the *CCAA* grants this Court the discretion to appoint a representative counsel:

> **General power of court**
>
> **11** Despite anything in the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* or the *Winding-up and Restructuring Act*, if an application is made under this Act in respect of a debtor company, the court, on the application of any person interested in the matter, may, subject to the

> restrictions set out in this Act, on notice to any other person or without notice as it may see fit, make any order that it considers appropriate in the circumstances.

CCAA, s. 11 *League Assets Corp, Re*, 2013 BCSC 2043 at para 70, *1057863 BC Ltd (Re)*, 2020 BCSC 1359 at para 124 *Mountain Equipment Co-Operative (Re)*, 2020 BCSC 2037 at para 22

B. The test for the appointment of representative counsel

10. In deciding whether to exercise its discretion to appoint a representative counsel, courts evaluate the following two considerations: (i) whether the persons to be represented by the representative counsel have a commonality of interest, and (ii) whether it is fair and reasonable in the circumstances to appoint the representative counsel.

11. Commonality of interest is evaluated with regard to the following six considerations:

    (a) commonality of interest is assessed based on the non-fragmentation test, not on an identity of interest test;

    (b) the interests to be considered are the legal interests that a creditor holds *qua* creditor in relationship to the debtor company prior to and under the plan as well as on liquidation;

    (c) the commonality of interests is to be viewed purposively, bearing in mind the object of the *CCAA*, namely to facilitate reorganizations if possible;

    (d) in placing a broad and purposive interpretation on the *CCAA*, the court should be careful to resist classification approaches that would potentially jeopardize viable plans;

    (e) absent bad faith, the motivations of creditors to approve or disapprove of a plan are irrelevant; and

    (f) the requirement of creditors being able to consult together means being able to assess their legal entitlement as creditors before or after the plan in a similar manner.

Nortel Networks Corp, Re (2009), 53 CBR (5th) 196 at para 62, 2009 CanLII 26603 (ONSC)

Stelco Inc, Re (2005), 78 OR (3d) 241 (CA)
at para 23

12. Where the parties to be represented by the representative counsel have a commonality of interest in light of the factors outlined above, this Court has considered the following in deciding whether it is fair and reasonable to exercise its discretion to appoint a representative counsel:

    (a) the vulnerability and resources of the group to be represented;

    (b) any benefit to the companies under *CCAA* protection;

    (c) any social benefit to be derived from representation of the group;

    (d) the facilitation of the administration of the proceedings and efficiency;

    (e) the avoidance of a multiplicity of legal retainers;

    (f) the balance of convenience and whether it is fair and just including to the creditors of the estate;

    (g) whether representative counsel has already been appointed for those who have similar interests to the group seeking representation and who is also prepared to act for the group seeking the order; and

    (h) the position of other stakeholders and the Monitor.

1057863 at paras 125 – 129
League Assets at paras 71 – 75
Mountain Equipment Co-Operative (Re),
2020 BCSC 2037 at para 23

C. The test has not been satisfied

13. The Applicants have failed to establish that the CCAA Representation Order is warranted and satisfies the applicable test.

14. First, it is unclear whether the Applicants and the Trevali Shareholder Class have a commonality of interest such that the relief sought in the Representative Counsel Application would assist in these CCAA Proceedings.

15. Second, it is not apparent that the Applicants or the Trevali Shareholders Class more broadly are vulnerable or otherwise lack the resources to retain counsel themselves in these CCAA Proceedings. This is quite unlike a proceeding where former employees are placed in a vulnerable financial position and have lost their source of income. Instead, these are individuals and potentially corporate entities who have made a risk-based decision to invest in a company. Further, the Applicants have provided no evidentiary support for the bald statement that most of the members of the Trevali Shareholders Class are retail investors who "likely" lack the financial and other resources to appear in this proceeding to represent their own interests, or to otherwise individually advance their own claims.

16. It is also unclear whether the Trevali Shareholders Class members support the relief sought in the Representative Counsel Application. There is no evidentiary support to suggest this and the Representative Counsel Application is silent on this. It is, therefore, not apparent that the relief sought in the Representative Counsel Application will, in fact, avoid a multiplicity of legal retainers.

17. Although the Applicants claim that they do not have a conflict of interests with the other members of the Trevali Shareholders Class, they also claim that "the Securities Claimants cannot be readily ascertained or found". If the class cannot be determined or ascertained, it can likewise not be determined at this juncture whether the Applicants' interests are in conflict with them.

18. Furthermore, the Applicants have not established that the relief sought in the Representative Counsel Application would lead to any meaningful benefit to the Petitioners, or a social benefit more generally.

19. In addition, KND seeks to be counsel for the Proposed Securities Class Action. The creation of a right or identity of the proposed class is inappropriate and not necessary in the CCAA Proceedings. Further, it could potentially result in confusion and risk inconsistent findings if the Proposed Securities Class Action is filed.

20. Finally, in considering the balance of convenience, there is nothing to suggest that the Applicants or the Trevali Shareholders Class members will be prejudiced by participating in, and having their claims evaluated and resolved through, the claims process.

21. For these reasons, the Board opposes the relief sought in the Representative Counsel Application.

Part 6: MATERIAL RELIED ON

1. Affidavit No. 1 of Michael Demmer, affirmed August 23, 2022;

2. Affidavit No. 1 of Hadi Davarinia, affirmed August 24, 2022;

3. Affidavit No. 1 of Hadi Davarinia, affirmed October 3, 2022; and

4. Such further and other material as counsel may advise and this Honourable Court may permit.

The application respondent estimates that the application will take 20 minutes.

The application respondent has filed in this proceeding a document that contains the application respondent's address for service.

Dated: October 4, 2022

Mary Buttery, K.C. / Amanda G. Manasterski,
Counsel for the Application Respondent

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Citation: *League Assets Corp. (Re),*
2013 BCSC 2043

Date: 20131108
Docket: S137743
Registry: Vancouver

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

And

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

And

In The Matter of the *Canada Business Corporations Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-44, As Amended

And

In The Matter of A Plan of Compromise and Arrangement of League Assets Corp. and Those Parties Listed on Schedule "A"

Petitioners

Before: The Honourable Madam Justice Fitzpatrick

Reasons for Judgment

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Counsel for TCC Mortgage Holdings Inc. FCC Mortgage Associates Inc.; Citizens Bank of Canada; First Calgary Financial Credit Union Limited, Firm Capital Mortgage Fund Inc.	Geoffrey Thompson R.B. Dawkins
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Counsel for Business Development Bank of Canada	D.B. Hyndman
Counsel for Timbercreek Mortgage Investment Corporation	William C. Kaplan, Q.C. H. Sevenoaks
Counsel for Ad Hoc Committee of Convertible Promissory Noteholders of League Opportunity Fund Ltd.	W.E.J. Skelly
Counsel for Export Development Canada, Bank of Montreal and Churchill Real Estate Inc.	H. Ferris
Counsel for Whil Concepts Inc., NWM Private Equity LP and NWM Balanced Mortgage Fund (Proposed DIP Lenders)	G.J. Gehlen
Counsel for Maxium Financial Services	P.J. Reardon
Counsel for Roynat Inc.	D.K. Fitzpatrick
Counsel for Proposed Representative Counsel for Investors	J. Grieve
Place and Date Of Hearing:	Vancouver, B.C. October 25, 2013
Place and Date of Judgment:	Vancouver, B.C. November 8, 2013

Introduction

[1] This proceeding was recently commenced, on October 17, 2013, under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 (the "*CCAA*"). On October 18, 2013, an Initial Order (the "Initial Order") was granted by Madam Justice Brown of this court. That Initial Order included an Administration Charge of $750,000 and a Directors' Charge of $500,000. PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc. was appointed as Monitor (the "Monitor").

[2] The organization of the petitioner group of companies (the "League Group") is exceedingly complex, as I will describe in more detail below. In broad terms, there is a complicated corporate structure comprised of real estate investment trusts, limited partnerships and corporations involved in the development and/or management of various real estate projects in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. The assets of the League Group include certain securities and income producing and development properties which have been said to have an "implied" equity of over $210 million. Liabilities of the League Group are in excess of $410 million, including claims from approximately 3,200 investors who paid approximately $352 million for various interests.

[3] The comeback hearing has been scheduled for November 18, 2013. Following the granting of the Initial Order, various secured creditors on individual projects have consolidated their opposition to these proceedings. It is expected that they will raise substantial issues at the comeback hearing.

[4] In the meantime, the League Group has brought this application for debtor in possession or "DIP" financing, given its contention that it urgently needs interim funding until the comeback hearing. The Monitor has also brought an application to appoint representative counsel for the investor group.

[5] On October 25, 2013, I heard both applications and granted both orders, although on somewhat different terms than those sought. I indicated at that time that my reasons would follow. These are those reasons.

Background

[6] Emanuel Arruda and Adam Gant started the League Group in 2005 with two projects. Further properties were acquired on the same basis as before, namely using traditional bank financing and individual investor contributions.

[7] At present, the majority of the League Group entities are owned by IGW Assets Limited Partnership ("LALP"). The general partner of this limited partnership is owned by two numbered companies, which are owned or controlled by Mr. Arruda and Mr. Gant's family trusts respectively.

[8] The League Group, which has sought and obtained protection under the *CCAA* and related entities, and their general business activities can be generally summarized as follows:

a) IGW Real Estate Investment Trust ("IGW REIT"): IGW REIT does business mainly through the IGW REIT Limited Partnership ("IGW LP") which undertakes certain project development directly or through separate limited partnerships located in B.C., Alberta, Quebec and Ontario. IGW REIT has issued various notes totalling approximately $10 million. In addition, there are numerous unsecured loans outstanding and outstanding mortgages in respect of various projects;

b) LALP project specific limited partnerships: LALP also operates another set of such limited partnerships designed for short term investments, located in B.C., Alberta and Ontario. Each project general partner is owned by LALP with investors buying units in the limited partnership. Some of the project entities are said to be solvent and not financially tied to the filing petitioners (such as through guarantees) and are therefore not filing parties themselves;

c) League Assets Corp. ("LAC"): LAC owns various general partners of a number of limited partnerships which are involved in various projects, the main ones being Redux Duncan, Colwood Development and Fort St.

John, all located in B.C. There are other entities owned by LAC with diverse, but it seems mostly inactive, operations. As with LALP, a number of LAC related entities (and hence projects) are said to be solvent and not financially tied to the filing petitioners. They are therefore not filing parties themselves;

d) "Other" project limited partnerships: these have a similar structure to that of LAC and LALP, save that Mr. Gant and Mr. Arruda own the general partners for the project specific limited partnerships in B.C., Quebec and Ontario. This is said to be an oversight and in any event, these "other" limited partnerships are managed within the League Group, with LAC providing management services for these projects;

e) League Opportunity Fund ("LOF"): LOF is wholly owned by LALP. It is a vehicle for investors and it has issued promissory notes of approximately $13.5 million. The money was loaned by LOF to other members of the League Group. IGW LP (majority owned by IGW REIT) and LAC have guaranteed these notes;

f) investment and wealth management: there are a number of entities within the League Group's investment division which relate to investment and wealth management, including the Harris Fraser Group Limited which was recently acquired in July 2013; and

g) asset management: LAC is retained by IGW REIT, IGW LP and various project limited partnerships to provide asset management, for which it charges fees.

[9] The causes of the League Group's financial difficulties have been attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the 2008 worldwide financial crisis caused a number of delays to certain projects; reduced demand resulted in increased borrowing costs in the long term. Secondly, the recovery from the financial downturn has resulted in many investors seeking to redeem their investments with the League Group to look

for higher risk/higher return investments. Thirdly, financing difficulties have been experienced on some projects, such as Redux Duncan and Colwood Development. Generally speaking, Mr. Gant states that the League Group has outgrown both its current corporate structure, which is too complex, and also its project by project funding model.

[10] The League Group currently has approximately 105 employees in various roles in Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary. The fairly recent acquisition of the Harris Group is adding a further 20 employees in Hong Kong.

[11] There has been substantial evidence introduced in Mr. Gant's affidavits regarding the value of the various assets and projects and the secured debt against them. Aside from some Marketable Securities, there are 17 income producing properties and four development properties, for a total of 21 properties.

[12] There are 34 mortgage lenders and some have charges on multiple properties. Exhibit "E" to Mr. Gant's affidavit #2 sets out a summary of the various properties or projects, including the appraised values ($395.6 million), the outstanding mortgage debt ($184.6 million) and the "implied equity" in those properties or projects. I will revisit the reliability of this document in further detail below, but it will suffice at this stage to refer to the indicated "implied equity" in the Marketable Securities ($5.8 million), Income Producing Properties ($76.2 million) and Development Properties ($128.9), for a total of approximately $211 million.

[13] Unsecured creditors include the note holders in the various project limited partnerships and IGW REIT, inter-corporate debt primarily between IGW LP and other members of the League Group, trade creditors (mostly relating to Colwood Development) and professional service firms (although some of them recently obtained security for their debts just before the filing).

[14] Mr. Gant indicates that government remittances are substantially up to date, including those owed to Canada Revenue Agency and the British Columbia government. Income taxes are paid in full for 2012. All of these amounts continue to

be paid in the ordinary course of business. However, property taxes are substantially in arrears.

[15] Finally, the investor group is comprised mostly of individuals and Mr. Gant believes that some of them have invested a significant portion of their net worth in the League Group. There are also some institutional investors. As of September 2013, IGW REIT ceased making distributions to its investors.

[16] Mr. Gant states that the League Group has already taken steps to attempt a restructuring but has been hampered by the lack of funds. He states that any restructuring would likely involve: simplifying the corporate structure, divesting underperforming projects, seeking a stable and comprehensive funding for the various projects, changing the IGW loan process and finally, a potential public offering to increase equity and reduce credit requirements.

Secured Creditor's Objections

[17] It quickly became apparent during this hearing that a substantial number of the secured creditors were opposed to these proceedings generally and also specifically opposed to the relief sought on these applications. The secured creditors appearing on these applications included BCMP Mortgage Investment Corporation, Interior Savings Credit Union, Firm Capital Mortgage Fund Inc., Citizens Bank of Canada, First Calgary Financial Credit Union Limited, Canadian Western Bank, Romspen Investment Corporation, Business Development Bank of Canada, Timbercreek Mortgage Investment Corporation, Export Development Canada, Bank of Montreal, Churchill Real Estate Inc., Maxium Financial Services and Roynat Inc.

[18] I will not address the complaints or arguments of each individual secured creditor. Many of the arguments are interrelated. Those arguments can be generally summarized in the broad categories as follows:

a) Service/notice: despite the preamble to the Initial Order stating that the court was advised "that the secured creditors and others who are likely to be affected by the charges created herein were given notice", many of the

secured creditors state that they did not receive any notice of that hearing or that notice was sent directly to the general offices of the secured creditors which inevitably meant that it was not addressed by them after the hearing had taken place.

No evidence was before me concerning service/notice to the secured creditors. It is apparent that many of the secured creditors intend to argue at the comeback hearing that the Initial Order was granted on an *ex parte* basis and is therefore subject to being set aside for material non-disclosure, including that there was no true urgency in hearing the matter on an *ex parte* basis. It is now generally agreed that the comeback hearing will be heard on a *de novo* basis with the League Group having the onus of justifying to the court the continuation of the provisions in the Initial Order in accordance with the *CCAA*, s. 11.02(3).

b) Statutory Prerequisites: it is argued that individual entities within the League Group do not meet the definition of "debtor company" in s. 2 of the *CCAA* (i.e. they are not "insolvent") and therefore, those entities do not qualify to file for protection under s. 3. I note, however, that this particular issue was addressed before Brown J. prior to the granting of the Initial Order.

In addition, at least one secured creditor intends to argue that the Initial Order should be set aside because the plan of arrangement was doomed to fail (see for example, *Chef Ready Foods Ltd. v. Hongkong Bank of Canada*, [1990] B.C.J. No. 2384 (C.A.));

c) The Enforcing Mortgagees: The secured creditors argue that there was no justification for two of the secured creditors, being TCC Mortgage Holdings Inc. ("TCC") and Quest Mortgage Corp. ("Quest"), being exempted from the stay under the Initial Order (para. 18).

TCC had commenced foreclosure proceedings in May 2013 in respect of the Redux Duncan property. An Order Nisi of foreclosure was granted in August 2013 with the redemption period due to expire in January 2014. Apparently, TCC had brought an application for the appointment of a receiver about the time that the Initial Order was granted. In addition, Quest's mortgages over the Colwood Development property were in default and demands for payment were served in early October 2013. The time for enforcement of those demands would have expired just before the granting of the Initial Order. It is my understanding that Quest has now also commenced a foreclosure proceeding against the Colwood Development.

Unfortunately, the exclusion of these "Enforcing Mortgagees" has engendered a response by the other secured creditors who, not surprisingly, wish to be treated in the same fashion. The fact that they are being treated differently has given rise to the other secured creditors taking the position that these proceedings are, unfairly, affecting only them in terms of their ability to enforce their security. In addition, it is only their security which is being primed by the various charges granted in these proceedings, since the security of the Enforcing Mortgagees has been exempted from the Administration Charge and the Directors' Charge and it is also proposed to be exempted from any DIP Lender's Charge or Representative Counsel Charge.

In many *CCAA* proceedings, foreclosing mortgagees are stayed in a variety of circumstances including when they have already begun enforcement proceedings. Although it was described as an "Enforcing Mortgagee" in the Initial Order, Quest had not yet commenced any foreclosure proceeding or at best, had only recently filed the action. Reasons for the exclusion of these parties were said to be not only that there were monetary defaults under their security, but also to avoid arguments by them as to the appropriateness of this *CCAA* proceeding,

based on well-known British Columbia authorities such as *Cliffs Over Maple Bay Investments Ltd. v. Fisgard Capital Corp.*, 2008 BCCA 327. Accordingly, while the League Group may have avoided that argument from the Enforcing Mortgagees, the decision to exempt them has resulted in the other secured creditors now being resolved to make those same arguments, in addition to arguing that the League Group was not acting in good faith by agreeing to that exemption.

My only preliminary comment on the issue at this point is that while the court strives to achieve fairness in the proceedings, the task of the court in imposing the stay is in part to ensure that it is "appropriate": *CCAA*, s. 11.02(3)(a). As Deschamps J. stated in *Century Services Inc. v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2010 SCC 60, appropriateness in part extends to treating stakeholders "as advantageously and fairly as the circumstances permit": para. 70. Often there are good reasons to depart from a blanket stay affecting various stakeholders, as is evidenced from the provisions of the model order. Typical examples would include payment of employees and critical suppliers. However, in respect of stakeholders having what seems to be a commonality of interest (and commonality of potential prejudice), I would expect that there would be cogent and compelling evidence to support an order that treated them differently.

d) The "White Boxes" Entities: The secured creditors also make certain arguments in respect of certain members of the League Group who are *not* part of the petitioning group. I have already referred to the extremely complex structure of the League Group. The organizational chart includes various entities marked in yellow which are part of the League Group and who are also petitioning debtors. Many other entities are identified in what have been called the "white boxes" on the organization chart which include those entities that were not part of the petitioning debtor group. I have already referred to some of these "white box" entities above, but it is

said by Mr. Gant that they also generally include firstly, shell companies where there are no assets and secondly, entities where the sole liability is to investors and as such, they are not insolvent.

The secured creditors argue that the exclusion of these "white box" entities is suspicious in that there has been inadequate disclosure of the financial circumstances relating to them. In particular, the suggestion has been made that there may be sufficient income or assets in those other entities to support the operations of the League Group in these proceedings without the necessity of priming charges which prejudice their security. If these entities are indeed solvent, then this argument would appear to be diametrically opposed to the other argument of some secured creditors (discussed above) that only *insolvent* entities should be petitioning debtors.

Despite these objections, and for the purposes of these applications, I am satisfied that the materials generally disclose the circumstances relating to these "white box" entities and why these entities have not been included in the *CCAA* filing. I do, however, appreciate that the stakeholders, including the secured creditors, may require further information about these "white box" entities beyond what is contained in Mr. Gant's affidavits. I expect that the League Group, possibly with the assistance of the Monitor, can provide reasonable and relevant material to them so that they might explore this matter. At present, I simply acknowledge that this may be the basis for arguments to be advanced by the secured creditors at the comeback hearing in respect of whether the League Group is operating in a *bona fide* manner.

e) Conflicts: Last, but not least, the secured creditors have raised a number of conflicts on the part of counsel involved in these proceedings. It is clear to me that these conflicts have significantly coloured the perceived fairness of these proceedings from the outset. The original counsel for the

> League Group (who has since withdrawn) disclosed, after the Initial Order was granted, that she has also acted in the past for Quest. Some of the secured creditors intend to argue at the comeback hearing that there was material nondisclosure of this conflict to Brown J. and that this relationship between the law firm and Quest may have affected the League Group's decision to exclude Quest from the stay.
>
> In addition, in the days following the granting of the Initial Order and in the face of the League Group's application for DIP financing, it was disclosed that the law firm acting for the Monitor (who ceased to act at the end of this hearing) had also undertaken to act for the DIP Lenders in respect of the preparation of financing documents. The explanation is that the DIP Lenders urgently required counsel to address the League Group's pressing need for this DIP financing. Although screens were put in place between the individual lawyers at the law firm, it has unfortunately resulted in the perception that the Monitor's support of the DIP financing, or at least the legal advice relating to the Monitor's support, has been influenced by that relationship. This turn of events was extremely unfortunate, particularly in light of the unquestioned duties of the Monitor as an officer of this court and its overriding duty to act fairly in respect of all stakeholders, whether they are in support of or opposed to the DIP financing.
>
> Finally, current counsel for the League Group has disclosed that his law firm is an unsecured creditor. I am not aware of any objections arising from this fact. However, it does appear that the law firm was giving legal advice to the DIP Lenders at one point.

[19] I am advised that all of the issues above may be raised at the comeback hearing. In addition, the secured creditors raised these issues on this application arguing that, in these circumstances, the court should be extremely reluctant to authorize DIP financing and grant a DIP charge or any other charge based on the

substantial attacks that will be made on the Initial Order and on the continuation of this proceeding. It is no doubt the strategy of the secured creditors at this time to attempt to inject sufficient uncertainty into these proceedings such that any DIP lender will be reluctant to advance monies to the League Group.

[20] It not my intention or role at this time to revisit the basis upon which the Initial Order was granted. Presumably, the Initial Order was granted having regard to the statutory requirements under the *CCAA* and based on well-known principles applicable on such applications, including those set out in *Century Services Inc.* at paras.15-18, 57-71. I appreciate that the issues raised by the secured creditors are significant and if substantiated, may have serious consequences. Nevertheless, I am not convinced that these arguments are sufficient to dissuade the court from granting interim relief at this time, simply to see the League Group through to the comeback hearing, some 24 days away at the time of this hearing.

