

2016 ONSC 1044
Ontario Superior Court of Justice

Danier Leather Inc., Re

2016 CarswellOnt 2414, 2016 ONSC 1044, 262 A.C.W.S. (3d) 573, 33 C.B.R. (6th) 221

In the Matter of Intention to Make a Proposal of Danier Leather Inc.

Penny J.

Heard: February 8, 2016

Judgment: February 10, 2016

Docket: 31-CL-2084381

Counsel: Jay Swartz, Natalie Renner, for Danier
Sean Zweig, for Proposal Trustee
Harvey Chaiton, for Directors and Officers
Jeffrey Levine, for GA Retail Canada
David Bish, for Cadillac Fairview
Linda Galessiere