[21] Accordingly, it is my intention to proceed to hear and decide these applications before me based on the Initial Order being extant and based on the updated and current circumstances of the League Group. I have specifically rejected the suggestion of one of the secured creditors to grant these orders on a "without prejudice" basis.

DIP Financing

[22] In its application materials, the League Group sought approval of a DIP facility in the amount of $31.5 million from Whil Concepts Inc., NWM Private Equity LP and NWM Balanced Mortgage Fund (whom I will collectively call the "DIP Lenders"). This proposed facility was not only for what was said to be operating funding for the next 13 weeks ($5 million), but for other purposes such as payment of tax arrears ($3.5 million), mortgage payments for 13 weeks ($5 million) and to payout one of the existing mortgage lenders, TCC ($18 million).

[23] Despite this, the League Group only sought a DIP Lender's Charge of $1.6 million which was said to be the amount of emergency funding that was urgently needed to get to the comeback hearing on November 18. The DIP Lenders

supported this restricted charge, based on their submissions that they had no intention of funding, save and except with a DIP Lender's Charge. I understand that given the urgency, and despite the objections of the secured creditors, the DIP Lenders are prepared to immediately fund this amount and in doing so, waive the following conditions: that advances would only be made after expiry of the appeal period and that certain administrative matters, such as insurance, be in place.

[24] The test for DIP funding is now mandated by the *CCAA*, s. 11.2:

> **Interim financing**
>
> 11.2 (1) On application by a debtor company and on notice to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the security or charge, a court may make an order declaring that all or part of the company's property is subject to a security or charge — in an amount that the court considers appropriate — in favour of a person specified in the order who agrees to lend to the company an amount approved by the court as being required by the company, having regard to its cash-flow statement. The security or charge may not secure an obligation that exists before the order is made.
>
> **Priority — secured creditors**
>
> (2) The court may order that the security or charge rank in priority over the claim of any secured creditor of the company.
>
> **Priority — other orders**
>
> (3) The court may order that the security or charge rank in priority over any security or charge arising from a previous order made under subsection (1) only with the consent of the person in whose favour the previous order was made.
>
> **Factors to be considered**
>
> (4) In deciding whether to make an order, the court is to consider, among other things,
>
> (*a*) the period during which the company is expected to be subject to proceedings under this Act;
>
> (*b*) how the company's business and financial affairs are to be managed during the proceedings;
>
> (*c*) whether the company's management has the confidence of its major creditors;
>
> (*d*) whether the loan would enhance the prospects of a viable compromise or arrangement being made in respect of the company;
>
> (*e*) the nature and value of the company's property;
>
> (*f*) whether any creditor would be materially prejudiced as a result of the security or charge; and

(*g*) the monitor's report referred to in paragraph 23(1)(*b*), if any.

[25] In accordance with the *CCAA*, s. 11.2(1), the League Group has filed a cash flow forecast to the date of the comeback hearing.

[26] As a preliminary matter, no one has challenged the adequacy of the efforts by the League Group to obtain satisfactory interim financing. Nor is there any challenge to the appropriateness of the business terms arranged with the DIP Lenders, including the term, interest rate and level of various fees for monitoring the commitment itself and professionals. The Monitor comments favourably on the process by which the DIP financing was sought by the League Group and the reasonableness of the terms proposed by the DIP Lenders.

[27] It is proposed that the DIP Lender's Charge would rank after the Administration Charge but before the Directors' Charge and any Representative Counsel Charge.

[28] Notice of this application for DIP financing has been given to secured creditors likely to be affected, as required by the *CCAA*, s. 11.2(1). The secured creditors attending on this application object to the financing for a variety of reasons (as discussed above), and also on the basis that this funding is not urgent, there is an insufficient evidentiary basis for the relief sought and that they will be prejudiced by the DIP Lender's Charge ranking ahead of their security.

[29] I will address each of the factors identified in *CCAA*, s.11.2(4).

(a) The period during which the League Group is expected to be subject to proceedings under the CCAA

[30] The DIP financing that is sought today is simply to allow the League Group to continue its operations until the comeback hearing on November 18 by allowing it to make certain core payments.

(b) How the League Group's business and financial affairs are to be managed during the proceedings

[31] Mr. Gant states in his affidavit that the League Group has been working closely with the Monitor regarding its financial affairs, including reviewing all payments made by the League Group. The Monitor similarly says that it has been working cooperatively with the League Group in terms of preparing the cash flow forecast and other financial documentation.

[32] In addition, the League Group had already made certain efforts to reduce operating expenses in anticipation of the *CCAA* filing.

(c) Whether the League Group's management has the confidence of its major creditors

[33] Not surprisingly, most of the counsel for the secured creditors appearing on this application voiced their clients' lack of confidence in the League Group's management. However, these types of bald assertions, without more, and without evidence, do little to provide the court with a satisfactory basis upon which to assess this factor. In addition, the position of the secured creditors must be considered in the context of other evidence that suggests that they are fully secured and that payments owed to them by the League Group are current: *Pacific Shores Resort & Spa Ltd. (Re)*, 2011 BCSC 1775 at para. 49(c).

[34] Counsel for certain note holders of LOF raised the matter of governance of the League Group during his submissions. While supporting the application for DIP financing, it appears that those stakeholders are considering whether an application for a chief restructuring officer (CRO) might be appropriate in the circumstances. I do not wish or need to predict what might happen at the comeback hearing or any later court application but presumably, if an application for such relief is brought, it will be based on evidence as to the willingness and/or ability of the current management of the League Group to proceed with its restructuring efforts.

(d) Whether the loan would enhance the prospects of a viable compromise or arrangement being made by the League Group

[35] Substantial arguments were advanced, by a number of the secured creditors, that the DIP funding was not necessary or urgent. With respect, I disagree.

[36] The cash flow forecast indicates that in the period leading up to November 18, approximately $1.6 million will be required in respect of corporate operating expenses. A large portion of that amount, $1.1 million, will be required for payroll, with the first payroll of approximately $550,000 due the very date of the hearing and the second payroll being due on November 8, 2013. The cash flow forecast indicates proposed payments of $339,000 for "project funding" which I am advised relates to supporting certain income producing properties which are operating on a negative cash flow basis. Notwithstanding that the evidence on the project operating expenditures is somewhat thin, in my view, it is reasonable to expect that the League Group has some ongoing operations in the specific projects that require support in this interim period. Again, I would emphasize that it is the overarching intention of the League Group to conduct business in the ordinary course, at least in the initial period of the restructuring until a longer term strategy can be formulated.

[37] The anticipated cash receipts of approximately $1.9 million over this time frame are clearly not sufficient to fund the anticipated costs of approximately $3.5 million. Nor is the timing of some of those receipts during the week of October 28 certain in terms of making the payroll as soon as possible after it was due on October 25.

[38] Finally, the cash flow forecast anticipates restructuring and financing costs of $1.45 million until the comeback hearing. There are strenuous objections to payment of these amounts; however, it cannot be argued that professionals who are assisting in the restructuring of these proceedings should be denied payment of their reasonable remuneration on an ongoing basis, if such payments are possible: *Timminco Ltd. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 506 at para. 66. The amounts are large but not unusual given the complexity of these proceedings and the issues raised. These

professionals should not be required to simply rely on a court ordered charge to protect their outstanding fees. The Administration Charge in any event would not have been sufficient to cover the amounts expected to be incurred to the date of the comeback hearing.

[39] Further, if they wish, the stakeholders will have the opportunity to review all professional fees at the end of this matter. In particular, paragraph 34 of the Initial Order provides that the Monitor and its legal counsel will pass their accounts before this court. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Initial Order provide for the payment of *reasonable* fees and disbursements to the League Group's counsel.

[40] Without the proposed DIP funding, the League Group readily admits that it will be unable to continue. The Monitor states:

> … If the financing is not approved, the current liquidity situation is such that League will not be able to fund payroll on Friday, October 25th, which will require an immediate cessation of operations and the accompanying liquidation of its assets in a forced and distressed manner.

[41] I am satisfied that the DIP financing sought on this application is urgently needed in order to fund operations within these proceedings until the comeback hearing. Accordingly, I agree that such funding will enhance the prospects of an arrangement by the League Group to its creditors.

(e) The nature and value of the League Group's property

[42] As I have stated numerous times, many of the secured creditors oppose the continuation of this proceeding and wish to take steps to realize on their security.

[43] Most of the assets owned by the League Group are complex real estate holdings including income producing properties and development properties, some of which are not yet completed.

[44] The Monitor points out what might be said to be fairly obvious; namely, that such a realization scenario is not in the interests of the creditors, including even these secured creditors, or the numerous other stakeholders in these proceedings:

> A forced and distressed liquidation is clearly not in the interests of the creditors or Investors, nor is it in the interests of many of the mortgage lenders who do not enjoy first mortgage security and whose security is spread across multiple properties and assets. Such lenders will then be compelled to deal with complicated scenarios where their recovery on one property will determine the extent to which they must rely on another property for the recovery of their loans. If a liquidation of League's assets is to occur, it is imperative that such a liquidation should occur on an orderly and controlled basis.

[45] In addition, as pointed out by counsel for the League Group, the nature of the assets is such that even if the secured creditors were to take steps to realize on their security, they would inevitably be incurring some of the same types of expenses, including professional fees, as are currently being proposed to be paid in accordance with the cash flow forecast: *Pacific Shores Resort & Spa Ltd.* at para. 49(f).

(f) Whether any creditor would be materially prejudiced as a result of the DIP Lender's Charge

[46] The issue of material prejudice to the secured creditors was largely focused on the evidence as to the value of the secured assets and the "implied equity" which was calculated based on certain mortgage amounts stated to be outstanding.

[47] Again, I do not intend to focus on each individual secured creditor. Many of the secured creditors take issue with what has been described as the appraised value of the various projects over which they hold security and also with what is calculated to be the mortgage debt outstanding on those projects.

[48] The League Group and the Monitor do not dispute that this calculation of $210.9 million of "implied equity" is not a certain calculation. In particular, the Monitor emphasizes that it has only, to this time, performed a "high level review" of the calculation of equity in the various projects. The Monitor notes:

a) Marketable Securities: those amounts are based on recent trading prices of units in the Partners REIT, which are publicly traded;

b) The Income Producing Properties: the ascribed values of these properties are supported by appraisals, although it is apparent that some of those appraisals are dated. In addition, the Monitor notes that most of the appraisals have been prepared for financing purposes which in their experience, tend to be higher than values recoverable in the market. Nevertheless, the Monitor concludes that there appears to be "significant positive equity available in these properties"; and

c) The Development Properties: the values ascribed are based on book values which represent the monies the League Group has spent to date to develop the properties. Again, based on the Monitor's experience, if the development is not completed, the recovery for these projects will be substantially less than the costs incurred to date. With respect to the Colwood Development specifically, the Monitor is of the view that even if the League Group completes the project, it is unlikely that the project costs will be fully recovered. Accordingly, the Monitor states that the $129.9 million "implied" equity in the development properties is overstated, although it is unclear at this time to what degree.

[49] I agree that the exact financial position of the League Group in the income producing and development properties is unknown to some extent. These proceedings have only begun and the Monitor is no doubt continuing its investigation and analysis of the various projects. I anticipate that the equity position in these properties will be further clarified in the near future and that this further information can be communicated to the stakeholders. The Monitor points to the fact that after the granting of the Initial Order, the mortgage lenders needed "time and a better understanding of League's complexity and possible restructuring plan to consider supporting this refinancing".

[50] In the meantime, despite the shortcomings in the financial calculations, there appears to be substantial equity in those properties. Most of the secured creditors appearing on the application did not have any more reliable information towards a

calculation of the equity in the projects. When asked about their own specific secured positions, most were not able to state convincingly or conclusively that their loans were in jeopardy, although some submissions were made that certain loan positions were "on the bubble". Even if any of the secured creditors are in or close to a deficit position, the intention of the League Group is to continue funding the mortgage payments, subject to obtaining further DIP financing to do so. In that event, any further prejudice will be lessened. None of the secured creditors were able to say that their loans were subject to any financial defaults, although I am assuming that given the *CCAA* filing, there are likely to be many non-financial defaults in accordance with the usual security documentation.

[51] As I noted in *Pacific Shores Resort & Spa Ltd.* at para. 49(f), material prejudice to secured creditors is only one factor to be considered in equal measure with the others listed in the *CCAA*, s. 11.2(4).

[52] On the basis of the evidence presented, I am satisfied that at the very least, the secured creditors will suffer some prejudice in terms of delays in realization of their security in the event of a failure to restructure by the League Group. Beyond that, I am not satisfied that there is *material* prejudice to the secured creditors given the asset/debt levels disclosed to date. Further prejudice may arise in the event that the "implied equity" amounts are reduced or perhaps eliminated.

[53] Based on the current values disclosed, it is, as Mr. Gant suggests, really the unsecured creditors and the investor group who are facing the material prejudice at this time and any prejudice to the secured creditors must also be considered in light of that material prejudice. As I have noted above, there are also a substantial number of employees.

[54] In light of the concerns expressed by the secured creditors, the League Group, with the support of the Monitor, has proposed certain allocation provisions in the order authorizing DIP financing, should an allocation issue arise in the future. In accordance with these provisions, costs that may be specifically attributed to a certain asset shall be allocated to that asset. Costs that are not attributable to any

asset are to be allocated as follows: firstly, to unencumbered or not fully encumbered assets and secondly, to assets generally based on a *pro rata* allocation based on the actual value of an asset.

[55] I agree that this allocation provision should alleviate many of the secured creditors concerns as to how the DIP Lender's Charge may be borne. It remains to be seen, of course, whether any allocation issues will in fact arise as that will be dependent on the success of the restructuring.

(g) The Monitor's report

[56] The Monitor's first report to the court is dated October 23, 2013. The Monitor supports the proposed DIP financing and the granting of a DIP Lender's Charge, having reviewed the financial terms of the DIP Lenders and being satisfied that those are reasonable terms and the best available in the marketplace.

[57] The Monitor is also satisfied that the restriction of the DIP Lender's Charge to $1.6 million will allow for the minimum cash requirements for the League Group to meet its operating and restructuring obligations until the time of the comeback hearing.

[58] Finally, the Monitor has expressed the view that it supports both the DIP Lender's Charge and the Representative Counsel Charge referred to below to a total of $1.85 million notwithstanding that those charges would prime the existing secured creditors, other than the Enforcing Mortgagees. The Monitor states that it is sensitive to concerns being raised by the mortgage lenders as a result of the priming but that it supports the priming on the basis that there appears to be equity in the properties such that it is unlikely the mortgage lenders will ultimately be impacted by these priority charges.

[59] As the Monitor notes, it is usual in these types of cases that a DIP Lender will advance monies into those proceedings only where the loans are supported by a court ordered priority charge over existing charge holders. All of the parties who submitted offers to the League Group to provide DIP financing required such a

priority charge. In *Timminco Ltd. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 948, aff'd 2012 ONCA 552, Mr. Justice Morawetz stated:

> [49] In the absence of the court granting the requested super priority, the objectives of the CCAA would be frustrated. It is neither reasonable nor realistic to expect a commercially motivated DIP lender to advance funds in a DIP facility without super priority. The outcome of a failure to grant super priority would, in all likelihood, result in the Timminco Entities having to cease operations, which would likely result in the CCAA proceedings coming to an abrupt halt, followed by bankruptcy proceedings. Such an outcome would be prejudicial to all stakeholders …

[60] The same considerations discussed in *Timminco Ltd.* are at play here. It is unreasonable to expect that any DIP lender would advance the required DIP financing, save and except with a charge having priority over existing creditors. As stated by the League Group and as confirmed by the Monitor, this DIP financing is necessary and urgently required to continue the operations of the League Group for a very short period of time until the comeback hearing. Failure to obtain that financing will result in a liquidation scenario - one which, given the different stakeholder groups and the complexity of the assets, will no doubt result in a multiplicity of realization proceedings at great cost. In that liquidation scenario, there will likely be prejudice to those who are said, at this time, to be the stakeholders who have significant equity in the assets.

[61] It is a fundamental objective of the *CCAA* to avoid such an outcome if at all possible.

[62] In conclusion, the DIP financing is urgently required by the League Group and is necessary to fund the operations for a very short period of time to the comeback hearing. The order approving the DIP facility is granted. However, in my view, there is no need to approve any DIP facility beyond the $1.6 million financing needed to the time of the comeback hearing. The League Group is at liberty to bring a further application in respect of any further DIP financing.

Representative Counsel

[63] The Monitor applies for the appointment of Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP ("Faskens") as representative counsel for the investor group. In addition, the Monitor seeks an order that Faskens be granted a charge in the amount of $250,000 in respect of its fees and disbursements. The proposed ranking of that charge is that it will stand in priority to all of the security and charges (including the Director's Charge) but be subordinate to the Administration Charge, the DIP Lender's Charge and the security of the Enforcing Mortgagees.

[64] As noted above, the investor group has been identified as comprising approximately 3,200 individuals and some institutional investors who have supplied approximately $352 million to the League Group to fund its real estate properties and business operations. Generally speaking, these investors have contributed funds in the form of secured notes, unsecured notes and equity to IGW REIT, LOF and to individual project limited partnerships, either directly or through an RRSP eligible investment vehicle. I understand that the various investment vehicles have different conversion, redemption or retraction features.

[65] The Monitor advises that while there are certain common attributes amongst the investor group, there are other circumstances relating to the various investments that would suggest that some individuals or sub-groups may have positions that may differ from others within the overall group. For example, it may be such that different project specific investments have equity, while others do not.

[66] The Monitor has already fielded over 100 enquiries from various investors. On October 23, 2013, the Monitor scheduled and held a conference call for the purpose of informing investors of the *CCAA* proceedings and the anticipated process and also to answer any questions. I am advised that over 460 investors participated in that call. At that time, the investors were introduced to counsel from Faskens and the concept of a representative counsel was discussed.

[67] If representative counsel is to be appointed, there is no opposition to the appointment of Faskens given their extensive experience in insolvency matters and

in particular, matters involving large and disparate stakeholder groups where representative counsel were appointed, such as in the Eron Mortgage Corporation proceedings.

[68] The Monitor states that it is unlikely that many of the individual investors will either have the financial wherewithal or means to engage legal counsel to provide for their meaningful participation in these insolvency proceedings. In addition, if a number of separate law firms are retained by investors, a multiplicity of representation by those having a commonality of interest will add to the cost and therefore the complexity of the proceedings. Finally, the Monitor notes that these investors are the stakeholders to be "most keenly affected by this restructuring" and representation of their interests may be beneficial so as to ensure that all stakeholders have adequate input into the course of these proceedings.

[69] I am satisfied that the Monitor is not in a position to assist any further in alerting the investors to these proceedings, organizing the investor group and advising them of issues that may affect them either as a group or individually.

[70] The statutory jurisdiction upon which such representative charges are considered is found in the *CCAA*, s. 11, which provides that the court may make any order that it considers "appropriate" in the circumstances:

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

[71] The appropriateness of such orders has been considered numerous times by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Commercial List): see *Nortel Networks Corp. (Re)* (2009), 53 C.B.R. (5th) 196, 2009 CarswellOnt 3028, *Fraser Papers Inc. (Re)*, 2009 CarswellOnt 6169, *Canwest Global Communications Corp. (Re)*, 2009 CarswellOnt 9398, and *TBS Acquireco Inc. (Re)*, 2013 ONSC 4663 and by this court: *Catalyst Paper Corp. (Re)*, 2012 BCSC 451.

[72] In *Canwest Publishing Inc. (Re)*, 2010 ONSC 1328, Pepall J. (as she then was) summarized many of the factors that have been considered in granting these types of order:

> [21] Factors that have been considered by courts in granting these orders include:
>
> - the vulnerability and resources of the group sought to be represented;
>
> - any benefit to the companies under CCAA protection;
>
> - any social benefit to be derived from representation of the group;
>
> - the facilitation of the administration of the proceedings and efficiency;
>
> - the avoidance of a multiplicity of legal retainers;
>
> - the balance of convenience and whether it is fair and just including to the creditors of the Estate;
>
> - whether representative counsel has already been appointed for those who have similar interests to the group seeking representation and who is also prepared to act for the group seeking the order; and
>
> - the position of other stakeholders and the Monitor.

[73] The stakeholder groups for which representative counsel were appointed in *Nortel Networks Corp.*, *Fraser Papers Inc.*, *Canwest Global Communications Corp*. and *Canwest Publishing Inc.* were current and former employees of the debtors. In those cases, the Ontario court noted the particular vulnerability of certain of those stakeholders. The vulnerability of the investor group here has not yet been fully investigated, but the Monitor and Mr. Gant certainly suggest that similar concerns arise in relation to the individuals who have invested a significant portion of their net worth in the League Group. In addition, the indications of equity in the League Group's assets would also suggest that their interests in these proceedings are real and not merely illusory.

[74] In *First Leaside Wealth Management Inc. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 1299, Mr. Justice D.M. Brown appointed representative counsel in those *CCAA* proceedings for some 1,200 clients who were investors in one of the debtor companies (para. 38). Representative counsel were also appointed in the Eron Mortgage Corporation

proceedings for certain investor groups: see *Eron Mortgage Corp. (Trustee of) v. Eron Mortgage Corp.* (1998), [1999] 4 W.W.R. 375 (S.C.) at para. 3.

[75] I am satisfied that the appointment of representative counsel in this case is appropriate for the reasons stated by the Monitor. As matters stand, the investor group is a significant one and it is important that they be properly represented so that they can take appropriate positions in these insolvency proceedings. From a timing perspective, it is somewhat imperative that the investors obtain some legal representation in respect of the comeback hearing which, as I have alluded to, is expected to be highly contentious principally from the perspective of the secured creditors.

[76] At this point in time, the investor group has a sufficient "commonality of interest" that can be best served by one counsel: *Nortel Networks Corp.* at paras. 62-63, *Fraser Papers Inc.* at paras. 11-12. The appointment of representative counsel will allow their positions to be advanced in an efficient manner, to the benefit of all stakeholders. Separate representation may be required at a later time once Faskens has had an opportunity to investigate the claims of the investors and determine what positions might be advanced in these proceedings. That matter can be addressed if and when it arises.

[77] The statutory jurisdiction to order that the fees and disbursements of any representative counsel be secured by a charge is found in the *CCAA*, s. 11.52(1)(c):

> **Court may order security or charge to cover certain costs**
>
> **11.52** (1) On notice to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the security or charge, the court may make an order declaring that all or part of the property of a debtor company is subject to a security or charge — in an amount that the court considers appropriate — in respect of the fees and expenses of
>
> ….
>
> (*c*) any financial, legal or other experts engaged by any other interested person if the court is satisfied that the security or charge is necessary for their effective participation in proceedings under this Act.
>
> **Priority**

> (2) The court may order that the security or charge rank in priority over the claim of any secured creditor of the company.

[78] Having forecast to the secured creditors my conclusions with respect to the DIP financing, I encouraged the parties to discuss what interim accommodations could be agreed upon in order that representative counsel could be retained for the investors in the short period of time leading up to the comeback hearing.

[79] As a result of those discussions, it was generally agreed and subsequently ordered that Faskens would be appointed as representative counsel with authorized fees of $125,000. The League Group was authorized to pay a retainer of $75,000. It was also recognized that a charge would be necessary in order to allow for Faskens' "effective participation" in the proceedings and a Representative Counsel Charge was ordered to the extent of $50,000, with priority save and except with respect to the Administration Charge, the DIP Lender's Charge and the security of the Enforcing Mortgagees.

[80] This modest cost for representative counsel at this stage is fair and reasonable and is intended to benefit the proceedings generally. Therefore, the Representative Counsel Charge is properly borne by stakeholders based on the proposed priority: *Canwest Publishing Inc. (Re)*, 2010 ONSC 222 at para. 54.

[81] It is anticipated that the Representative Counsel will have met at least to some degree with the investor group prior to the comeback hearing and will be in a position to report to the court on what efforts have been made to organize the group. It is also hoped that by then, the Representative Counsel will have assessed the investor group's interests so as to be able to advise, if possible, what issues might be raised by the investor group. Finally, it is anticipated that Faskens will make efforts to determine whether it is possible to raise retainer funds within the investor group itself for any representation beyond the comeback hearing, rather than securing further amounts from the League Group.

Disposition

[82] The Initial Order is amended and restated on the terms proposed with respect to the DIP financing and the DIP Lender's Charge, save and except that the authorized credit facility shall not exceed $1.6 million. The League Group and the DIP Lenders are to file a copy of the amended commitment letter in this court once that is signed.

[83] The order is granted appointing Faskens as Representative Counsel for the investor group on the terms proposed. The authorized fees for the Representative Counsel will be $125,000, to be secured by a retainer of $75,000 paid by the League Group and a Representative Counsel Charge of $50,000 with the indicated priority.

[84] The remainder of the applications, including the applications of FCC Mortgage Associates Inc. and Export Development Canada, are adjourned to November 18, 2013 to be heard at the same time as the comeback hearing.

"Fitzpatrick J."

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Citation: *1057863 B.C. Ltd. (Re),*
2020 BCSC 1359

Date: 20200914
Docket: S206189
Registry: Vancouver

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

and

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

and

In the Matter of a Plan of Compromise or Arrangement of 1057863 B.C. Ltd., Northern Resources Nova Scotia Corporation, Northern Pulp Nova Scotia Corporation, Northern Timber Nova Scotia Corporation, 3253527 Nova Scotia Limited, 3243722 Nova Scotia Limited and Northern Pulp NS GP ULC

Petitioners

Before: The Honourable Madam Justice Fitzpatrick

Reasons for Judgment

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Counsel Pacific Harbor North American Resources Ltd, as the proposed interim lender:	B. Brammall
Counsel for Atlas Holdings LLC and Blue Wolf Capital Management, LLC:	N. MacParland
Counsel for Envirosystems Inc., dba Terrapure Environmental:	H. P. Whiteley
Counsel for Pictou Landing First Nation:	B. Hebert
Counsel for Nova Scotia Superintendent of Pensions:	S. Choo
Place and Date of Hearing:	Vancouver, B.C. July 31 and August 5, 2020
Place and Date of Ruling with Written Reasons to Follow:	Vancouver, B.C. August 6, 2020
Place and Date of Written Reasons:	Vancouver, B.C. September 14, 2020

INTRODUCTION

[1] On June 17, 2020, the petitioners filed these proceedings seeking a restructuring solution to their financial problems, pursuant to the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 (the "*CCAA*").

[2] The petitioner, 1057863 B.C. Ltd., a British Columbia company, is the parent company of the other petitioners. The corporate group also includes various limited partnerships that are not named petitioners. Together, the group operates a pulp mill in Pictou County, Nova Scotia (the "Pulp Mill"). They also conduct related forestry activities in the Province of Nova Scotia to support those operations. I will refer to the group collectively as the "Petitioners".

[3] On January 31, 2020, the Petitioners were required to shut down the Pulp Mill, resulting in a complete cessation of its business activities. At the centre of the reasons for the shut down is an Effluent Treatment Facility ("ETF") that became inoperable after that date. The ETF is source of considerable controversy with certain of the stakeholders.

[4] Without the ability to use the ETF, the Pulp Mill could not operate.

[5] The Petitioners describe that the shut down of the Pulp Mill had a "devastating effect" on them and their partners. Indeed, most employees were laid off after the shut down.

[6] On June 19, 2020, the Petitioners sought and the Court granted an initial order under the *CCAA* (the "Initial Order"). The Petitioners' stated intention at that time was to continue to ensure the orderly hibernation, care and maintenance of the Pulp Mill while they investigated and assessed various restructuring options. The Initial Order granted was what is colloquially termed a "skinny" order, particularly in light of new strictures under s. 11.001 of the *CCAA* that limit the initial relief to what is reasonably necessary during the initial stay period.

[7] In the Initial Order, I appointed Ernst & Young Inc. as Monitor. I granted a Director's Charge limited to $500,000. I extended the stay of proceedings to the limited partnerships, as appropriate in these circumstances: *4519922 Canada Inc. (Re)*, 2015 ONSC 124 at para. 37. Finally, I granted an Administration Charge of $500,000. At the time of the initial hearing, the Petitioners indicated that it was their intention to come back to the Court to seek approval of interim financing and other relief, including approval of a Key Employee Retention Plan ("KERP") and authority to pay certain pre-filing amounts.

[8] Since June 19, 2020, I have extended the stay a number of times to allow further discussions between the Petitioners and their stakeholders toward a possible resolution, including with the Province of Nova Scotia ("Nova Scotia"), their major secured creditor. The Monitor supported those extensions, as set out in its first report to the Court dated July 2, 2020 (the "First Report").

[9] Unfortunately, considerable disagreement remains as to whether this proceeding should continue and if so, on what terms.

[10] This hearing was essentially the comeback hearing. The Petitioners sought an Amended and Restated Initial Order ("ARIO") to incorporate the original relief in the Initial Order, with some amendments; significantly, they sought approval for interim financing that would allow their restructuring activities to continue.

[11] On August 6, 2020, I granted an ARIO that incorporated much of the relief sought. In addition, I granted the order sought by Unifor, Local 440 ("Unifor") for representative status in this proceeding. These reasons follow from my decisions at that time.

BACKGROUND

[12] The Pulp Mill has a considerable history leading to the current and fraught relationship between the owners of the Pulp Mill and other stakeholders, being Nova Scotia in particular. I will only provide a very high-level description of that history as is relevant to this application.

[13] The Pulp Mill has been in operation since 1967. It is located on Abercrombie Point in Pictou County, NS. The process of producing pulp at the Pulp Mill creates wastewater, and it is necessary to treat that wastewater before discharge. Since 1972, the treatment of the wastewater was done at the ETF, which is located near "Boat Harbour". Nova Scotia owns the ETF and has leased it to the Pulp Mill's owners over the years. As stated, the Pulp Mill cannot operate without treating the wastewater at the ETF.

[14] The Pulp Mill is adjacent to reserve lands of the Pictou Landing First Nation ("PLFN"), a Mi'kmaq First Nation.

[15] In 2011, Paper Excellence Canada Holdings Corporation ("PEC") directly or indirectly acquired ownership of the Petitioners. PEC describes having spent more than $118 million in respect of the operations of the Pulp Mill and related activities.

[16] Events leading to the Petitioners' financial difficulties include:

a) In 2014, there was an effluent leak in the pipeline from the Pulp Mill to the ETF; that event led to PLFN members blockading the area;

b) In 2015, Nova Scotia passed the *Boat Harbour Act*, S.N.S. 2015, c. 4 (the "*BHAct*"). The *BHAct* required the Petitioners cease using the ETF for the reception and treatment of effluent from the Pulp Mill by January 31, 2020. The deadline set in this legislation was contrary to the terms of the lease between Nova Scotia and the Pulp Mill (entered into prior to PEC's involvement) that contemplated use of the ETF until December 31, 2030;

c) The Petitioners set about planning for a replacement ETF ("RETF") that would allow the Pulp Mill's operations to continue past January 2020. The Petitioners have spent considerable monies to advance the project, with financial and other contributions by Nova Scotia;

d) The Petitioners' efforts to establish the RETF involved, understandably, considerable input and agreement from Nova Scotia under its environmental and regulatory process and requirements;

e) The RETF approval process did not go smoothly, at least from the Petitioners' point of view. In part, the process took place in the face of litigation between Nova Scotia and PLFN relating to Nova Scotia's decisions in relation to the Petitioners and the Pulp Mill;

f) The Petitioners say that they told Nova Scotia that it was not possible to complete the RETF by January 2020. Nova Scotia says that they never gave the Petitioners any inkling that a possible extension would be afforded to them;

g) Matters came to a head somewhat in late December 2019. Nova Scotia's Minister of Environment ("MOE") determined that a further environmental assessment report ("EAR") was required for the RETF. Almost immediately thereafter, Nova Scotia gave formal notice to the Petitioners that no extension under the *BHAct* was forthcoming;

h) In January 2020, the Petitioners filed a judicial review proceeding challenging the MOE's requirement to file a further EAR (the "Judicial Review");

i) The Pulp Mill ceased operations on January 12, 2020;

j) Commencing January 29, 2020, the MOE issued various orders to the Petitioners in respect of the orderly shutdown of the Pulp Mill. The MOE's May 14, 2020 order was appealed to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (the "Appeal"); and

k) The Petitioners have clearly signalled to Nova Scotia that they are seeking financial redress from the Province arising from the passage and implementation of the *BHAct* (the "BH Claim"). As matters stand,

> the Judicial Review and Appeal are in abeyance, along with the Petitioners' consideration of the BH Claim against Nova Scotia.

[17] The primary debt owed by the Petitioners is to PEC and Nova Scotia. The Petitioners owe PEC approximately $213 million; $30 million of that amount is secured against the Petitioners' assets. The Petitioners owe Nova Scotia approximately $85 million, which has a first ranking secured position against the assets. The Petitioners also owe Nova Scotia $1.3 million on an unsecured basis.

[18] In addition to unsecured amounts owed to PEC, Nova Scotia and employees, the Petitioners owe approximately $4.3 million to trade creditors and owners of the timberlands that they harvested.

[19] Before the shutdown of the Pulp Mill, the Petitioners employed approximately 200 unionized persons, represented by Unifor. In addition, there were approximately 135 other full-time employees, including salaried personnel. The Petitioners also retained approximately 600 contractors on a full or part-time basis.

[20] As of June 2020, approximately 32 employees and 18 seasonal part-time employees remained. The rest of the employees were laid off or terminated.

[21] Considered more broadly, the impact of the shutdown of the Pulp Mill has had far-reaching and considerable negative consequences for the stakeholders.

[22] The Monitor confirms in the First Report that the Petitioners contributed more than $279 million annually to the Nova Scotia economy, arising from purchases of goods and services. The Petitioners maintained a supply chain of approximately 1,379 companies who supported the operations of the Pulp Mill. Finally, the Pulp Mill provided employment for an estimated 2,679 full-time equivalent jobs, generating an estimated $38 million annually in provincial and federal taxes.

INTERIM FINANCING

[23] The Petitioners seek court approval of an interim financing term sheet (the "Term Sheet") for a financing facility (the "Interim Lending Facility") between the

Petitioners, as borrowers, PEC, as arranger and agent, and PEC together with Pacific Harbor North American Resources Ltd., as lenders (collectively, the "Interim Lenders").

[24] The Interim Lending Facility contemplates a maximum principal amount of $50 million. However, the Petitioners presently only seek approval of an initial advance of $15 million and a corresponding charge in favour of the Interim Lenders over the Petitioners' assets in first ranking priority (the "Interim Financing Charge"). The stated purpose for these initial funds is to allow payment of the Petitioners' expenses to December 2020. If the Term Sheet is approved, the Petitioners intend to make later applications for court approval to access further draws.

[25] In support of their request, the Petitioners prepared a budget to detail the uses of the $50 million (the "Financing Budget"). The Financing Budget indicates the projected financing requirements of the Petitioners to June 2022. As stated by Bruce Chapman, the general manager of the Petitioners and PEC, those projections were based on a "successful outcome" of these proceedings, said to include: the successful shutdown of the ETF; hibernation of the Pulp Mill; identifying, designing, and obtaining approvals for the RETF; and, negotiating contributions and financing associated with those activities.

[26] After the Petitioners' introduced the Financing Budget as part of this application, Nova Scotia raised a variety of objections. Nova Scotia's response at para. 2, filed in opposition to the application, sets out those objections:

> (a) there is no restructuring plan being pursued by the Applicants;
>
> (b) the DIP financing will be used to fund the Applicants' pre-filing obligations;
>
> (c) the DIP financing will be an inappropriate re-prioritization of security;
>
> (d) the cash flow statements are not supported by appropriate documentation; and
>
> (e) the Applicants have not engaged the Province in any meaningful way, other than to continue to pursue their agenda for obtaining the DIP financing to fund existing obligations.

[27] The Monitor has brought considerable balance and objectivity forward in terms of assisting the stakeholders in understanding the Financing Budget. In particular, the Monitor has sought to address Nova Scotia's concerns in the face of significant disputes between the Petitioners and Nova Scotia.

[28] In the Monitor's second report dated July 23, 2020 (the "Second Report"), the Monitor introduced the concept of milestones. The milestones set out categories of work or activities required to move the overall restructuring toward the anticipated "success" date of June 2022. Target Completion Dates are identified in the "Milestones Schedule" at Appendix C to the Second Report, along with Evaluation Dates and the Cumulative DIP Draw required by the respective dates. This "Milestones Schedule" provides, in my view, considerable structure to the approval process and it will allow, in the future, the Court, the Monitor and the stakeholders (particularly Nova Scotia) to gauge the ongoing progress of the Petitioners' efforts.

[29] In addition, the Monitor assisted in the development of an interim budget to December 2020 (the "Interim Budget"). That document, discussed in the Monitor's Second Report and its Supplemental Report dated July 30, 2020, provides a detailed breakdown of the activities and the estimated cost of those activities under the initial draw of $15 million. Those activities and costs are:

Activity	**Activity Costs**
Boat Harbour operations and de-commissioning costs and environmental costs	$6,846,698
Mill operating costs	$1,231,650
Financing and administration costs	$407,734
Employee costs	$1,161,104
Severance and salary continuations	$2,646,498
Professional fees (includes approx. $575,000 for the Judicial Review and Appeal)	$3,481,625
TOTAL	**$15,775,308**

[30] The Monitor anticipates that, with cash on hand of approximately $4.8 million, the Petitioners will have sufficient funding through to the end of 2020 with this interim financing.

[31] Section 11.2(1) and (2) of the *CCAA* confirms the Court's jurisdiction to approve interim financing and approve a charge in priority to existing secured creditors:

> (1) On application by a debtor company and on notice to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the security or charge, a court may make an order declaring that all or part of the company's property is subject to a security or charge – in an amount that the court considers appropriate – in favour of a person specified in the order who agrees to lend the company an amount approved by the court as being required by the company, having regard to its cash-flow statement. The security or charge may not secure an obligation that exists before the order is made.
>
> (2) The court may order that the security or charge rank in priority over the claim of any secured creditor of the company.

[32] The Supreme Court of Canada recently commented on the importance of the relief available under s. 11.2, including the granting of an interim lenders' charge. In *9354-9186 Québec inc. v. Callidus Capital Corp.*, 2020 SCC 10 at para. 85-86, the Court confirmed that a court may exercise its discretion to approve such financing to achieve the important statutory objective under the *CCAA* of not only providing working capital, but also enabling the "preservation and realization of the value of a debtor's assets".

[33] The Court in *Callidus* also acknowledged that a court's ability to grant a charge in favour of an interim financier is often necessarily and practically the only way to secure this benefit:

> [89] Such charges, also known as "priming liens", reduce lenders' risks, thereby incentivizing them to assist insolvent companies. As a practical matter, these charges are often the only way to encourage this lending. Normally, a lender protects itself against lending risk by taking a security interest in the borrower's assets. However, debtor companies under *CCAA* protection will often have pledged all or substantially all of their assets to other creditors. Accordingly, without the benefit of a super-priority charge, an interim financing lender would rank behind those other creditors. Although super-priority charges do subordinate secured creditors' security positions to

> the interim financing lender's — a result that was controversial at common law — Parliament has indicated its general acceptance of the trade-offs associated with these charges by enacting s. 11.2(2) [citations omitted].

[34] Section 11.2(4) of the *CCAA* sets out certain non-exhaustive factors to be considered by the court in deciding whether to approve interim financing and grant an interim lenders' charge:

> (a) the period during which the company is expected to be subject to proceedings under this Act;
>
> (b) how the company's business and financial affairs are to be managed during the proceedings;
>
> (c) whether the company's management has the confidence of its major creditors;
>
> (d) whether the loan would enhance the prospects of a viable compromise or arrangement being made in respect of the company;
>
> (e) the nature and value of the company's property;
>
> (f) whether any creditor would be materially prejudiced as a result of the security or charge; and
>
> (g) the monitor's report…

[35] No one factor set out in s. 11.2(4) governs or limits the Court's consideration. The exercise is necessarily one of balancing the respective interests of the debtors and its stakeholders towards ensuring, if appropriate, that the financing will assist the debtor company to obtain the "breathing room" said to be needed to hopefully achieve a restructuring acceptable to the creditors and the court: *White Birch Paper Holding Co. (Re)*, 2010 QCCS 1176, at para. 33 and *Pacific Shores Resort & Spa Ltd. (Re)*, 2011 BCSC 1775 at para. 49.

[36] I will discuss the factors in turn.

[37] These proceedings were filed in mid-June 2020. Despite the Petitioners' initial intentions to undertake a restructuring process to mid-2022 under the Interim Lending Facility, their ambitions have been significantly curtailed, at least in the short term. Under the present proposal, the Petitioners seek only to extend these proceedings to December 2020, when hopefully there will be further clarity about how the restructuring may proceed. This shortened period will allow the Court, the

Monitor and the stakeholders to get a sense of the Petitioners' progress toward assessing whether any further extension of the proceedings is justified.

[38] Nova Scotia submitted that, if the Court approved the interim financing and extended the stay, that stay period should only be to October 2020, when the Court could assess matters then.

[39] I would not accede to this submission. There is considerable cost and energy to bring matters forward to the Court, which may not necessarily be justified depending on the status of matters in October 2020. Rather, I accept that the financing is justified in order to allow further operations to December 2020. I have specifically ordered the Monitor to provide oversight with respect to the Petitioners' expenditures to ensure that they are consistent with the Interim Budget. In addition, I ordered that the Monitor file a formal report with the Court by no later than October 31, 2020 as to the status of the Petitioners' restructuring efforts and spending under the Interim Budget. That information will of course be available to the stakeholders. If anything arises from that report, the Monitor or any stakeholder may apply to the Court.

[40] Nova Scotia has raised, however obliquely, concerns regarding how the Petitioners' business and financial affairs will be managed during the proceedings. In my view, this largely arises from the great degree of mistrust and suspicion, if not downright animosity, that exists in the chasm that separates Nova Scotia and the Petitioners.

[41] Nova Scotia filed various affidavits in support of its opposition to this application, being those of Duff MacKay Montgomerie, Paul Bradley and Kenneth Swain. All of these affidavits were intended to provide Nova Scotia's side of the "story" and respond to Mr. Chapman's various affidavits. Mr. Chapman replied to the points raised in Nova Scotia's affidavits.

[42] Clearly, the disagreements between the Petitioners and Nova Scotia are many, and some long-standing. Two major issues relate to (a) payments made by

the Petitioners to PEC as a shareholder some years ago when monies were owed to Nova Scotia, and (b) the use of monies advanced by Nova Scotia to the Petitioners for environmental expenses under a Contribution Agreement. I only note the existence of those disputes; in my view, there is no need at this time and in these proceedings to resolve those disputes. Whether those disputes need to be resolved in the fullness of time remains to be seen.

[43] I accept that Nova Scotia's concerns give rise to some question as to the future conduct of these proceedings. However, this question is largely answered by the Monitor, who raises no concerns regarding the conduct of the Petitioners' management from the time of the Initial Order. As stated in *Pacific Shores* at para. 31, the good faith requirement to support the relief on this application relates to conduct within the proceeding, not conduct pre-existing the filing. The Monitor continues to provide oversight with respect to the Petitioners' activities.

[44] One of the major factors is whether the loan would enhance the prospect of the Petitioners making a viable compromise or arrangement with their creditors.

[45] The result of not approving this financing is stark. The shutdown of the Pulp Mill has resulted in a complete cessation of any revenue. Both Mr. Chapman and the Monitor confirm that, without the financing, the Petitioners cannot continue any restructuring efforts or even the continued hibernation of the Pulp Mill. The Monitor confirms that a lack of funding would likely result in a receivership or bankruptcy, with the usual dire result of yielding nothing for the majority of the stakeholders.

[46] A large portion of the $15 million interim financing is earmarked for what Mr. Chapman calls "critical expenses" relating to the direct and indirect expenses of the hibernation of the Pulp Mill. In its opposition, Nova Scotia does not address what would happen in the event that PEC walked away from its investment in the Petitioners and the Pulp Mill. As best I can tell, Nova Scotia seems to be ready to test PEC's resolve to determine if PEC will, as the shareholder, fund the ongoing costs itself without any interim financing and related charge.

[47] In my view, given the sensitive nature of the assets, and the potential and negative consequences particular to the environment and local population arising on a liquidation, I do not consider it is reasonable to allow a "game of chicken" to take place between Nova Scotia and PEC. It appears to be the case that even if a receivership takes place (perhaps at the behest of Nova Scotia), many of these costs would be incurred in any event: *Pacific Shores* at para. 49(f).

[48] Nova Scotia also takes issue with payment of pre-filing unsecured amounts, including amounts owed to employees and former employees, which the Petitioners seek to fund under the Financing Budget and the Interim Budget. I will address that issue separately below.

[49] Finally, Nova Scotia takes great umbrage in having an Interim Financing Charge placed ahead of its own charge when some of the funds under the Financing and Interim Budgets are to be used to some extent to advance litigation (or potential litigation) against it. Paragraph 10 of the Term Sheet provides that the purpose of the facility is in part to fund expenses associated with:

> … the evaluation, settlement or progression of claims and other legal remedies that may be available to the Borrowers and to pay transaction costs, fees and expenses [including all reasonable fees and expenses in connection with any other proceeding pursued or defended by the Borrowers relating to the Northern Pulp facility and business] …

[50] It is common ground that the "claims and other legal remedies" include the Judicial Review, the Appeal and the potential BH Claim against Nova Scotia. The estimated cost in the Interim Budget of professional fees toward those matters is approximately $575,000. Nova Scotia questions whether the Interim Financing Facility is simply to improve the Petitioners' negotiating position with Nova Scotia.

[51] The Petitioners state that they remain committed to pursuing the re-start of the Pulp Mill in an environmentally responsible manner by ultimately constructing the RETF and resuming operations. The Petitioners believe that a re-start of operations affords Nova Scotia the best opportunity to recover its secured claims for money

advanced. Nova Scotia disagrees and appears to have considered the consequences of a complete and permanent shutdown of the Pulp Mill.

[52] The Petitioners say that they have continued the litigation – and are still considering the BH Claim – against Nova Scotia only as a backstop if they are not able to resolve their outstanding claims against Nova Scotia through negotiation and settlement. As noted by the Petitioners' counsel, the rights of the Petitioners under the Judicial Review, the Appeal and the BH Claim are choses in action and part of the Petitioners' assets. In *Callidus* at para. 96, the Court recognized that funding to preserve a "litigation asset" may be appropriate if it is intended to preserve and realize upon that asset for the benefit of the stakeholders.

[53] In my view, in the overall context, the limited amount of litigation funding proposed to be spent between now and December 2020 is justified in these circumstances. If the proceedings are extended beyond that date, and further funding for that purpose is requested, the Court may revisit the matter.

[54] Another factor is the nature and value of the Petitioners' property. The Monitor sets out in the First Report that the 2019 unaudited consolidated assets of the Petitioners (at book value) was approximately $343 million. The estimated liabilities as of mid-June 2020 were approximately $311 million. By any measure, most of the value of the Petitioners' assets, particularly the Pulp Mill, will only be realized if the Pulp Mill begins operations again. That necessarily involves the establishment of the RETF.

[55] The Interim Financing Facility, as limited by the initial draw under the Interim Budget, will allow the Petitioners a short period (some five months) to show real progress toward that objective of enhancing the value of their assets. I do not agree with Nova Scotia that the Petitioners have failed to identify any restructuring plan or that the Interim Financing Facility *is* the plan. The materials before the Court clearly show a "kernel of a plan" – namely the restart of the Pulp Mill and the Petitioners' operations, all intended to alleviate the dire financial circumstances here and allow the Petitioners to fashion a way forward with the support of their creditors. The

Petitioners should be allowed some opportunity to advance their efforts to that end, if possible.

[56] Another significant factor here is whether any creditor would be materially prejudiced if the Interim Financing Charge is granted. Clearly, Nova Scotia, as the major and presently first ranking secured creditor thinks so. It is not difficult to discern that Nova Scotia faces a myriad of concerns with respect to the Petitioners and the Pulp Mill, including relating to the environment, employment of its citizens, the general welfare of the employees, obligations to the PLFN and the state of its economy.

[57] It is not my role on this application to judge how Nova Scotia has seen fit to balance its duties and obligations in this complex situation. Nova Scotia is clearly frustrated with the Petitioners, noting in particular that it has already contributed significant amounts of public money and other benefits to assist them in meeting their environmental obligations.

[58] I agree that Nova Scotia faces prejudice, although not to the degree submitted by its counsel. As stated above, it remains the case that, if a receivership occurs, a receiver would incur some of these expenses anyway. This is particularly so, with respect to the expenses (both direct and indirect) intended to protect the environment and the citizens of Pictou County in the Pulp Mill hibernation process.

[59] I have no concerns that Nova Scotia is anything but committed to the well-being of the environment and its citizens, particularly those living near the Pulp Mill, such as members of the PLFN. I acknowledge Nova Scotia's concerns, but they must be balanced against other stakeholder interests and prejudice faced by those stakeholders if the financing is not approved: *Pacific Shores* at para. 49.

[60] The final factor is whether the monitor supports the financing. That is clearly the case here. As stated above, the Monitor has attempt to bridge the gap between Nova Scotia's concerns and the objectives of the Petitioners. It has succeeded to some degree.

[61] The Monitor has carefully analyzed the proposed financing terms. In its various reports, the Monitor has provided a detailed summary of the key elements of the Term Sheet, including specific terms that Nova Scotia questioned (including those provisions relating to payment-in-kind terms, change of control, right of first refusal and right to match, a prohibition on voluntary provisions and certain default terms). In light of submissions made by the Petitioners, and comments of the Monitor, I have no concerns regarding those matters.

[62] Nova Scotia also raised an issue with respect to possible action by the Interim Lenders if there is an Event of Default (para. 23 of the Term Sheet). Again, I had no concerns in that respect as those were normal terms. I ordered an amendment to the draft ARIO to ensure that it was consistent with the provisions in the Term Sheet.

[63] The Monitor recommends approval of the Interim Financing Facility, limited to the initial draw under the Interim Budget. I expect that the Monitor will work closely with the Petitioners in the next few months to ensure that proper expenditures are made in accordance with the Interim Budget. Such oversight will allow adequate protection to the stakeholders in this critical interim period while the Petitioners explore what options are available to them in the future with or without certain stakeholder support.

[64] I conclude that the Interim Financing Facility is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances. I approve the interim draw of $15 million, as sought. This financing will provide a viable short term path forward to allow the Petitioners to explore restructuring options, all for the benefit of the entire large stakeholder group, including Nova Scotia, the employees (both past and present) and members of the PLFN, all of whom were represented on this application.

[65] As noted by Petitioners' counsel, no other viable alternatives are available to avoid the significant and negative social, economic and environmental consequences if the Petitioners do not receive the funding they need to advance their restructuring plan.

SEVERANCE / SALARY CONTINUATION PAYMENTS

[66] The Initial Order provided that the Petitioners could pay certain employee expenses incurred prior to that date:

> 4. The Petitioners shall be entitled, but not required, to pay the following expenses which may have been incurred prior to the Order Date:
>
> (a) all outstanding wages, salaries, employee and pension benefits (including long and short term disability payments), vacation pay and expenses (but excluding severance pay) payable before or after the Order Date, in each case incurred in the ordinary course of business and consistent with the relevant compensation policies and arrangements existing at the time incurred …

[67] The pre-filing unsecured employee obligations fall into two categories:

a) 191 unionized employees were terminated before filing (or expect to be terminated shortly), trigging severance obligations under Unifor's collective bargaining agreements (the "Severance Obligations"). Before the filing, approximately half of that amount ($1.65 million) was paid, leaving approximately $1.94 million to be paid (some already due and the rest to be funded into July 2021); and

b) Between January and June 2020, 45 salaried employees were terminated. In that event, their employment agreements require payment of salary continuance (the "Salary Continuance"). Before the filing, $3.3 million of Salary Continuance was paid. Under the terms of the Initial Order, $370,000 was paid to these employees. The remaining estimated amount of Salary Continuance budgeted to be paid from August 2020 to September 2024 is approximately $3.5 million.

[68] The Interim Budget provides for payment of the Severance Obligations and the Salary Continuance, together with benefits to retired employees. The Petitioners seek an order allowing them to make such payments, estimated in total at $2.9 million to December 2020.

[69] Unifor understandably supports the Petitioners' request to make pre-filing payments of the Severance Obligations in accordance with the Interim Budget.

[70] There is no dispute between the parties that I have the jurisdiction to authorize payment of pre-filing unsecured obligations. Section 11 of the *CCAA* provides a broad discretion to the Court to make any order as may be "appropriate in the circumstances". The more difficult question is whether I *should* exercise my discretion to allow such payments here.

[71] Nova Scotia disputes that these payments are appropriate in the circumstances. The Monitor presents, appropriately, a neutral exposition of the relevant circumstances, without recommendation.

[72] The Petitioners refer to *Cinram International Inc. (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 3767. In *Cinram*, the Court authorized payments to certain employees, including any obligations that arose prior to the filing. However, as noted at paras. 23 and 43, the Court did so in the context of Cinram's "ongoing business operations" and with respect to the "active employment of employees in the ordinary course".

[73] In this case, there are no ongoing business operations as discussed in *Cinram*; in addition, the payments are to be made to *former* employees who were terminated before the filing.

[74] The circumstances considered in *JTI-Macdonald Corp. (Re)*, 2019 ONSC 1625 are also unhelpful to the Petitioners. At paras. 24-25, the Court's discussion of payment of pre-filing employee claims took place within the context of "critical suppliers" and the need to ensure continued delivery of necessary goods and services for the debtor's operations and to support the restructuring. The Court accepted the recommendation of the proposed monitor that pre and post-filing "payroll and benefits" be paid. The monitor's reasons included that many of the relevant payments would have priority status and/or give rise to director liability if not paid. Further, in the proposed monitor's experience, it is common to pay pre-filing and post-filing obligations to employees in the normal course, to ensure continued

and uninterrupted service by employees. Importantly, the debtor had sufficient cash on hand to pay these expenses, which is not the case here.

[75] The reasons advanced by the Petitioners in asserting that these payments are "critical" are much more ephemeral than the reasons advanced in *JTI-Macdonald*. The Petitioners argue that allowing payment of the pre-filing unsecured employee amounts (in addition to ongoing employee expenses) is necessary to:

a) preserve the Petitioners' going concern value;

b) ensure that the other activities provided for in the Interim Financing Budget can be carried out by the Petitioners' remaining employees;

c) mitigate the adverse effects of the Pulp Mill's closure in the communities in which the Petitioners operate. The Petitioners emphasize the significant negative consequences suffered by the lay-offs and terminations, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic;

d) preserve their relationships with the employees who are no longer working, many of whom are expected to be called upon to return to employment at the Pulp Mill in the future if the construction of the RETF is undertaken; and

e) preserve their relationship with Unifor. The Petitioners state that unions as a whole will inevitably be present in some form if the Petitioners resume operations. They say that preserving an effective working relationship with Unifor, consistent with Unifor's collective bargaining agreements, will provide an additional benefit to them, both during and after these proceedings.

[76] The Petitioners also reiterate that payment of these pre-filing employee amounts will signal their commitment to the stakeholders to develop and implement

a plan to recommence the Pulp Mill's operations and in doing so, alleviate financial hardship within what they describe is a critical stakeholder group.

[77] I appreciate that court approval to allow payment to employees, even for pre-filing unsecured amounts, is often granted. When a debtor is conducting ongoing operations during a proceeding, it will often be necessary to ensure that employment relationships are not disrupted so as to hinder the restructuring efforts.

[78] However, the starting point for this discussion continues to be that *all* pre-filing unsecured amounts are not to be paid in a *CCAA* proceeding, even if owed to employees. All pre-filing creditors are covered under the general stay of proceedings; any payment is the exception to the general rule. That starting point is intended to preserve the *status quo* between creditors of the debtor pending the debtor advancing a fair and equitable proposal at the end of the day in respect of all of its obligations.

[79] At that later stage, it is generally anticipated that unsecured creditors will be treated fairly and equitably in any plan of arrangement, usually by way of a *pro rata* payment, subject to certain minimum requirements with respect to employee claims, as set out in s. 6(5) of the *CCAA*.

[80] Two Ontario decisions, cited by Nova Scotia, are of assistance.

[81] The first decision is *Nortel Networks Corp. (Re)*, [2009] O.J. No. 2558 (Ont. S.C.J.) aff'd *Sproule v. Nortel Networks Corp.*, 2009 ONCA 833. In the lower court, Justice Morawetz (as he then was) was addressing requests from the union and former employees for payment of their pre-filing claims for retirement allowance payments, voluntary retirement options, vacation pay, benefit options and termination and severance pay.

[82] At para. 51 of *Nortel*, Morawetz J. noted that it was necessary to take into account the overall financial picture of the applicants, who opposed the applications. There, as here, the debtor was not in a position to pay their obligations to all creditors and a number of defaults were present, including those relating to the

unionized and former employees. At para. 57, Morawetz J. described that *Nortel* was not carrying on "business as usual", which is also the case here. The Court dismissed the application stating:

> [60] An overriding consideration is that the employee claims whether put forth by the Union or the Former Employees, are unsecured claims. These claims do not have any statutory priority.
>
> . . .
>
> [80] At this stage of the Applicants' CCAA process, I see no basis in principle to treat either unionized or non-unionized employees differently than other unsecured creditors of the Applicants. Their claims are all stayed. The Applicants are attempting to restructure for the benefit of all stakeholders and their resources should be used for such a purpose.

[83] In *Sproule*, the Court of Appeal agreed that the stay applied to these types of claims:

> [39] The *CCAA* stay provision is a clear example of a case where the intent of Parliament, to allow the court to freeze the debt obligations owing to all creditors for past services (and goods) in order to permit a company to restructure for the benefit of all stakeholders, would be frustrated if the court's stay order could not apply to statutory termination and severance payments owed to terminated employees in respect of past services.

[84] The Court in *Nortel* asked the monitor to investigate whether an interim payment might be made to the employees in any event. That request was made, however, in very different circumstances where there were no significant secured creditors and a distribution to the unsecured creditors seemed likely in any event:

> [87] However, I am also mindful that the record, as I have previously noted, makes reference to a number of individuals that are severely impacted by the cessation of payments. There are no significant secured creditors of the Applicants, outside of certain charges provided for in the CCAA proceedings, and in view of the Applicants' declared assets, it is reasonable to expect that there will be a meaningful distribution to unsecured creditors, including retirees and Former Employees. The timing of such distribution may be extremely important to a number of retirees and Former Employees who have been severely impacted by the cessation of payments. In my view, it would be both helpful and equitable if a partial distribution could be made to affected employees on a timely basis.

[85] In *Windsor Machine & Stamping Ltd. (Re)*, [2009] O.J. No. 3195 (Ont. S.C.J.), the union brought an application to require the debtors to pay termination and

severance pay owing as a result of post-filing terminations. The major secured creditor objected. Justice Morawetz similarly rejected this application, citing the priority of that secured creditor:

> [43] First, the priority of secured creditors must, in my view, be recognized. Counsel to the Union made the submission that the Applicants and the Bank are advancing a priority argument that may be relevant in a bankruptcy or receivership proceeding but not in a CCAA proceeding, as there is no priority distribution scheme in the CCAA. In my view this submission is misguided. Although there is no specific priority distribution scheme in the CCAA, that does not mean that priority issues should not be considered. An initial order under the CCAA usually results in a stay of proceedings as against secured creditors as well as unsecured creditors. The stay prevents secured creditors from taking enforcement proceedings which would confirm their priority position. The inability of a secured creditor to take such enforcement proceedings should not result in an enhanced position for unsecured creditors. There is no basis, in my view, for the argument that somehow the absence of a statutory distribution scheme entitles unsecured creditors to obtain enhanced priority over secured creditors for pre-filing obligations. To give effect to this argument would result in a situation where secured creditors would be prejudiced by participating in CCAA proceedings as opposed to receivership/bankruptcy proceedings. This could very well result in a situation where secured creditors would prefer the receivership/bankruptcy option as opposed to the CCAA option as it would recognize their priority position. Such an outcome would undermine certain key objectives of the CCAA, namely, (i) maintain the *status quo* during the proceedings; and (ii) to facilitate the ability of a debtor to restructure its affairs. In my view, it is essential, in a court supervised process, to give due consideration to the priority rights of secured creditors. In this case, the secured creditors have priority over the termination pay and severance pay claims of the Tilbury Union Employees and the Pellus Union Employees.
>
> [44] Second, counsel to the Union also submits that based on the rationale in the decision of the Court of Appeal in *Re 1231640 Ontario Inc. (State Group)* (2007), 37 C.B.R. (5th) 185 (Ont. C.A.), priority rules do not crystallize in a CCAA proceeding. I do not accept this argument. *State Group* addressed a priority issue as between competing PPSA secured creditors in the context of a interim receivership under s. 47 of the BIA. The issue in *State Group* was whether a s. 47 BIA receiver was a person who represents creditors of the debtor under s. 20(1)(b) of the PPSA. The Court of Appeal held that an interim receiver was not such a person. The issue in *State Group* governs the relationship as between competing interests under the PPSA. In my view, it does not stand for the proposition that the priority position of a secured creditor vis-à-vis unsecured creditors should not be recognized in the context of a CCAA proceeding.
>
> [45] Third, the Union put forth submissions to the effect that, in this particular situation, the amount of termination pay and severance pay is relatively low and the Applicants have the cash to pay the amounts owing and, further, that such payments would not jeopardize the Proposed Sale.

> [46] In my view, the fact that the Applicants may have available cash does not mean that the Applicants can use the cash as they see fit. The asset is to be used in accordance with credit agreements and court authorized purposes, including those set out in the Amended and Restated Initial Order. I am in agreement with these submissions of counsel to the Applicants as set out at [15]. This Order placed restrictions on the use of cash, which restrictions are consistent with legal priorities. In my view, the fact that the Applicants have cash does not justify an alteration of legal priorities. The legal priority position is that the claims for termination pay and severance pay are unsecured claims which rank pari passu with other unsecured creditors and subordinate to the interests of the secured creditors. (See also *Indalex Limited*, [2009] O.J. No. 3165, CV-09-8122-00CL – July 24, 2009 on this point.)
>
> [47] I acknowledge that the situation facing the employees is unfortunate and that in *Nortel*, a hardship exception was made. However, this exception was predicated, in part, on the reasonable expectation that there will be a meaningful distribution to unsecured creditors, including the former employees. Such is not the case in this matter.

[86] The circumstances here are more resonant with the facts discussed in *Nortel* and *Windsor Machine*. Given that this proceeding is very much in its early days, I cannot conclude that a distribution to pre-filing unsecured claims (including to the employees) is likely at the end of the day. There are no ongoing operations; there is no cash with which to pay these amounts.

[87] Significantly, Nova Scotia, the major secured creditor, whose security would be primed by these payments, objects. In the absence of any objection by Nova Scotia, and with the general support of the Petitioners and the stakeholders appearing on this application, I might have come to a different conclusion.

[88] The Petitioners also argue that the Severance Obligations constitute inchoate priority charges under provisions of the Nova Scotia *Labour Standards Code*, R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 246 (the "*Code*"). They argue that these provisions would be triggered if an employee makes a successful claim to the Nova Scotia Labour Board (the "Board") and the Board issues an order. They refer to s. 88 of the *Code* that provides that amounts in an order are a debt due to the Board secured by a lien or mortgage that has priority over all other liens, charges, or mortgages. They also refer to ss. 90 and 90A of the *Code* with respect to potential actions by the Board. However, any such actions are currently stayed under the Initial Order, just as they

are with respect to any action that might have been taken by Nova Scotia as a secured creditor.

[89] This is an unpersuasive argument by the Petitioners in any event. It is well taken that a province cannot create priorities that alter the federal scheme of distribution in the event of a bankruptcy: *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. B-3, ss. 86-87, 136: *Husky Oil Operations Ltd. v. Minister of National Revenue*, [1995] 3 S.C.R. 453. Given that these proceedings are in their nascent days, it is anyone's guess on the outcome. A bankruptcy remains a possibility, however slight in the Petitioners' minds.

[90] I accept, without hesitation, that these hard working and dedicated employees will meet my decision with a great deal of disappointment, if not dismay. The reasons for the closure and shutdown are completely divorced from their commitment to their jobs. I also appreciate that this vulnerable group of stakeholders will suffer arising from my decision. I say this knowing that the Petitioners represented – or at least previously represented – a significant employer in the province and in Pictou County, particularly. I expect that many of these lost jobs, no doubt some with expertise involving work at pulp mills, cannot be easily replaced, if at all.

[91] The Petitioners have emphasized the need to maintain the goodwill of their workforce in the event that the RETF is constructed and operations recommence. Whether or not the Petitioners will achieve that objective is simply unknown at this time.

[92] Unfortunately, I conclude that there is no principled basis upon which I could exercise my discretion to grant this relief. The Petitioners have not advanced a persuasive case toward authorizing such payments in such nebulous circumstances, particularly when it would amount to prioritizing those unsecured creditors over the existing security of Nova Scotia and where Nova Scotia objects.

TERRAPURE

[93] Before and after the *CCAA* filing, Envirosystems Inc., dba Terrapure Environmental ("Terrapure") provided services to the Petitioners relating to the removal of wastewater. The pre-filing debt owed to Terrapure for its services is approximately $1.1 million.

[94] The Petitioners do not seek any relief in favour of Terrapure, such as a declaration that it is a "critical supplier". Indeed, by the date of this application, the Petitioners had found an alternate means to remove the wastewater and they advised that it is unlikely they will need any further services from Terrapure.

[95] Terrapure's position on this application is to support the approval of the Interim Financing Facility and the payment of the unsecured pre-filing claims of the employees, but only if Terrapure is similarly paid its pre-filing unsecured claim.

[96] The general discussion above regarding the general application of the stay of proceedings with respect to unsecured creditors equally applies to Terrapure. Nova Scotia similarly objects to any payment to Terrapure, since the means to make any such payment could only arise from the Interim Financing Facility.

[97] In my view, there is no basis to prefer Terrapure in this case by allowing payment of its pre-filing unsecured claim. All claims by unsecured creditors are equally covered by the stay under the Initial Order, including the claims by employees, as discussed above, and Terrapure.

[98] In the event that the Court did not approve payment of its pre-filing debt, Terrapure requested the addition of a term in the ARIO to confirm that it has no further obligation to provide services to the Petitioners. No one raised any objections to that provision and I grant that relief.

KEY EMPLOYEE RETENTION PLAN (KERP)

[99] The Petitioners seek approval of a KERP and the granting of a Court ordered KERP charge to a maximum of $342,207 (the "KERP Charge"). They say that the

KERP is for a select group of key employees to incentivize their continued retention, which is necessary if there is to be any viable prospect for the Petitioners to pursue their restructuring strategy.

[100] They propose that the KERP Charge rank directly below the Directors' Charge.

[101] The Court may exercise its discretion under its general statutory jurisdiction under s. 11 of the *CCAA* to approve a KERP and grant a KERP Charge: *U.S. Steel Canada Inc. (Re)*, 2014 ONSC 6145 at para. 27.

[102] As the Petitioners note, courts across Canada have approved key employee incentive plans in numerous *CCAA* proceedings: for example, *Nortel Networks Corp. (Re)*, [2009] O.J. No. 1044 (Ont. S.C.J.) and *U.S. Steel Canada*.

[103] In *Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. (Re)*, 2016 BCSC 107, this Court stated:

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

[104] In *Walter Energy* at para. 59, I discussed the *Grant Forest Products* factors, as follows:

- Is this employee important to the restructuring process?
- Does the employee have specialized knowledge that cannot be easily replaced?
- Will the employee consider other employment options if the KERP is not approved?
- Was the KERP developed through a consultative process involving the Monitor and other professionals?; and
- Does the Monitor support the KERP and a charge?

[105] More recently, in *Aralez Pharmaceuticals Inc. (Re)*, 2018 ONSC 6980 at para. 30, Justice Dunphy stated that three criterion underlie all of the considerations of key employee retention and incentive programs in insolvency proceedings as

discussed in the relevant case law: arm's length safeguards, necessity and reasonableness of design.

[106] As Mr. Chapman describes, the KERP has been designed to facilitate and encourage the continued participation of select key employees of the Petitioners who are contemplated to either (a) provide necessary services up to the expiry of the stay period (to December 2020); or (b) guide the business through the restructuring and preserve value for stakeholders over the length of the case.

[107] The KERP consists of two independent programs: the Key Management Employee Retention Plan (the "Management KERP") and the Key Technical Employee Retention Plan (the "Technical KERP"). These plans would apply to a small number of employees: five under the Management KERP; two under the Technical KERP. Payments under the Technical KERP are conditional on the proceedings continuing on the date that each payment is to be made and do not amount to a long-term payment commitment if the restructuring fails.

[108] The Petitioners' evidence on this application fully supports an affirmative answer to all of the above questions set out in *Walter Energy*. These employees are important to the restructuring process; the Monitor describes a "knowledge and operational void" if their employment is not further secured in some fashion. Given the nature of the assets in question, I agree that these employees, both management and technical, have specialized knowledge that cannot be easily replaced.

[109] There is no evidence on this application that any of these employees are considering other employment options if the KERP is not approved. However, that lack of evidence is not fatal to approval of the KERP since that very scenario is intended to be avoided by approval of the KERP.

[110] The KERP was developed through a consultative process involving the Monitor. The Monitor supports the KERP and the KERP Charge, noting that without

securing this “human capital”, the ability of the Petitioners to restructure their affairs will be greatly impaired.

[111] The Monitor notes in particular that Mr. Chapman, a PEC employee and general manager of the Pulp Mill, is included in the KERP. The Monitor describes Mr. Chapman as a “key resource” and provides that his continued support is “critical” toward achieving a successful restructuring. Mr. Chapman has been the person providing significant evidence in support of the Petitioners in this proceeding to date, which speaks to that fact.

[112] No stakeholder opposes this relief. In my view, such relief is appropriate. I approve the KERP and I grant the KERP Charge on the terms sought.

ADMINISTRATION / DIRECTORS’ CHARGES

[113] The Petitioners have not sought an increase of the Administration Charge on this application. The Petitioners seek the continuation of the Administration Charge in its previously approved amount (not to exceed $500,000) to secure professional fees and disbursements of the Monitor, counsel to the Monitor and the Petitioners' counsel.

[114] The Petitioners have also determined that they do not require an increase of the Directors’ Charge at this time. The Petitioners seek the continuation of the Directors’ Charge in its previously approved amount (not to exceed $500,000) to secure the indemnity provided for in the Initial Order.

[115] Again, no opposition arises. In my view, continuing this relief from the Initial Order is appropriate and I grant it.

STAY EXTENSION

[116] The Petitioners seek an extension of the stay to December 31, 2020.

[117] Under s. 11.02(2) of the *CCAA*, the Court has broad jurisdiction to extend a stay of proceedings where the circumstances warrant and for any period the Court considers necessary. Baseline considerations include those set out in s. 11.02(3) of

the *CCAA*, including confirmation that the debtor is acting with due diligence and in good faith and that the relief sought is appropriate.

[118] The comments of court in *Timminco Limited (Re)*, 2012 ONSC 2515 aptly set out the statutory objectives intended to be achieved by the stay:

> [15] The stay of proceedings is one of the main tools available to achieve the purpose of the CCAA. The stay provides the [debtors] with a degree of time in which to attempt to arrange an acceptable restructuring plan or sale of assets in order to maximize recovery for stakeholders. The court's jurisdiction in granting a stay extends to both preserving the *status quo* and facilitating a restructuring. See *Re Stelco Inc.*, (2005) O.J. No. 1171 (C.A.) at para. 36.

[119] Throughout this proceeding, and to this time, the Monitor confirms its view that the Petitioners have been working in good faith and with due diligence. The Monitor recommends the extension of the stay to December 31, 2020.

[120] It will be more than apparent from the discussion above and the orders I have granted, particularly as to the Interim Financing Facility, that I have concluded that an extension of the stay to December 31, 2020 is appropriate in the circumstances. As discussed above, there is somewhat of a "check" on the proceedings arising from the Monitor's report that will be filed before the end of October 2020.

[121] The stay period to December 2020 will allow the Petitioners to advance their objective of securing a restructuring option for the benefit of the stakeholders. I conclude that they should be afforded the opportunity to do so here.

UNIFOR APPLICATION

[122] Unifor seeks an order authorizing it to represent the current and former union members of the local, including pensioners, retirees, deferred vested participants, and their surviving spouses and dependants, employed or formerly employed by the Petitioners, in these proceedings. Unifor does not seek any court ordered funding to secure its participation or that of Pink Larkin, its counsel.

[123] The Petitioners support this relief and no stakeholder objects.

[124] As with much of the above relief, the Court has jurisdiction to exercise its discretion to grant the order sought under its broad statutory jurisdiction found in s. 11 of the *CCAA*.

[125] In *Canwest Publishing Inc.*, 2010 ONSC 1328, the Court discussed the factors typically considered in granting such relief. Justice Pepall (as she then was) set those out as follows:

> [21] Factors that have been considered by courts in granting these orders include:
>
> - the vulnerability and resources of the group sought to be represented;
> - any benefit to the companies under *CCAA* protection;
> - any social benefit to be derived from representation of the group;
> - the facilitation of the administration of the proceedings and efficiency;
> - the avoidance of a multiplicity of legal retainers;
> - the balance of convenience and whether it is fair and just including to the creditors of the Estate;
> - whether representative counsel has already been appointed for those who have similar interests to the group seeking representation and who is also prepared to act for the group seeking the order; and
> - the position of other stakeholders and the Monitor.

See also *Target Canada Co. (Re)*, 2015 ONSC 303 at para. 61.

[126] I agree that these employees presently have a commonality of interest that is best represented in this proceeding as an entire group. Wanda Skinner is the president of the Unifor local. Ms. Skinner's affidavit #2 sworn July 28, 2020 supports the vulnerability of the unionized employees arising from the disastrous economic consequences to them of losing their jobs and benefits.

[127] Unifor clearly has a relationship with this cohort and is in the best position to advance the entire group's interests, at least at this time. That representation will be a benefit to the Petitioners in advancing this restructuring by facilitating discussions between them. The estate will incur no cost by reason of Unifor's representation, welcome news given the lack of cash resources available to the Petitioners.

[128] The order sought by Unifor is consistent with the order granted in the Fraser Papers Inc. restructuring: see *Fraser Papers Inc. (Re)*, 2009 CanLII 55115 and 2009 CanLII 63589 (Ont. S.C.J.).

[129] I am satisfied that the terms of the order sought are appropriate, with one exception. In para. 3 of the draft order, Unifor seeks authority to "determine, file, advance or compromise" any claims of its current or former employees. The only change I would make to that provision is to amend it to provide that any compromise proposed to be made by Unifor will be subject to court approval. This will ensure some oversight in respect of any decisions that Unifor seeks to make for the employee group they will represent.

"Fitzpatrick J."

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Citation: *Mountain Equipment Co-Operative (Re),* 2020 BCSC 2037

Date: 20201221
Docket: S209201
Registry: Vancouver

In the Matter of the *COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT,* R.S.C. 1985, C. C-36, as amended

- AND -

In the Matter of 1077 HOLDINGS CO-OPERATIVE and 1314625 ONTARIO LIMITED

Petitioners

Before: The Honourable Madam Justice Fitzpatrick

Reasons for Judgment (Representative Counsel / Charge)

Counsel for the Petitioners, 1077 Holdings Co-Operative and 1314625 Ontario Limited:	H. Gorman, Q.C. S. Boucher
Counsel for the Monitor, Alvarez & Marsal Canada Inc.:	M.I.A. Buttery, Q.C. H.L. Williams
Counsel for Lorne Hoover, on his own behalf and on behalf of former MEC employees:	C. Gusikowski
Place and Date of Hearing:	Vancouver, B.C. November 24 and 27, 2020
Place and Date of Decision:	Vancouver, B.C. December 21, 2020

INTRODUCTION

[1] Lorne Hoover is a former employee of the petitioner, Mountain Equipment Co-operative ("MEC"). MEC has since changed its name to 1077 Holdings Co-operative.

[2] Mr. Hoover seeks an order appointing Victory Square Law Office ("VSLO") as representative counsel for all of MEC's former employees in relation to claims that will be advanced by them in this *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act,* R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 ("*CCAA*") proceeding.

[3] In addition, Mr. Hoover seeks a court ordered charge in the amount of $85,000 against MEC's assets to secure that representation, with priority over all claims, save for certain court ordered charges that have already been court approved (such as the Administrative Charge, the D&O Charge and the KERP).

[4] MEC opposes this relief as unnecessary and unwarranted. The Monitor has raised similar concerns, also stating that the relief may be redundant and unnecessary in the circumstances.

BACKGROUND FACTS

[5] On October 2, 2020, I granted the Sale Approval and Vesting Order (SAVO) by which the Court approved a sale of substantially all of MEC's assets: *Mountain Equipment Co-Operative (Re),* 2020 BCSC 1586.

[6] On October 30, 2020, the sale transaction closed. Fortunately, the purchaser took over more retail locations than initially forecast, such that 21 of the 22 retail stores are to continue. In addition, the purchaser retained over 90% of MEC's active employees who worked in those locations across Canada.

[7] MEC received net sale proceeds of approximately $22.9 million. Further amounts (approximately $7.5 million) remain held in escrow pending final accounting adjustments to be completed under the sale.

[8] In November 2020, Mr. Hoover's application was filed. His application was heard with MEC's own applications toward addressing the next steps in this proceeding.

[9] On November 27, 2020, I granted a Claims Process Order (the "CPO") and a further order to enhance the Monitor's powers in relation to these proceedings (the "Enhanced Powers Order"). The Enhanced Powers Order was necessary because of steps taken by MEC following the sale. MEC terminated all of its management personnel effective November 30, 2020. In addition, MEC's board of directors intended to resign and those resignations were to become effective immediately after the granting of this order.

[10] The Enhanced Powers Order allows the Monitor to assume responsibility for the administration of the remainder of MEC's assets and importantly, the administration of a Claims Process.

THE CLAIMS PROCESS

[11] Under the Enhanced Powers Order, the Monitor was authorized to initiate and administer the Claims Process. The Monitor anticipates that the Claims Process will involve a determination of a variety of claims, including the substantial claims of landlords whose leases were disclaimed and employees' claims arising from their termination.

[12] The features of the Claims Process, as established by the CPO, are:

a) Claims affected by the CPO will be all Pre-filing Claims, Restructuring Period Claims, Employee Claims and D&O Claims. The Claims Process will not affect certain claims not relevant to this application;

b) By December 11, 2020, the Monitor will deliver Claims Packages and Employee Claims Packages to all known Claimants and Employee Claimants, respectively;

c) The Employee Claims Packages will include MEC's calculations of each Employee Claim and, if available in MEC's records, any relevant employment contract. A negative process will be in place such that an affected employee will only be required to file any materials if they dispute MEC's proposed assessment of their claim;

d) In the usual fashion, the Claims Process will be widely advertised in national papers and on the Monitor's Website;

e) Claimants with Pre-filing Claims and D&O Claims, and Employee Claimants who dispute their assessed Employee Claims, will have until February 10, 2021 (the "Claims Bar Date") to file Proofs of Claim or D&O Proofs of Claim with the Monitor;

f) Claimants with Restructuring Period Claims will have until the later of (i) 45 days after the date on which the Monitor sends a Claims Package with respect to a Restructuring Period Claim and (ii) the Claims Bar Date;

g) The Monitor shall review all Proofs of Claim and D&O Claims in consultation with MEC and the Directors and Officers named in respect of any D&O Claim, and shall accept, revise or reject each Claim;

h) If the Monitor intends to revise or reject a Claim, the Monitor shall send a Notice of Revision or Disallowance (NORD) to the Claimant or Employee Claimant by no later than March 22, 2021, unless otherwise ordered by this Court on application by the Monitor;

i) Any Claimant or Employee Claimant who intends to dispute a NORD shall deliver a Notice of Dispute of Revision or Disallowance to the Monitor within 30 days of receiving the NORD;

j) The Monitor may refer any Claims to Herman Van Ommen, Q.C., the Claims Officer, or the Court, for adjudication at its election by sending written notice to the Claimant or Employee Claimant; and

k) For any Claims adjudicated by a Claims Officer, the Claimant, Employee Claimant, Monitor or Petitioners may file a notice of appeal of the Claims Officer's determination within ten days of receiving notice of the same. Appeals will be conducted as true appeals and not as hearings *de novo*.

[13] Approximately 210 of MEC's employees were terminated after the commencement of these *CCAA* proceedings. This group included 103 head office staff and 107 retail staff, all of whom received outstanding wages, vacation pay and benefits to the date of termination. Certain former MEC employees were terminated prior to the commencement of these *CCAA* proceedings but were on salary continuance. MEC and the Monitor expect that most of these employees will have claims for unpaid severance.

[14] In its Fourth Report dated November 23, 2020 (the "Fourth Report"), the Monitor indicates that MEC's management has already undertaken significant efforts to prepare a preliminary calculation of the severance and termination amounts owing to former employees, with oversight and input from the Monitor. This would include an assessment of the applicable provincial statutory requirements (including those arising from any group terminations), which the Monitor states would apply to the majority of these employees. The Monitor considers that approximately 34 employees are entitled to contractual and/or common law notice.

[15] MEC's assessments of all the former employee claims will be included in the Employee Claims Packages that each of them will receive and review. As above, if any employee disputes MEC's assessment of his/her claim amount, the claim will be reviewed by the Monitor and, if necessary, determined by the Claims Officer or the Court.

[16] Although uncertain at this point, the initial indications are that the unsecured creditors could receive between 30%-50% of their claims.

REPRESENTATIVE COUNSEL

[17] Mr. Hoover was employed by MEC for just over 21 years. He was terminated on October 14, 2020. He believes that one or more contracts governed his terms of employment. He states that he is uncertain as to his contractual status.

[18] Mr. Hoover's status in relation to the remainder of MEC's other terminated employees arises from a Facebook group called "Former MEC Staffers". This Facebook group is comprised of approximately 85 members who purport to be former MEC employees.

[19] Mr. Hoover states that he is unaware of any other organized group of former MEC employees with claims who are involved in the *CCAA* proceedings. Mr. Hoover has been told that the Administrator of the Facebook group has advised the members of his application before the Court. Mr. Hoover has been advised that no member of the Facebook group has expressed concern about the application.

[20] Mr. Gusikoski, counsel for Mr. Hoover from VSLO, has been in contact with approximately 35 former employees who are members of the Facebook group, many of whom have no written contracts. In addition, Mr. Gusikoski has reviewed the contracts of many employees. Since the filing of Mr. Hoover's application, Mr. Gusikoski has received numerous emails from former MEC employees, expressing their wish that he represent them in these proceedings.

[21] Mr. Gusikoski is of the view that there is a complex array of legal and factual issues likely to arise in relation to the employee claims to be addressed in the Claims Process. Those issues include:

a) Employment Standards: He agrees with MEC that the provincial employment standards legislation applies to employees who have

been terminated, and that group termination provisions may be applicable;

b) Common Law Severance: He agrees with MEC that there are former employees who will be entitled to file claims for common law severance. There is no dispute that the issue will be a determination of what is "reasonable notice" in the circumstances, as that phrase is discussed in the case authorities. It is uncontroversial that the assessment of reasonable notice will be highly fact specific in relation to each former employee;

c) Contractual Severance Provisions: He asserts that there are a variety of contractual terms dealing with severance. Many contractual provisions are simply to the effect that the notice period is as set out in the legislation, however, he asserts that common law severance may still be available. Other contractual provisions refer not only to the legislated minimum notice periods, but also further entitlements (i.e. Separation Payments). He similarly takes the view that this language only sets a further minimum entitlement without waiving an employee's right to pursue damages at common law; and

d) Application of Written Contracts: He raises other issues that may also become relevant to an employee's claim. The first issue raised is whether any contract is even in force, arising from the contention that a number of employees were not offered fresh consideration when they signed a new contract in mid-employment. The second issue relates to long-term employees and whether the changed nature of their employment over time has negated the legal effect of termination provisions in an earlier employment contract, citing *Rasanen v. Lisle-Metrix Ltd.* (2001), 17 C.C.E.L. (3d) 134 at para. 41 (Ont. S.C.J.); aff'd (2004) 33 C.C.E.L. (3d) 47 (Ont. C.A.).

Legal Principles for Appointing Representative Counsel

[22] Appointment of representative counsel in *CCAA* proceedings is not entirely unusual. There is no dispute here that the Court has jurisdiction to appoint representative counsel under its general power set out in s. 11 of the *CCAA*, if such relief is appropriate in the circumstances.

[23] Many case authorities discuss the factors to be considered by the courts in determining whether the appointment of representative counsel is appropriate. Generally, these cases refer to the well known non-exhaustive factors set out in *Canwest Publishing Inc. (Re)*, 2010 ONSC 1328 at para. 21, as adopted by this Court in *Re League Assets Corp. (Re)*, 2013 BCSC 2043 at para. 72:

> - the vulnerability and resources of the group sought to be represented;
> - any benefit to the companies under *CCAA* protection;
> - any social benefit to be derived from representation of the group;
> - the facilitation of the administration of the proceedings and efficiency;
> - the avoidance of a multiplicity of legal retainers;
> - the balance of convenience and whether it is fair and just including to the creditors of the Estate;
> - whether representative counsel has already been appointed for those who have similar interests to the group seeking representation and who is also prepared to act for the group seeking the order; and
> - the position of other stakeholders and the Monitor.

[24] For the purposes of this application, analysis of the *Canwest Publishing* factors can be addressed under three broad categories: (1) the former employee group, (2) the benefit of their representation in this proceeding, and (3) the balancing of stakeholder interests.

The Former Employee Group

[25] Mr. Hoover submits that the former employees are a financially vulnerable group dispersed throughout Canada, but concentrated in western Canada. He confirms that the former employees have severance claims, only a portion of which are expected to be returned. He asserts that the former employees are disproportionately affected by MEC's *CCAA* proceedings, in that they have not only

suffered immediate losses, but loss of income going forward. Mr. Hoover says that the former employees have little financial resources available to fund any "sophisticated" defence of their interests. He says that a "social benefit" will be derived from ensuring this vulnerable group of employees is represented by legal counsel.

[26] MEC asserts that there is insufficient evidence to support that these former employees could not retain a law firm, either individually or as a group. However, later emails sent by many former MEC employees to VSLO mention that the termination of their employment has caused financial stress in their lives. This is not entirely surprising, whether this is a short-term or longer-term situation.

[27] Certainly, the negative economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused significant hardship to many Canadians, despite the government support available to them. For the purpose of this application, I accept that Mr. Hoover has established some evidence to the effect that, generally speaking, the former employees have been left in a vulnerable position arising from the loss of their jobs.

[28] Courts have appointed representative counsel in numerous *CCAA* proceedings for current and/or former employees and retirees: see *Nortel Networks Corp. (Re)* (2009), 53 C.B.R. (5th) 196 at paras. 10–16 (Ont. S.C.J.); *Fraser Papers Inc. (Re)*, 2009 CanLII 55115 and 2009 CanLII 63589 (Ont. S.C.J.); *Target Canada Co. (Re)*, 2015 ONSC 303 at para. 61. However, the circumstances in those cases were significantly different than those here. An important factor in those restructurings was that literally thousands of former and current employees or retirees sought representation in the early days of those complex *CCAA* proceedings.

[29] In *1057863 B.C. Ltd. (Re),* 2020 BCSC 1359 at paras. 122-129, this Court appointed the union to represent hundreds of laid-off employees in the early days of the Northern Pulp restructuring.

[30] In *Canwest Publishing*, a smaller number (75) of former employees and retirees sought representation. Justice Pepall (as she then was) agreed that a representation order was appropriate because, among other factors, the vulnerable employee group was facing what was to be a complex *CCAA* restructuring, particularly given the sales process that was underway.

[31] The circumstances relating to MEC and this Claims Process represent a far different scenario than was addressed in the above cases. At present, what remains to be advanced is the distribution of the monies in the Monitor's hands in accordance with the Claims Process. Of particular note are the following factors in relation to the Employee Claimants:

a) There is no reason to question the good faith efforts of MEC's management to gather the applicable facts and documents and assess what MEC considers to be the termination entitlement of each employee. This effort is subject to the involvement and oversight of the Monitor;

b) The majority of the 210 employees will be subject to the applicable provincial legislation, where the calculation of severance entitlement, including in the event of a group termination, is fairly straightforward;

c) With respect to the former employees who have contracts or are entitled to common law notice, their entitlement will be based on the specific facts and circumstances unique to them, indicative of a unique analysis, as opposed to common issues to be advanced on behalf of all or most of them;

d) It remains to be seen whether common issues arise with respect to the former employees that would justify joint representation on the contract or common law issues;

e) Mr. Hoover argues that "information asymmetries" between employees would lead to obvious and manifest unfairness. However, there is no

evidence that the employees who are clearly not subject to the legislation could not band together to fund joint representation to present common or individual issues, whether through VSLO or another law firm: *Urbancorp Inc. (Re)*, 2016 ONSC 5426 at para. 16;

f) It may be that VSLO's representation of all the employees would present a conflict, since advocating for one employee may increase his or her claim to the detriment of others who will share in the same pot of monies: *Urbancorp* at para. 20;

g) Mr. Hoover argues that many employees are or may be unaware of significant legal interests they have without representation. However, Mr. Gusikoski has already been in contact with 35 employees. In addition, copies of Mr. Hoover's application materials, which identify various legal issues, can be posted on the Facebook group or other social media; and

h) Mr. Hoover also argues that some employees may not be aware of common law severance rights, which could increase their claim significantly. Again, VSLO and/or Mr. Hoover can identify the issues for the Facebook group and identify sources of legal resources for use by them, just as many self-represented parties use in other litigation before the Court.

Benefit of Representation in this Proceeding

[32] Many of the above factors are brought into sharper focus in relation to whether there is some benefit in appointing representative counsel to promote the efficient administration of these proceedings for the benefit of all stakeholders.

[33] This proceeding is not in its early days; rather, it is in its final days as the Claims Process begins toward determining the proportionate sharing of the remaining monies as between the creditors. The Claims Process is a comprehensive one that will lead unsecured creditors toward that final outcome. Each former

employee will have a full opportunity to either accept MEC's proposed assessment of his/her claim or contest that assessment within the specific procedures set out in the CPO.

[34] In that event, I agree with MEC's counsel that there seems to be little utility in appointing representative counsel even before that process is underway.

[35] Mr. Hoover submits that VSLO possesses specialized expertise in labour and employment law matters and, of that, I have no doubt. Mr. Hoover also submits that VSLO can work with MEC's counsel or the Monitor to sharply consolidate issues and streamline dispute resolution processes before the Claims Officer. However, it is far from clear what issues may need to be "consolidated" and it is far from clear whether there will be need for counsel to act for employees to streamline the process to determine their claims if they dispute MEC's assessment.

[36] Mr. Hoover argues that the former employees have not been involved with legal counsel in these proceedings. Furthermore, Mr. Hoover says that they have not been provided with timely advice about the *CCAA* proceedings which relate directly to their interests. That may be the case, but former employees have full access to the materials filed in these proceedings which have been posted online from the outset. I expect that, in large part, many of the stakeholders, including the former employees, have been awaiting the outcome of the sale process to see what amounts might be available to them as unsecured creditors.

[37] Mr. Hoover cites *Quadriga Fintech Solutions Corp. (Re)*, 2019 NSSC 65 at paras. 9 and 16 as confirming that representative counsel can provide effective communication to stakeholders regarding the *CCAA* proceedings and ensure that their interests are brought to the attention of the Court.

[38] As I see it, MEC and the Monitor are very much alive to the interests of the Employee Claimants and the Claims Process has been designed to specifically address their unique interests. Further, leaving aside Mr. Hoover's Facebook group,

the Employee Claims Package that each of them will receive will describe in detail the stage of these proceedings and how their claims are to be addressed.

[39] Mr. Gusikoski asserts that many former employees are entitled to both statutory and contractual/common law notice periods. He asserts that many of the written contracts have similar legal issues which could apply to many participants, which could be more efficiently grouped and adjudicated within the Claims Process in a manner most efficient to the resolution of all issues. As such, Mr. Hoover argues that granting a representative counsel is the *only way* in which to ensure the former employees' claims are determined in the fairest, consistent and efficient manner possible.

[40] At paras. 62-63 in *Nortel Networks*, in assessing appointment of representative counsel, the court considered the "commonality of interest" test that is commonly referred to in respect of classification of creditors. Justice Morawetz (as he then was) found that the former employees had a "commonality of interest" that could benefit the proceeding by the appointment of one representative counsel.

[41] Mr. Hoover refers to authorities where representative counsel were appointed in relation to claims processes. In *Target Canada Co. (Re)*, 2015 ONSC 1028 at paras. 32-40, the court appointed, with limited funding, counsel for certain franchisees who were facing "similar circumstances". The role of counsel in that event was with respect to several matters, one of which related to participating in the claims process. In *TBS Acquireco Inc. (Re)*, 2013 ONSC 4663 at paras. 33-37, the court declined any appointment and funding to allow terminated employees to advance *Wage Earner Protection Program* claims.

[42] I accept that there may be circumstances to justify appointing representative counsel for the purpose of pursuing claims in a claims process. Mr. Hoover's arguments may be valid at some point in the Claims Process. However, until the Claims Process is underway and the former employees respond, it is completely unknown as to which of them might dispute MEC's assessment and, if so, on what

basis. In that event, it is largely premature as to whether any common issues will emerge that may support a representative counsel appointment.

[43] I have no doubt that the Monitor will be attuned to any common issues as may emerge in the Claims Process and will consider the most efficient manner of adjudicating those issues. At that time, it may be the case that representative counsel makes sense to coordinate the former employees' arguments so as to avoid a multiplicity of retainers within the Claims Process.

Balancing of Stakeholder Interests

[44] MEC filed a Response opposing the appointment of representative counsel and the granting of a charge in favour of representative counsel. In addition, the Monitor filed a Response indicating that it was not supportive of this relief. No other stakeholder took a position on this application.

[45] The Monitor's position was addressed in more detail in the Fourth Report. At para. 11.5, the Monitor states that it views the relief sought as possibly redundant and not necessary in the circumstances. The Monitor states, in part:

> d) the Monitor, as an independent officer of the Court, will be adjudicating claims and any disputed claims that are unable to be settled will be referred to the independent Claims Officer and/or the Court for resolution. Any third-party legal counsel engaged to prepare and calculate the Former Employees' claims when a negative claims process is being administered by the Court's officer is duplicative and impacts potential recoveries to the estate and affected creditors including non-former employee claimants; and
>
> e) the Employee Claims are unsecured claims that should be treated equitably with other unsecured claims in the Claims Process, of which such claimants (primarily landlord claims in respect of disclaimed leases) have not been granted a charge for their respective legal counsel.

[46] Mr. Hoover takes great umbrage at the Monitor's stated position, either in the Response or the Fourth Report, asserting that the Monitor has "entered the fray" by failing to act impartially in relation to the former employees. In addition, Mr. Hoover asserts that, in doing so, the Monitor has acted outside the scope of its duties as prescribed by this Court.

[47] The comments found in *Ernst & Young Inc. v. Essar Global Fund Limited*, 2017 ONCA 1014 are well accepted in describing the role of a monitor in *CCAA* proceedings, in that:

> [109] . . . the monitor is to be independent and impartial, must treat all parties reasonably and fairly, and is to conduct itself in a manner consistent with the objectives of the *CCAA* and its restructuring purpose.

[48] Having reviewed the Monitor's statements in context, I consider that Mr. Hoover's submissions on this point are misplaced. The Monitor has considered the particular circumstances of the former employees, but importantly, the Monitor has also considered the relief sought by them more generally in the present circumstances of this *CCAA* restructuring proceeding. To do so is entirely appropriate, since the interests of the former employees cannot be considered in isolation in terms of the balancing of interests of all stakeholders.

[49] As with many issues, the Monitor is uniquely situated to comment on the overall circumstances so as to assist the Court in the balancing exercise. Indeed, the very authorities that are cited by all parties here, including the former employees, as to the applicable test in appointing representative counsel (*Canwest Publishing*), specifically sets out that one factor to be considered is the position of the Monitor.

[50] The Monitor's comments and its position emphasize that the Claims Process has been put in place and is a comprehensive process for the determination of the claims to be advanced against MEC. As with other claims processes granted in *CCAA* proceedings, it is intended to afford an efficient and expeditious means of resolving claims, including those of the former employees, to allow distribution to the creditors as soon as possible.

[51] With the Enhanced Powers Order, the Monitor has assumed conduct of the Claims Process and has full access to MEC's books and records as may be relevant to that task. Further, the Monitor, as a court appointed officer, can be expected to address claims in a fair manner, including those relating to former employees.

[52] The Claims Process is intended to benefit all stakeholders, not just the former employees. Many other creditors will participate in the Claims Process without legal representation as they wish. The Claims Process is expected to be easily understood in terms of how the process works, and how disputes are to be raised and addressed. As noted by the court in *Urbancorp* at para. 18, it is a "normal process" for a Monitor to deal with claimants.

[53] In all of the circumstances, I am not convinced that a representative counsel appointment is appropriate at this time. If certain issues emerge in the Claims Process that might support a more coordinated resolution of common issues, either the Monitor or any of the former employees have leave to reapply for such relief.

REPRESENTATIVE COUNSEL CHARGE

[54] I will also address Mr. Hoover's request for a court ordered charge for representative counsel if I had acceded to his request for representative counsel and to address any future application that might arise.

[55] Mr. Hoover seeks a charge of $85,000 against MEC's property to secure what he expects will be VSLO's anticipated fees so as to allow for the former employees' "effective participation" in the Claims Process.

[56] Section 11.52(1)(c) of the *CCAA* allows the court to grant a charge on a petitioner's assets to secure payment of the legal fees and disbursements for representative counsel who may be appointed:

> 11.52(1) On notice to the secured creditors who are likely to be affected by the security or charge, the court may make an order declaring that all or part of the property of a debtor company is subject to a security or charge — in an amount that the court considers appropriate — in respect of the fees and expenses of
>
> . . .
>
> (c) any financial, legal or other experts engaged by any other interested person if the court is satisfied that the security or charge is necessary for their effective participation in proceedings under this Act.
>
> . . .

> (2) The court may order that the security or charge rank in priority over the claim of any secured creditor of the company.

[57] The Court must be satisfied that the charge is necessary for the effective participation of representative counsel in the proceedings: *Urbancorp* at para. 14.

[58] Factors to consider in approving an administrative charge include those set out in *Canwest Publishing Inc. (Re)*, 2010 ONSC 222 at para. 54, as adopted by this Court in *Walter Energy Canada Holdings, Inc. (Re)*, 2016 BCSC 107 at para. 42:

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

[59] MEC's business was large and complex, but that was in the past. Having now sold the business, MEC's interests are simply to administer a sum of money for distribution to its creditors under the Claims Process, now a role assumed by the Monitor.

[60] The Claims Process has been designed to provide as streamlined a process as possible for the former employees. The process is not complex or difficult.

[61] Mr. Hoover argues that, while the Monitor is a representative of the Court and has an obligation to all stakeholders, it does not have the time or resources to properly advise the former employees. I disagree and would respond that this is not a correct characterization of the Monitor's role in the Claims Process.

[62] The Monitor will have an impartial and important role in that process, and it is to be expected that the Monitor will provide assistance to all claimants, as necessary and appropriate. In that sense, I am of the view that the Monitor's comments about this relief being redundant and unnecessary have some merit given present

circumstances: *Homburg Invest Inc. (Arrangement relatif a)*, 2014 QCCS 980 at para. 100 (see factors a and b).

[63] In addition, MEC argues that the proposed charge for the former employees is unnecessary and would adversely affect MEC's other stakeholders, including its landlords, suppliers and vendors, and other unsecured creditors. Just as the Monitor has in this case, the monitor in *Urbancorp* argued that the court would be wrong to allow funding that was solely in the interest of one group of stakeholders (para. 18). This argument was accepted by Justice Newbould, who noted:

> [24] Estate funds should be spent for the benefit of the estate as a whole, not for the benefit of one group whose interests are contrary to the interests of the estate as a whole. . . .

[64] No other unsecured creditor or creditor group has sought funding from MEC's estate for their participation in the Claims Process. While certainly some of them will have more substantial resources than the former employees individually, certainly some of them will not.

[65] Further, it is difficult to assess the reasonableness of the quantum of the proposed charge. This is because it is difficult to say which of MEC's assessments might be contested and, if so, on what basis. For example, if only a few employees advance a dispute within the Claims Process, it will be apparent that estate resources are being spent on only a relatively small subset of stakeholders. This is arguably unreasonable, particularly since those funds would be spent to increase those few employees' slice of the pie to the detriment of others who do have the benefit of estate funded representation.

[66] In my view, weighing all the above factors leads me to conclude that, even if I had appointed representative counsel, the proposed charge to secure that representation is not appropriate in the present circumstances.

CONCLUSION

[67] Mr. Hoover's application is dismissed. Mr. Hoover and the Monitor have leave to bring this issue forward in the future, if further steps taken within the Claims Process dictate a further consideration of the issues.

"Fitzpatrick J."

COURT FILE NO.: 09-CL-7950
DATE: 20090527

SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE – ONTARIO
(COMMERCIAL LIST)

RE: **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 NORTEL NETWORKS CORPORATION, NORTEL NETWORKS LIMITED, NORTEL NETWORKS GLOBAL CORPORATION, NORTEL NETWORKS INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION AND NORTEL NETWORKS TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION

APPLICANTS

APPLICATION UNDER THE *COMPANIES' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, AS AMENDED

BEFORE: **MORAWETZ J.**

COUNSEL: **Janice Payne, Steven Levitt and Arthur O. Jacques for the Steering Committee of Recently Severed Canadian Nortel Employees**

Barry Wadsworth for the CAW-Canada and George Borosh and Debra Connor

Lyndon Barnes and Adam Hirsh for the Board of Directors of Nortel Networks Corporation and Nortel Networks Limited

Alan Mersky and Derrick Tay for the Applicants

Henry Juroviesky, Eli Karp, Kevin Caspersz and Aaron Hershtal for the Steering Committee for The Nortel Terminated Canadian Employees Owed Termination and Severance Pay

M. Starnino for the Superintendent of Financial Services or Administrator of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund

Leanne Williams for Flextronics Telecom Systems Ltd.

Jay Carfagnini and Chris Armstrong for Ernst & Young Inc., Monitor

Gail Misra for the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada

J. Davis-Sydor for Brookfield Lepage Johnson Controls Facility Management Services

Mark Zigler and S. Philpott for Certain Former Employees of Nortel

G. H. Finlayson for Informal Nortel Noteholders Group

A. Kauffman for Export Development Canada

Alex MacFarlane for the Unsecured Creditors' Committee (U.S.)

HEARD: **April 20, 2009**

E N D O R S E M E N T

[1] On May 20, 2009, I released an endorsement appointing Koskie Minsky as representative counsel with reasons to follow. The reasons are as follows.

[2] This endorsement addresses five motions in which various parties seek to be appointed as representative counsel for various factions of Nortel's current and former employees (Nortel Networks Corporation, Nortel Networks Limited, Nortel Networks Global Corporation, Nortel Networks International Corporation and Nortel Networks Technology Corporation are collectively referred to as the "Applicants" or "Nortel").

[3] The proposed representative counsel are:

(i) Koskie Minsky LLP ("KM") who is seeking to represent all former employees, including pensioners, of the Applicants or any person claiming an interest under or on behalf of such former employees or pensioners and surviving spouses in respect of a pension from the Applicants. Approximately 2,000 people have retained KM.

(ii) Nelligan O'Brien Payne LLP and Shibley Righton LLP (collectively "NS") who are seeking to be co-counsel to represent all former non-unionized employees, terminated either prior to or after the CCAA filing date, to whom the Applicants owe severance and/or pay in lieu of reasonable notice. In addition, in a separate

motion, NS seeks to be appointed as co-counsel to the continuing employees of Nortel. Approximately 460 people have retained NS and a further 106 have retained Macleod Dixon LLP, who has agreed to work with NS.

(iii) Juroviesky and Ricci LLP ("J&R") who is seeking to represent terminated employees or any person claiming an interest under or on behalf of former employees. At the time that this motion was heard approximately 120 people had retained J&R. A subsequent affidavit was filed indicating that this number had increased to 186.

(iv) Mr. Lewis Gottheil, in-house legal counsel for the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada ("CAW") who is seeking to represent all retirees of the Applicants who were formerly members of one of the CAW locals when they were employees. Approximately 600 people have retained Mr. Gottheil or the CAW.

[4] At the outset, it is noted that all parties who seek representation orders have submitted ample evidence that establishes that the legal counsel that they seek to be appointed as representative counsel are well respected members of the profession.

[5] Nortel filed for CCAA protection on January 14, 2009 (the "Filing Date"). At the Filing Date, Nortel employed approximately 6,000 employees and had approximately 11,700 retirees or their spouses receiving pension and/or benefits from retirement plans sponsored by the Applicants.

[6] The Monitor reports that the Applicants have continued to honour substantially all of the obligations to active employees. However, the Applicants acknowledge that upon commencement of the CCAA proceedings, they ceased making almost all payments to former employees of amounts that would constitute unsecured claims. Included in those amounts were payments to a number of former employees for termination and severance, as well as amounts under various retirement and retirement transition programs.

[7] The Monitor is of the view that it is appropriate that there be representative counsel in light of the large number of former employees of the Applicants. The Monitor is of the view that former employee claims may require a combination of legal, financial, actuarial and advisory resources in order to be advanced and that representative counsel can efficiently co-ordinate such assistance for this large number of individuals.

[8] The Monitor has reported that the Applicants' financial position is under pressure. The Monitor is of the view that the financial burden of multiple representative counsel would further increase this pressure.

[9] These motions give rise to the following issues:

(i) when is it appropriate for the court to make a representation and funding order?

(ii) given the completing claims for representation rights, who should be appointed as representative counsel?

Issue 1 – Representative Counsel and Funding Orders

[10] The court has authority under Rule 10.01 of the *Rules of Civil Procedure* to appoint representative counsel where persons with an interest in an estate cannot be readily ascertained, found or served.

[11] Alternatively, Rule 12.07 provides the court with the authority to appoint a representative defendant where numerous persons have the same interests.

[12] In addition, the court has a wide discretion pursuant to s. 11 of the CCAA to appoint representatives on behalf of a group of employees in CCAA proceedings and to order legal and other professional expenses of such representatives to be paid from the estate of the debtor applicant.

[13] In the KM factum, it is submitted that employees and retirees are a vulnerable group of creditors in an insolvency because they have little means to pursue a claim in complex CCAA proceedings or other related insolvency proceedings. It was further submitted that the former employees of Nortel have little means to pursue their claims in respect of pension, termination, severance, retirement payments and other benefit claims and that the former employees would benefit from an order appointing representative counsel. In addition, the granting of a representation order would provide a social benefit by assisting former employees and that representative counsel would provide a reliable resource for former employees for information about the process. The appointment of representative counsel would also have the benefit of streamlining and introducing efficiency to the process for all parties involved in Nortel's insolvency.

[14] I am in agreement with these general submissions.

[15] The benefits of representative counsel have also been recognized by both Nortel and by the Monitor. Nortel consents to the appointment of KM as the single representative counsel for all former employees. Nortel opposes the appointment of any additional representatives. The Monitor supports the Applicants' recommendation that KM be appointed as representative counsel. No party is opposed to the appointment of representative counsel.

[16] In the circumstances of this case, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to exercise discretion pursuant to s. 11 of the CCAA to make a Rule 10 representation order.

Issue 2 – Who Should be Appointed as Representative Counsel?

[17] The second issue to consider is who to appoint as representative counsel. On this issue, there are divergent views. The differences primarily centre around whether there are inherent conflicts in the positions of various categories of former employees.

[18] The motion to appoint KM was brought by Messrs. Sproule, Archibald and Campbell (the "Koskie Representatives"). The Koskie Representatives seek a representation order to appoint KM as representative counsel for all former employees in Nortel's insolvency proceedings, except:

(a) any former chief executive officer or chairman of the board of directors, any non-employee members of the board of directors, or such former employees or officers that are subject to investigation and charges by the Ontario Securities Commission or the United States Securities and Exchange Commission:

(b) any former unionized employees who are represented by their former union pursuant to a Court approved representation order; and

(c) any former employee who chooses to represent himself or herself as an independent individual party to these proceedings.

[19] Ms. Paula Klein and Ms. Joanne Reid, on behalf of the Recently Severed Canadian Nortel Employees ("RSCNE"), seek a representation order to appoint NS as counsel in respect of all former Nortel Canadian non-unionized employees to whom Nortel owes termination and severance pay (the "RSCNE Group").

[20] Mr. Kent Felske and Mr. Dany Sylvain, on behalf of the Nortel Continuing Canadian Employees ("NCCE") seek a representative order to appoint NS as counsel in respect of all current Canadian non-unionized Nortel employees (the "NCCE Group").

[21] J&R, on behalf of the Steering Committee (Mr. Michael McCorkle, Mr. Harvey Stein and Ms. Marie Lunney) for Nortel Terminated Canadian Employees ("NTCEC") owed termination and severance pay seek a representation order to appoint J&R in respect of any claim of any terminated employee arising out of the insolvency of Nortel for:

(a) unpaid termination pay;

(b) unpaid severance pay;

(c) unpaid expense reimbursements; and

(d) amounts and benefits payable pursuant to employment contracts between the Employees and Nortel

[22] Mr. George Borosh and/or Ms. Debra Connor seek a representation order to represent all retirees of the Applicants who were formerly represented by the CAW (the "Retirees") or, alternatively, an order authorizing the CAW to represent the Retirees.

[23] The former employees of Nortel have an interest in Nortel's CCAA proceedings in respect of their pension and employee benefit plans and in respect of severance, termination pay,

retirement allowances and other amounts that the former employees consider are owed in respect of applicable contractual obligations and employment standards legislation.

[24] Most former employees and survivors of former employees have basic entitlement to receive payment from the Nortel Networks Limited Managerial and Non-negotiated Pension Plan (the "Pension Plan") or from the corresponding pension plan for unionized employees.

[25] Certain former employees may also be entitled to receive payment from Nortel Networks Excess Plan (the "Excess Plan") in addition to their entitlement to the Pension Plan. The Excess Plan is a non-registered retirement plan which provides benefits to plan members in excess of those permitted under the registered Pension Plan in accordance with the *Income Tax Act*.

[26] Certain former employees who held executive positions may also be entitled to receive payment from the Supplementary Executive Retirement Plan ("SERP") in addition to their entitlement to the Pension Plan. The SERP is a non-registered plan.

[27] As of Nortel's last formal valuation dated December 31, 2006, the Pension Plan was funded at a level of 86% on a wind-up basis. As a result of declining equity markets, it is anticipated that the Pension Plan funding levels have declined since the date of the formal valuation and that Nortel anticipates that its Pension Plan funding requirements in 2009 will increase in a very substantial and material matter.

[28] At this time, Nortel continues to fund the deficit in the Pension Plan and makes payment of all current service costs associated with the benefits; however, as KM points out in its factum, there is no requirement in the Initial Order compelling Nortel to continue making those payments.

[29] Many retirees and former employees of Nortel are entitled to receive health and medical benefits and other benefits such as group life insurance (the "Health Care Plan"), some of which are funded through the Nortel Networks' Health and Welfare Trust (the "HWT").

[30] Many former employees are entitled to a payment in respect of the Transitional Retirement Allowance ("TRA"), a payment which provides supplemental retirement benefits for those who at the time of their retirement elect to receive such payment. Some 442 non-union retirees have ceased to receive this benefit as a result of the CCAA proceedings.

[31] Former employees who have been recently terminated from Nortel are owed termination pay and severance pay. There were 277 non-union former employees owed termination pay and severance pay at the Filing Date.

[32] Certain former unionized employees also have certain entitlements including:

(a) Voluntary Retirement Option ("VRO");

(b) Retirement Allowance Payment ("RAP"); and

(c) Layoff and Severance Payments

[33] The Initial Order permitted Nortel to cease making payments to its former employees in respect of certain amounts owing to them and effective January 14, 2009, Nortel has ceased payment of the following:

(a) all supplementary pensions which were paid from sources other than the Registered Pension Plan, including payments in respect of the Excess Plan and the SERP;

(b) all TRA agreements where amounts were still owing to the affected former employees as at January 14, 2009;

(c) all RAP agreements where amounts were still owing to the affected former employees as at January 14, 2009;

(d) all severance and termination agreements where amounts were still owing to the affected former employees as at January 14, 2009; and

(e) all retention bonuses where amounts were still owing to affected former employees as at January 14, 2009.

[34] The representatives seeking the appointment of KM are members of the Nortel Retiree and Former Employee Protection Committee ("NRPC"), a national-based group of over 2,000 former employees. Its stated mandate is to defend and protect pensions, severance, termination and retirement payments and other benefits. In the KM factum, it is stated that since its inception, the NRPC has taken steps to organize across the country and it has assembled subcommittees in major centres. The NRPC consists of 20 individuals who it claims represent all different regions and interests and that they participate in weekly teleconference meetings with legal counsel to ensure that all former employees' concerns are appropriately addressed.

[35] At paragraph 49 of the KM factum, counsel submits that NRPC members are a cross-section of all former employees and include a variety of interests, including those who have an interest in and/or are entitled to:

(a) the basic Pension Plan as a deferred member or a member entitled to transfer value;

(b) the Health Care Plan;

(c) the Pension Plan and Health Care Plan as a survivor of a former employee;

(d) Supplementary Retirement Benefits from the Excess Plan and the SERP plans;

(e) severance and termination pay ; and

(f) TRA payments.

[36] The representatives submit that they are well suited to represent all former employees in Nortel's CCAA proceedings in respect of all of their interests. The record (Affidavit of Mr. D. Sproule) references the considerable experience of KM in representing employee groups in large-scale restructurings.

[37] With respect to the allegations of a conflict of interest as between the various employee groups (as described below), the position of the representatives seeking the appointment of KM is that all former employees have unsecured claims against Nortel in its CCAA proceedings and that there is no priority among claims in respect of Nortel's assets. Further, they submit that a number of former employees seeking severance and termination pay also have other interests, including the Pension Plan, TRA payments and the supplementary pension payments and that it would unjust and inefficient to force these individuals to hire individual counsel or to have separate counsel for separate claims.

[38] Finally, they submit that there is no guarantee as to whether Nortel will emerge from the CCAA, whether it will file for bankruptcy or whether a receiver will be appointed or indeed whether even a plan of compromise will be filed. They submit that there is no actual conflict of interest at this time and that the court need not be concerned with hypothetical scenarios which may never materialize. Finally, they submit that in the unlikely event of a serious conflict in the group, such matters can be brought to the attention of the court by the representatives and their counsel on a *ex parte* basis for resolution.

[39] The terminated employee groups seeking a representation order for both NS and J&R submit that separate representative counsel appointments are necessary to address the conflict between the pension group and the employee group as the two groups have separate legal, procedural, and equitable interests that will inevitably conflict during the CCAA process.

[40] They submit that the pensioners under the Pension Plan are continuing to receive the full amount of the pension from the Pension Plan and as such they are not creditors of Nortel. Counsel submits that the interest of pensioners is in continuing to receive to receive their full pension and survivor benefits from the Pension Plan for the remainder of their lives and the lives of surviving spouses.

[41] In the NS factum at paragraphs 44 – 58, the argument is put forward as to why the former employees to whom Nortel owes severance and termination pay should be represented separately from the pensioners. The thrust of the argument is that future events may dictate the response of the affected parties. At paragraph 51 of the factum, it is submitted that generally, the recently severed employees' primary interest is to obtain the fastest possible payout of the greatest amount of severance and/or pay in lieu of notice in order to alleviate the financial hardships they are currently experiencing. The interests of pensioners, on the other hand, is to maintain the status quo, in which they continue to receive full pension benefits as long as possible. The submission emphasizes that issues facing the pensioner group and the non-pensioner group are profoundly divergent as full monthly benefit payments for the pensioner group have continued to

date while non-pensioners are receiving 86% of their lump sums on termination of employment, in accordance with the most recently filed valuation report.

[42] The motion submitted by the NTCEC takes the distinction one step further. The NTCEC is opposed to the motion of NS. NS wishes to represent both the RSCNE and the NCCE. The NTCEC believes that the terminated employees who are owed unpaid wages, termination pay and/or severance should comprise their own distinct and individual class.

[43] The NTCEC seek payment and fulfillment of Nortel's obligations to pay one or several of the following:

(a) TRA;

(b) 2008 bonuses; and

(c) amendments to the Nortel Pension Plan

[44] Counsel to NTCEC submits that the most glaring and obvious difference between the NCCE and the NTCEC, is that NCCE are still employed and have a continuing relationship with Nortel and have a source of employment income and may only have a contingent claim. The submission goes on to suggest that, if the NCCE is granted a representation order in these proceedings, they will seek to recover the full value of their TRA claim from Nortel during the negotiation process notwithstanding that one's claim for TRA does not crystallize until retirement or termination. On the other hand, the terminated employees, represented by the NTCEC and RSCNE are also claiming lost TRA benefits and that claim has crystallized because their employment with Nortel has ceased. Counsel further submits that the contingent claim of the NCCE for TRA is distinct and separate with the crystallized claim of the NTCEC and RSCNE for TRA.

[45] Counsel to NTCEC further submits that there are difficulties with the claim of NCCE which is seeking financial redress in the CCAA proceedings for damages stemming from certain changes to the Nortel Networks Limited Managerial and Non-negotiated Pension Plan effective June 1, 2008 and Nortel's decision to decrease retirees benefits. Counsel submits that, even if the NCCE claims relating to the Pension Plan amendment are quantifiable, they are so dissimilar to the claims of the RSCNE and NTCEC, that the current and former Nortel employees cannot be viewed as a single group of creditors with common interests in these proceedings, thus necessitating distinct legal representation for each group of creditors.

[46] Counsel further argues that NTCEC's sole mandate is to maximize recovery of unpaid wages, termination and severance pay which, those terminated employees as a result of Nortel's CCAA filing, have lost their employment income, termination pay and/or severance pay which would otherwise be protected by statute or common law.

[47] KM, on behalf of the Koskie Representatives, responded to the concerns raised by NS and by J&R in its reply factum.

[48] KM submits that the conflict of interest is artificial. KM submits that all members of the Pension Plan who are owed pensions face reductions on the potential wind-up of the Pension Plan due to serious under-funding and that temporarily maintaining of status quo monthly payments at 100%, although required by statute, does not avoid future reductions due to under-funding which offset any alleged overpayments. They submit that all pension members, whether they can withdraw 86% of their funds now and transfer them a locked-in vehicle or receive them later in the form of potentially reduced pensions, face a loss and are thus creditors of Nortel for the pension shortfalls.

[49] KM also states that the submission of the RSCNE that non-pensioners may put pressure on Nortel to reduce monthly payments on pensioners ignores the *Ontario Pension Benefits Act* and its applicability in conjunction with the CCAA. It further submits that issues regarding the reduction of pensions and the transfers of commuted values are not dealt with through the CCAA proceedings, but through the Superintendent of Financial Services and the Plan Administrator in their administration and application of the PBA. KM concludes that the Nortel Pension Plans are not applicants in this matter nor is there a conflict given the application of the provisions of the PBA as detailed in the factum at paragraphs 11 – 21.

[50] KM further submits that over 1,500 former employees have claims in respect of other employment and retirement related benefits such as the Excess Plan, the SERP, the TRA and other benefit allowances which are claims that have "crystallized" and are payable now. Additionally, they submit that 11,000 members of the Pension Plan are entitled to benefits from the Pensioner Health Care Plan which is not pre-funded, resulting in significant claims in Nortel's CCAA proceedings for lost health care benefits.

[51] Finally, in addition to the lack of any genuine conflict of interest between former employees who are pensioners and those who are non-pensioners, there is significant overlap in interest between such individuals and a number of the former employees seeking severance and termination pay have the same or similar interests in other benefit payments, including the Pension Plan, Health Care Plan, TRA, SERP and Excess Plan payments. As well, former employees who have an interest in the Pension Plan also may be entitled to severance and termination pay.

[52] With respect to the motions of NS and J&R, I have not been persuaded that there is a real and direct conflict of interest. Claims under the Pension Plan, to the extent that it is funded, are not affected by the CCAA proceedings. To the extent that there is a deficiency in funding, such claims are unsecured claims against Nortel. In a sense, deficiency claims are not dissimilar from other employee benefit claims.

[53] To the extent that there may be potentially a divergence of interest as between pension-based claims and terminated-employee claims, these distinctions are, at this time, hypothetical. At this stage of the proceeding, there has been no attempt by Nortel to propose a creditor classification, let alone a plan of arrangement to its creditors. It seems to me that the primary emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the arguments of employees are placed before the court in the most time efficient and cost effective way possible. In my view, this can be

accomplished by the appointment of a single representative counsel, knowledgeable and experienced in all facets of employee claims.

[54] It is conceivable that there will be differences of opinion between employees at some point in the future, but if such differences of opinion or conflict arise, I am satisfied that this issue will be recognized by representative counsel and further directions can be provided.

[55] A submission was also made to the effect that certain individuals or groups of individuals should not be deprived of their counsel of choice. In my view, the effect of appointing one representative counsel does not, in any way, deprive a party of their ability to be represented by the counsel of their choice. The Notice of Motion of KM provides that any former employee who does not wish to be bound by the representative order may take steps to notify KM of their decision and may thereafter appear as an independent party.

[56] In the responding factum at paragraphs 28 – 30, KM submits that each former employee, whether or not entitled to an interest in the Pension Plan, has a common interest in that each one is an unsecured creditor who is owed some form of deferred compensation, being it severance pay, TRA or RAP payments, supplementary pensions, health benefits or benefits under a registered Pension Plan and that classifying former employees as one group of creditors will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Nortel's CCAA proceedings and will facilitate the reorganization of the company. Further, in the event of a liquidation of Nortel, each former employee will seek to recover deferred compensation claims as an unsecured creditor. Thus, fragmentation of the group is undesirable. Further, all former employees also have a common legal position as unsecured creditors of Nortel in that their claims all arise out of the terms and conditions of their employment and regardless of the form of payment, unpaid severance pay and termination pay, unpaid health benefits, unpaid supplementary pension benefits and other unpaid retirement benefits are all remuneration of some form arising from former employment with Nortel.

[57] The submission on behalf of KM concludes that funds in a pension plan can also be described as deferred wages. An employer who creates a pension plan agrees to provide benefits to retiring employees as a form of compensation to that employee. An underfunded pension plan reflects the employer's failure to pay the deferred wages owing to former employees.

[58] In its factum, the CAW submits that the two proposed representative individuals are members of the Nortel Pension Plan applicable to unionized employees. Both individuals are former unionized employees of Nortel and were members of the CAW. Counsel submits that naming them as representatives on behalf of all retirees of Nortel who were members of the CAW will not result in a conflict with any other member of the group.

[59] Counsel to the CAW also stated that in the event that the requested representation order is not granted, those 600 individuals who have retained Mr. Lewis Gottheil will still be represented by him, and the other similarly situated individuals might possibly be represented by other counsel. The retainer specifically provides that no individual who retains Mr. Gottheil shall be

charged any fees nor be responsible for costs or penalties. It further provides that the retainer may be discontinued by the individual or by counsel in accordance with applicable rules.

[60] Counsel further submits that the 600 members of the group for which the representation order is being sought have already retained counsel of their choice, that being Mr. Lewis Gottheil of the CAW. However, if the requested representative order is not granted, there will still be a group of 600 individual members of the Pension Plan who are represented by Mr. Gottheil. As a result, counsel acknowledges there is little to no difference that will result from granting the requested representation order in this case, except that all retirees formerly represented by the union will have one counsel, as opposed to two or several counsel if the order is not granted.

[61] In view of this acknowledgement, it seems to me that there is no advantage to be gained by granting the CAW representative status. There will be no increased efficiencies, no simplification of the process, nor any real practical benefit to be gained by such an order.

[62] Notwithstanding that creditor classification has yet to be proposed in this CCAA proceeding, it is useful, in my view, to make reference to some of the principles of classification. In *Re Stelco Inc.*, the Ontario Court of Appeal noted that the classification of creditors in the CCAA proceeding is to be determined based on the "commonality of interest" test. In *Re Stelco*, the Court of Appeal upheld the reasoning of Paperny J. (as she then was) in *Re Canadian Airlines Corp*. and articulated the following factors to be considered in the assessment of the "commonality of interest".

> In summary, the case has established the following principles applicable to assessing commonality of interest:
>
> 1. Commonality of interest should be viewed based on the non-fragmentation test, not on an identity of interest test;
>
> 2. The interests to be considered are the legal interests that a creditor holds qua creditor in relationship to the debtor company prior to and under the plan as well as on liquidation.
>
> 3. The commonality of interests are to be viewed purposively, bearing in mind the object of the CCAA, namely to facilitate reorganizations if possible.
>
> 4. In placing a broad and purposive interpretation on the CCAA, the court should be careful to resist classification approaches that would potentially jeopardize viable plans.
>
> 5. Absent bad faith, the motivations of creditors to approve or disapprove [of the Plan] are irrelevant.

> 6. The requirement of creditors being able to consult together means being able to assess their legal entitlement *as creditors* before or after the plan in a similar manner.
>
> *Re Stelco Inc*., 15 C.B.R. 5th 307 (Ont. C.A.), paras 21-23; *Re Canadian Airlines Corp*. (2000) 19 C.B.R. 4th 12 Alta. Q.B., para 31.

[63] I have concluded that, at this point in the proceedings, the former employees have a "commonality of interest" and that this process can be best served by the appointment of one representative counsel.

[64] As to which counsel should be appointed, all firms have established their credentials. However, KM is, in my view, the logical choice. They have indicated a willingness to act on behalf of all former employees. The choice of KM is based on the broad mandate they have received from the employees, their experience in representing groups of retirees and employees in large scale restructurings and speciality practice in the areas of pension, benefits, labour and employment, restructuring and insolvency law, as well as my decision that the process can be best served by having one firm put forth the arguments on behalf of all employees as opposed to subdividing the employee group.

[65] The motion of Messrs. Sproule, Archibald and Campbell is granted and Koskie Minsky LLP is appointed as Representative Counsel. This representation order is also to cover the fees and disbursements of Koskie Minsky.

[66] The motions to appoint Nelligan O'Brien Payne and Shibley Righton, Juroviesky and Ricci, and the CAW as representative counsel are dismissed.

[67] I would ask that counsel prepare a form of order for my consideration.

_____

MORAWETZ J.

DATE: May 27, 2009

In the Matter of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended and in the Matter of a Proposed Plan of Compromise or Arrangement with Respect to Stelco Inc., and the Other Applicants Listed Under Schedule "A"

Application Under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended

[Indexed as: Stelco Inc. (Re)]

78 O.R. (3d) 241
[2005] O.J. No. 4883
Dockets: C44436 and M33171

Court of Appeal for Ontario,
Goudge, Sharpe and Blair JJ.A.
November 17, 2005

Debtor and creditor -- Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act -- Creditors -- Classification -- Classification of creditors should be determined by their legal rights in relation to debtor company as opposed to their rights as creditors in relation to each other.

The appellant represented unsecured creditors who held convertible unsecured subordinated debentures issued by the debtor company pursuant to a Supplemental Trust Indenture. Their claims were subordinated to Senior Debt Holders. The Supplemental Trust Indenture provided that if the Subordinated Debenture Holders received any payment from the company, or any distribution from the assets of the company, before the Senior Debt was fully paid, they were obliged to remit any such payment or distribution to the Senior Debt Holders until the latter had been paid in full, but that no such payment or distribution by the company shall be deemed to constitute

payment on the Subordinated Debenture Holders' debt. The parties referred to these provisions as the "Turnover Payment" provisions. In the company's Proposed Plan, the Subordinated Debenture Holders and the Senior Debt Holders were included in the same class (along with Trade Creditors) for the purposes of voting on the Proposed Plan. The appellant sought an order from the supervising judge classifying the Subordinated Debenture Holders as a separate class for voting purposes, arguing that their interests were different than those of the Senior Debt Holders and that creditors who do not have common interests should not be classified in the same group for voting purposes. The motion was dismissed. The appellant appealed.

Held, the appeal should be dismissed.

The classification of creditors is a fact-driven exercise, dependent upon the circumstances of each particular case. It is determined by the creditors' legal rights in relation to the debtor company, as opposed to their rights as creditors in relation to each other. The supervising judge did not err in finding that there was no material distinction between the legal rights of the Subordinated Debenture Holders and those of the Senior Debt Holders vis--vis the company. Each was entitled to be paid the moneys owing under their respective debt contracts. The only difference was that the former creditors were subordinated in interest to the latter and had agreed to pay over to the latter any portion of their recovery received until the Senior Debt had been paid in full. As between the two groups of creditors, this merely reflected the very deal the Subordinated Debenture Holders bought into when they purchased their subordinated debentures. The supervising judge was also entitled to determine that th is was not a case involving any confiscation of legal rights. Finally, the supervising judge's finding that there was no realistic conflict of interest between the creditors was supported on the record. [page242] Each had the same general interest in relation to the company, namely to be paid under their contracts, and to maximize the amount recoverable from the company through the Plan negotiation process. The Senior Debt Holders' efforts would not be moderated in some respect because they would be content to make their recovery on the

backs of the Subordinated Debenture Holders through the Turnover Payment process. In order to carry the class, the Senior Debt Holders would require the support of the Trade Creditors, whose interest was not affected by the subordination agreement. Thus, the Senior Debt Holders would be required to support the maximization approach.

Canadian Airlines Corp. (Re), [2000] A.J. No. 1693, 19 C.B.R. (4th) 12 (Q.B.), apld

NsC Diesel Power Inc. (Re), [1990] N.S.J. No. 484, 97 N.S.R. (2d) 295, 258 A.P.R. 295, 79 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1 (T.D.), not folld

Other cases referred to

Campeau Corp. (Re), [1991] O.J. No. 2338, 86 D.L.R. (4th) 570, 10 C.B.R. (3d) 100 (Gen. Div.); Country Style Food Services Inc. (Re), [2002] O.J. No. 1377, 158 O.A.C. 30, 112 A.C.W.S. (3d) 1009 (C.A.); Elan Corp. v. Comiskey (1990), 1 O.R. (3d) 289, [1990] O.J. No. 2180, 41 O.A.C. 282, 1 C.B.R. (3d) 101 (C.A.) (sub nom. Nova Metal Products v. Comiskey); Fairview Industries Ltd. (Re), [1991] N.S.J. No. 456, 109 N.S.R. (2d) 32, 11 C.B.R. (3d) 71, 30 A.C.W.S. (3d) 376 (T.D.); Norcen Energy Resources Ltd. v. Oakwood Petroleums Ltd., [1988] A.J. No. 1226, [1989] 2 W.W.R. 566, 64 Alta. L.R. (2d) 139, 72 C.B.R. (N.S.) 20 (Q.B.); Northland Properties Ltd. v. Excelsior Life Insurance Co. of Canada, [1989] B.C.J. No. 63, 34 B.C.L.R. (2d) 122, [1989] 3 W.W.R. 363, 73 C.B.R. (N.S.) 195 (C.A.); Northland Properties Ltd. (Re), [1988] B.C.J. No. 1937, 32 B.C.L.R. (2d) 309 (C.A.), affg [1988] B.C.J. No. 1530, 31 B.C.L.R. (2d) 35, 73 C.B.R. (N.S 166 (S.C.); Pacific Coastal Airlines Ltd. v. Air Canada, [2001] B.C.J. No. 2580, 2001 BCSC 1721, 19 B.L.R. (3d) 286, 110 A.C.W.S. (3d) 259 (S.C.); Resurgence Asset Management LLC v. Canadian Airlines Corp., [2000] A.J. No. 610, 2000 ABCA 149, 80 Alta. L.R. (3d) 213, 261 A.R. 12, 19 C.B.R. (4th) 33, 97 A.C.W.S. (3d) 844 (C.A.); Savage v. Amoco Acquisition Co., [1988] A.J. No. 330, 59 Alta. L.R. (2d) 260, 40 B.L.R. 188, 68 C.B.R. (N.S.) 154 (C.A.) (sub. nom. Amoco Acquisition Co. v. Savage); Sklar-

Peppler Furniture Corp. v. Bank of Nova Scotia, [1991] O.J. No. 2288, 86 D.L.R. (4th) 621, 8 C.B.R. (3d) 312 (Gen. Div.); Sovereign Life Assurance Co. v. Dodd (1892), [1891-4] All E.R. Rep. 246, [1892] 2 Q.B. 573, 8 T.L.R. 684, 36 Sol. Jo. 644, 41 W.R. 4, 62 L.J.Q.B. 19, 67 L.T. 396 (C.A.); Stelco Inc. (Re) (2005), 75 O.R. (3d) 5, [2005] O.J. No. 117, 1196 O.A.C. 142, 253 D.L.R. (4th) 109, 9 C.B.R. (5th) 135, 2 B.L.R.(4th) 238 (C.A.); Wellin gton Building Corp. Ltd. (Re), [1934] O.R. 653, [1934] 4 D.L.R. 626, 16 C.B.R. 48 (H.C.J.); Woodward's Ltd. (Re), [1993] B.C.J. No. 852, 84 B.C.L.R. (2d) 206, 20 C.B.R. (3d) 74 (S.C.)

Statutes referred to

Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36

Joint Stock Companies Arrangement Act 1870 (U.K.), 33 and 34 Vict., c. 104

Authorities referred to

Edwards, S.E., "Reorganizations Under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act" (1947) 25 Can. Bar Rev. 587

Robertson, Q.C., R.N., "Legal Problems on Reorganization of Major Financial and Commercial Debtors" (Canadian Bar Association -- Ontario Continuing Legal Education, April 5, 1983) [page243]

APPEAL from an order of Farley J., [2005] O.J. No. 4814, 143 A.C.W.S. (3d) 623 (S.C.J.) dismissing a motion for an order classifying the appellants as a separate class of creditors for voting purposes.

Paul Macdonald, Andrew Kent and Brett Harrison, for Informal Independent Converts' Committee.

Michael E. Barrack and Geoff R. Hall, for Stelco Inc.

Robert Staley and Alan Gardner, for Senior Debenture Holders.

Fred Myers, for Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario, and the Superintendent of Financial Services.

Ken Rosenberg, for United Steelworkers of America.

A. Kauffman, for Tricap Management Ltd.

Kyla Mahar, for Monitor.

Murray Gold, for Salaried Retirees.

Heath Whitley, for CIBC.

Steven Bosnick, for U.S.W.A. Loc. 5328 and 8782.

The judgment of the court was delivered by

BLAIR J.A.:--

Background

[1] This appeal arises out of the reorganization of Stelco Inc., and related companies, pursuant to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act ("CCAA") [See Note 1 at the end of the document]. Stelco has been in the midst of this fractious process for approximately 21 months. Justice Farley has been the supervising judge throughout.

[2] Stelco has presented a Proposed Plan of Compromise or Arrangement to its creditors for their approval. The vote was scheduled for Tuesday, November 15, 2005. On Thursday, November 10, a group of creditors known as the Informal Independent Converts' Committee (the "Converts' Committee) sought an order from the supervising judge, amongst other things, classifying the Subordinated Debenture Holders whom they represent as a separate class for voting purposes. Justice Farley dismissed the motion. In the face of the pending vote, the Converts' Committee sought leave to appeal on Thursday

afternoon (the courts were closed on Friday, November 11, for Remembrance Day). Rosenberg J.A. dealt with the matter and directed that the application for leave, and if leave be granted, the appeal, be heard by a panel of this court on Monday, November 14, 2005. [page244]

[3] This panel heard the application for leave and the appeal on Monday. We concluded that leave should be granted, but that the appeal must be dismissed, and at the conclusion of argument -- and in order to clarify matters so that the vote could proceed the following day -- we issued a brief endorsement with our decision, but indicating that more detailed reasons would follow.

[4] The endorsement read as follows:

> In our view, the appellants have not demonstrated a different legal interest from the other unsecured creditors vis vis the debtor, nor any basis for setting aside the finding of Farley J. that there are no different practical interests such that the appellants deserve a separate class. We see no legal error or error in principle in his exercise of discretion.
>
> Leave to appeal is granted, but the appeal must therefore be dismissed. Because of the importance of the issue for Ontario practice in this area, we propose to expand somewhat on these reasons in due course.

[5] These are those expanded reasons.

Facts

[6] Stelco's Proposed Plan is made to unsecured creditors only. It is not intended to affect the claims of secured creditors.

[7] The Converts' Committee represents unsecured creditors who hold $90 million of convertible unsecured subordinated debentures issued by Stelco pursuant to a Supplemental Trust Indenture dated January 21, 2002, and due in 2007. With

interest, the claims of the Subordinated Debenture Holders now amount to approximately $110 million. Those claims are subordinated to approximately $328 million in favour of Senior Debt Holders. In addition, Stelco has unsecured trade debts totalling approximately $228 million. In the Proposed Plan, these three groups of unsecured creditors -- the Subordinated Debenture Holders (represented by the Converts' Committee), the Senior Debt Holders and the Trade Creditors -- have all been included in the same class for the purposes of voting on the Proposed Plan or any amended version of it.

[8] The Converts' Committee takes issue with this, and seeks to have the Subordinated Debenture Holders classified as a separate class of creditors for voting purposes. They argue that their interests are different than those of the Bondholders and that creditors who do not have common interests should not be classified in the same group for voting purposes. They submit, therefore, that the supervising judge erred in law in not granting them a separate classification. In that regard, they rely upon this court's decision in Elan Corp. v. Comiskey (1990), 1 O.R. (3d) 289, [1990] O.J. No. 2180 (C.A.). They also argue that the supervising [page245] judge was wrong, on the facts contained in the record, in finding that the Subordinated Debenture Holders and the Bondholders did not have conflicting interests.

[9] In making their argument about a different interest, the appellants rely upon their status as subordinated debt holders as shaped particularly by Articles 6.2 and 6.3 of the Supplemental Trust Indenture. In essence those provisions reinforce the subordinated nature of their debt. They stipulate (a) that if the Subordinated Debenture Holders receive any payment from Stelco, or any distribution from the assets of Stelco, before the Senior Debt is fully paid, they are obliged to remit any such payment or distribution to the Senior Debt Holders until the latter have been paid in full (Art. 6.2(3)), but (b) that no such payment or distribution by Stelco shall be deemed to constitute a payment on the Subordinated Debenture Holders' debt (Art. 6.3). The parties refer to these provisions as the "Turnover Payment" provisions.

[10] In short, although Stelco is obliged to pay both groups of creditors in full, as between the Subordinated Debenture Holders and the Senior Debt Holders, the latter are entitled to be paid in full before the former receive anything. The Supplemental Trust Indenture makes it clear that the provisions of Article 6 "are intended solely for the purpose of defining the relative rights of [the Subordinated Debenture Holders] and the holders of the Senior Debt" (Art. 6.3).

[11] The appellants contend that the Turnover Payment provisions distinguish their interests from those of the Subordinated Debenture Holders when it comes to voting on Stelco's Proposed Plan. They say that the Subordinated Debenture Holders' interest in maximizing the amounts to be made available to unsecured creditors ends once they have received full recovery, in part as a result of the Turnover Payments that the Subordinated Debenture Holders will be required to make from their portion of the funds. On the other hand, the Subordinated Debenture Holders will have an interest in seeking more because their recovery, for practical purposes, will have only begun once that point is reached.

[12] The respondents submit, for their part, that the appellants are seeking a separate classification for a collateral purpose, i.e., so that they will be able to veto the Proposed Plan, or at least threaten to veto it, unless they are granted a benefit to which they are not entitled -- the elimination of their subordinated position by virtue of the Turnover Payment provisions.

[13] Farley J. rejected the appellants' arguments. The thrust of his decision in this regard is found in paras. 13 and 14 of his reasons: [page246]

> I would note as well that the primary and most significant attribute of the ConCom debt and that of the BondCom debt/ Senior Debt [See Note 2 at the end of the document] plus the trade debt vis--vis Stelco is that it is all unsecured debt. Thus absent valid reason to have separate classes it would be reasonable, logical, rational and practical to have all this unsecured debt in the same class. Certainly that would avoid

> any unnecessary fragmentation -- and in this respect multiplicity of classes does not mean that that fragmentation starts only when there are many classes. Unless more than one class is necessary, fragmentation would start at two classes. Fragmentation if necessary, but not necessarily fragmentation.
>
> Is it necessary to have more than one class? Firstly, it would not appear to me that as between Stelco and the unsecured creditors overall there is any material distinction. Secondly, there would not appear to me to be any confiscation of any rights (or the other side of the coin any new imposition of obligations) upon the holders of the ConCom debt. The subrogation issue was something which these holders assumed on the issue of that debt. Thirdly, I do not see that there is a realistic conflict of interest. Each group of unsecured creditors including the ConCom debt holders and the BondCom debt holders has the same general interest vis--vis Stelco, namely to extract from Stelco through the Plan the maximum value in the sense of consideration possible . . . . That situation is not impacted for our purposes here in this motion by the possibility that in a subsequent dispute between the ConCom holders and the BondCom holders there may be a difference of opinion as to the variation of the considerat ion obtained.

[14] We agree with his conclusion and see no basis to interfere with his findings in that regard.

The Leave Application

[15] The principles to be applied by this court in determining whether leave to appeal should be granted to someone dissatisfied with an order made in a CCAA proceeding are not in dispute. Leave is only sparingly granted in such matters because of their "real time" dynamic and because of the generally discretionary character underlying many of the orders made by supervising judges in such proceedings. There must be serious and arguable grounds that are of real and significant interest to the parties. The court has assessed this criterion on the basis of a four-part test, namely,

(a) whether the point on appeal is of significance to the practice;

(b) whether the point is of significance to the action;

(c) whether the appeal is prima facie meritorious or frivolous; and [page247]

(d) whether the appeal will unduly hinder the progress of the action.

See Stelco Inc. (Re) (2005), 75 O.R. (3d) 5, [2005] O.J. No. 1171 (C.A.), at para. 24; Country Style Food Services Inc. (Re), [2002] O.J. No. 1377, 158 O.A.C. 30 (C.A.), at para. 15; Resurgence Asset Management LLC v. Canadian Airlines Corp., [2000] A.J. No. 610, 19 C.B.R. (4th) 33 (C.A.), at para. 7.

[16] Here, we granted leave to appeal because the proposed appeal raised an issue of significance to the practice, namely the nature of the "common interest" test to be applied by the courts for purposes of the classification of creditors in CCAA proceedings. Although the law seems to have progressed in the lower courts along the lines developed in Alberta, beginning with the decision of Paperny J. in Canadian Airlines Corp. (Re), [2000] A.J. No. 1693, 19 C.B.R. (4th) 12 (Q.B), this court has not dealt with the issue since its decision in Elan Corp. v. Comiskey, supra, and the Converts' Committee argues that the Alberta line of authorities is contrary to Elan.

[17] A brief further comment respecting the leave process may be in order.

[18] The court recognizes the importance of its ability to react in a responsible and timely fashion to the appellate needs arising in the "real time" dynamics of CCAA restructurings. Often, as in the case of this restructuring, they involve a significant public dimension. For good policy reasons, however, appellate courts in Canada -- including this one -- have developed relatively stringent parameters for the granting of leave to appeal in CCAA cases. As noted, leave is only sparingly granted. The parameters as set out in the

authorities cited above remain good law.

[19] Merely because a corporate restructuring is a big one and money is no object to the participants in the process, does not mean that the court will necessarily depart from the normal leave to appeal process that applies to other cases. In granting leave to appeal in these circumstances, we do not wish to be taken as supporting a notion that the fusion of leave applications with the hearing of the appeal in CCAA restructurings -- particularly in major ones such as this one involving Stelco -- has become the practice. Where there is an urgency that a leave application be expedited in the public interest, the court will do so in this area of the law as it does in other areas. However, where what is involved is essentially an attempt to review a discretionary order made on the facts of the case, in a tightly supervised process with which the judge is intimately familiar, the collapsed process that was made available in this particular situation will not generally be afforded. [page248]

[20] As these reasons demonstrate, however, the issues raised on this particular appeal, and the timing factor involved, warranted the expedited procedure that was ordered by Justice Rosenberg.

The Appeal

No error in law or principle

[21] Everyone agrees that the classification of creditors for CCAA voting purposes is to be determined generally on the basis of a "commonality of interest" (or a "common interest") between creditors of the same class. Most analyses of this approach start with a reference to Sovereign Life Assurance Co. v. Dodd (1892), [1891-4] All E.R. Rep. 246, [1892] 2 Q.B. 573 (C.A.) which dealt with the classification of creditors for voting purposes in a winding-up proceeding. Two passages from the judgments in that decision are frequently cited. At pp. 249-50 All E.R., Lord Esher said:

The Act provides that the persons to be summoned to the

> meeting, all of whom, it is to be observed, are creditors, are persons who can be divided into different classes, classes which the Act [See Note 3 at the end of the document] recognizes, though it does not define. The creditors, therefore, must be divided into different classes. What is the reason for prescribing such a course? It is because the creditors composing the different classes have different interests, and, therefore, if a different state of facts exists with respect to different creditors, which may affect their minds and judgments differently, they must be separated into different classes.

At p. 251 All E.R., Bowen L.J. stated:

> The word "class" used in the statute is vague, and to find out what it means we must look at the general scope of the section, which enables the court to order a meeting of a "class of creditors" to be summoned. It seems to me that we must give such a meaning to the term "class" as will prevent the section being so worked as to produce confiscation and injustice, and that we must confine its meaning to those persons whose rights are not so dissimilar as to make it impossible for them to consult together with a view to their common interest.

[22] These views have been applied in the CCAA context. But what comprises those "not so dissimilar" rights and what are the components of that "common interest" have been the subject of debate and evolution over time. It is clear that classification is a fact-driven exercise, dependent upon the circumstances of each particular case. Moreover, given the nature of the CCAA process and the underlying flexibility of that process -- a flexibility which is its genius -- there can be no fixed rules that must apply in all cases.

[23] In Canadian Airlines Corp. (Re), supra, Paperny J. nonetheless extracted a number of principles to be considered by the courts in dealing with the commonality of interest test. At para. 31 she said: [page249]

> In summary, the cases establish the following principles

applicable to assessing commonality of interest:

1. Commonality of interest should be viewed based on the non-fragmentation test, not on an identity of interest test;

2. The interests to be considered are the legal interests that a creditor holds qua creditor in relationship to the debtor company prior to and under the plan as well as on liquidation;

3. The commonality of interests are to be viewed purposively, bearing in mind the object of the C.C.C.A., namely to facilitate reorganizations if at all possible;

4. In placing a broad and purposive interpretation on the C.C.C.A., the court should be careful to resist classification approaches which would potentially jeopardize viable plans.

5. Absent bad faith, the motivations of creditors to approve or disapprove [of the Plan] are irrelevant.

6. The requirement of creditors being able to consult together means being able to assess their legal entitlement as creditors before or after the plan in a similar manner.

[24] In developing this summary of principles, Paperny J. considered a number of authorities from across Canada, including the following: Sklar-Peppler Furniture Corp. v. Bank of Nova Scotia, [1991] O.J. No. 2288, 86 D.L.R. (4th) 621 (Gen. Div.); Norcen Energy Resources Ltd. v. Oakwood Petroleums Ltd., [1988] A.J. No. 1226, 72 C.B.R. (N.S.) 20 (Q.B.); Fairview Industries Ltd. (Re), [1991] N.S.J. No. 456, 11 C.B.R. (3d) 71 (T.D.); Woodward's Ltd. (Re), [1993] B.C.J. No. 852, 84 B.C.L.R. (2d) 206 (S.C.); Northland Properties Ltd. (Re), [1988] B.C.J. No. 1530, 73 C.B.R. (N.S.) 166 (S.C.); Northland Properties Ltd. v. Excelsior Life Insurance Co. of Canada, [1989] B.C.J. No. 63, 73 C.B.R. (N.S.) 195 (C.A.); NsC Diesel Power Inc. (Re), [1990] N.S.J. No. 484, 79 C.B.R. (N.S.) 1 (T.D.); Savage v. Amoco Acquisition Co., [1988] A.J. No. 330, 68 C.B.R. (N.S.) 154 (C.A.) (sub nom. Amoco Acquisition Co. v.

Savage); Wellingt on Building Corp. (Re), [1934] O.R. 653, 16 C.B.R. 48 (H.C.J.). Her summarized principles were cited by the Alberta Court of Appeal, apparently with approval, in a subsequent Canadian Airlines decision: Canadian Airlines Corp. (Re), supra, at para. 27.

[25] In the passage from his reasons cited above (paras. 13 and 14) the supervising judge in this case applied those principles. In our view, he was correct in law in doing so.

[26] We do not read the foregoing principles as being inconsistent with the earlier decision of this court in Elan Corp. v. Comiskey. There the court applied a common interest test in determining that the two creditors in question ought not to be grouped in the same class of creditors for voting purposes. But the differing interests in question were not different legal interests as between the [page250] two creditors; they were different legal interests as between each of the creditors and the debtor company. One creditor (the Bank) held first security over the debtor company's receivables and the other creditor (RoyNat) held second security on those assets; RoyNat, however, held first security over the debtor's building and realty, whereas the Bank was second in priority in relation to those assets. The two creditors had differing commercial interests in how the assets should be dealt with (it was in the interests of the bank, with a smaller claim, to collect and retain the more realizable receivable assets, but in the interests of RoyNat to preserve the cash flow and have the business sold as a going concern). Those differing commercial interests were rooted in differing legal interests as between the individual creditors and the debtor company, arising from the different security held. Because of the size of its claim, RoyNat would dominate any group that it was in, and Finlayson J.A. was of the view that RoyNat, as the holder of second security, should not be able to override the Bank's legal interest as the first secured creditor with respect to the receivables by virtue of its voting rights. On the basis that there was "no true community of interest" between the secured creditors (p. 299 O.R.), given their different legal interests, he ordered that the Bank be placed in a separate class for voting purposes.

[27] Elan Corp. v. Comiskey did not deal with the issue of whether creditors with divergent interests as amongst themselves -- as opposed to divergent legal interests vis--vis the debtor company -- could be forced to vote as members of a common class. Nor did it apply an "identity of interest" test -- a test that has been rejected as too narrow and too likely to lead to excessive fragmentation: see Sklar-Peppler Furniture Corp. v. Bank of Nova Scotia, supra); Norcen Energy Resources Ltd. v. Oakwood Petroleums Ltd., supra; Fairview Industries Ltd. (Re), supra; Woodward's Ltd. (Re), supra. In our view, there is nothing in the decision in Elan Corp. that is inconsistent with the evolutionary set of principles developed in the Alberta jurisprudence and applied by the supervising judge here.

[28] In addition to commonality of interest concerns, a court dealing with a classification of creditors issue needs to be alert to concerns about the confiscation of legal rights and about avoiding what the parties have referred to as "a tyranny of the minority". Examples of the former include Elan Corp. v. Comiskey [See Note 4 at the end of the document] and [page251] Wellington Building Corp. Ltd. (Re), supra [See Note 5 at the end of the document]. Examples of the latter include Sklar-Peppler, supra [See Note 6 at the end of the document] and Campeau Corp. (Re), [1991] O.J. No. 2338, 10 C.B.R. (3d) 100 (Gen. Div.) [See Note 7 at the end of the document].

[29] Here, as noted earlier in these reasons, the respondents argue that the appellants are seeking a separate classification in order to extract a benefit to which they are not entitled, namely a concession that the Turnover Payment requirements of their subordinated position be extinguished by the Proposed Plan, thus avoiding their obligation to transfer payments to the Senior Debt Holders until they have been paid in full, and freeing up all of the distribution the appellants will receive from Stelco for payment on account of their own claims. On the other hand, the appellants point to this conflict between the Subordinated Debenture Holders and the Senior Debt Holders as evidence that they do not have a commonality of interest or the ability to consult together with a view to whatever commonality

of interest they may have vis--vis Stelco.

[30] We agree with the line of authorities summarized in Canadian Airlines (Re) and applied by the supervising judge in this case which stipulate that the classification of creditors is determined by their legal rights in relation to the debtor company, as opposed to their rights as creditors in relation to each other. To the extent that other authorities at the trial level in other jurisdictions may suggest to the contrary -- see, for example NsC Diesel Power Inc. (Re), supra -- we prefer the Alberta approach.

[31] There are good reasons for such an approach.

[32] First, as the supervising judge noted [at para. 7], the CCAA itself is more compendiously styled "An Act to facilitate compromises and arrangements between companies and their creditors." There is no mention of dealing with issues that would change the nature of the relationships as between the creditors themselves. As Tysoe J. noted in Pacific Coastal Airlines Ltd. v. Air Canada, [2001] B.C.J. No. 2580, 19 B.L.R. (3d) 286 (S.C.), at para. 24 [page252] (after referring to the full style of the legislation):

> [The purpose of the CCAA proceeding] is not to deal with disputes between a creditor of a company and a third party, even if the company was also involved in the subject matter of the dispute. While issues between the debtor company and non-creditors are sometimes dealt with in CCAA proceedings, it is not a proper use of a CCAA proceeding to determine disputes between parties other than the debtor company.

[33] In this particular case, the supervising judge was very careful to say that nothing in his reasons should be taken to determine or affect the relationship between the Subordinate Debenture Holders and the Senior Debt Holders.

[34] Secondly, it has long been recognized that creditors should be classified in accordance with their contract rights, that is, according to their respective interests in the debtor company: see Stanley E. Edwards, "Reorganizations Under the

Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act" (1947) 25 Can. Bar Rev. 587, at p. 602.

[35] Finally, to hold the classification and voting process hostage to the vagaries of a potentially infinite variety of disputes as between already disgruntled creditors who have been caught in the maelstrom of a CCAA restructuring runs the risk of hobbling that process unduly. It could lead to the very type of fragmentation and multiplicity of discrete classes or sub-classes of classes that judges and legal writers have warned might well defeat the purpose of the Act: see Stanley Edwards, "Reorganizations under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act", supra; Ronald N. Robertson Q.C., "Legal Problems on Reorganization of Major Financial and Commercial Debtors", Canadian Bar Association -- Ontario Continuing Legal Education, April 5, 1983 at 19-21; Norcen Energy Resources Ltd. v. Oakwood Petroleums Ltd., supra, at para. 27; Northland Properties Ltd. v. Excelsior Life Insurance Co. of Canada, supra; Sklar-Peppler, supra; Woodwards Ltd. (Re), supra.

[36] In the end, it is important to remember that classification of creditors, like most other things pertaining to the CCAA, must be crafted with the underlying purpose of the CCAA in mind, namely facilitation of the reorganization of an insolvent company through the negotiation and approval of a plan of compromise or arrangement between the debtor company and its creditors, so that the debtor company can continue to carry on its business to the benefit of all concerned. As Paperny J. noted [at para. 31] in Canadian Airlines (Re), "the Court should be careful to resist classification approaches that would potentially jeopardize viable plans". [page253]

Discretion and fact finding

[37] Having concluded that the supervising judge made no error in law or principle in his approach to the classification issue, we can find no error in his factual findings or in his exercise of discretion in determining that the Subordinate Debenture Holders should remain in the same class as the Senior Debt Holders and Trade Creditors in the circumstances of this case.

[38] We agree that there is no material distinction between the legal rights of the Subordinated Debenture Holders and those of the Senior Debt Holders vis--vis Stelco. Each is entitled to be paid the moneys owing under their respective debt contracts. The only difference is that the former creditors are subordinated in interest to the latter and have agreed to pay over to the latter any portion of their recovery received until the Senior Debt has been paid in full. As between the two groups of creditors, this merely reflects the very deal the Subordinated Debenture Holders bought into when they purchased their subordinated debentures. For that reason, the supervising judge was also entitled to determine that this was not a case involving any confiscation of legal rights.

[39] Finally, the supervising judge's finding that there is no "realistic conflict of interest" between the creditors is supported on the record. Each has the same general interest in relation to Stelco, namely to be paid under their contracts, and to maximize the amount recoverable from the debtor company through the Plan negotiation process. We do not accept the argument that the Senior Debt Holder's efforts will be moderated in some respect because they will be content to make their recovery on the backs of the Subordinated Debenture Holders through the Turnover Payment process. In order to carry the class, the Senior Debt Holders will require the support of the Trade Creditors, whose interest is not affected by the subordination agreement. Thus the Senior Debt Holders will be required to support the maximization approach.

[40] We need not deal with whether a realistic and genuine conflict of interest, produced by different legal positions of creditors vis--vis each other, could ever warrant separate classes, as we are satisfied that even if it could, this is not such a case.

Disposition

[41] Accordingly, we would not interfere with the supervising judge's decision that the appellants had not made out a case for a separate class. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Appeal dismissed. [page254]

Notes

Note 1: R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36, as amended.

Note 2: Farley J. uses the term "ConCom debt" to refer to the debt represented by the Converts' Committee (i.e., that of the Subordinated Debenture Holders), and the term "BondCom debt" to refer to that of the Senior Debt Holders.

Note 3: The Joint Stock Companies Arrangement Act 1870 (U.K.), 33 & 34 Vict., c. 104.

Note 4: A second secured creditor with superior voting power was separated from a first secured creditor for the voting purposes, in order [to] prevent the former from utilizing its superior voting strength to adversely affect the latter's prior security position.

Note 5: The court refused to allow subsequent mortgagees to vote in the same class as a first mortgagee because in the circumstances the subsequent mortgagees would be able to use their voting power to destroy the priority rights and security of the first mortgagee.

Note 6: Borins J., as he then was, warned against the dangers of "excessive fragmentation" and of creating "a special class simply for the benefit of the opposing creditor, which would give that creditor the potential to exercise an unwarranted degree of power" [at p. 627 D.L.R.].

Note 7: Montgomery J. declined to grant a separate classification to a minority group of creditors who would use that classification to extract benefits to which it was not otherwise entitled.

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

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

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

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

General power of court

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

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

Pouvoir général du tribunal

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

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

Relief reasonably necessary

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

2019, c. 29, s. 136.

Redressements normalement nécessaires

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

2019, ch. 29, art. 136.

Rights of suppliers

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

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

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

2005, c. 47, s. 128.

Droits des fournisseurs

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

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

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

2005, ch. 47, art. 128.

Stays, etc. — initial application

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

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

Suspension : demande initiale

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

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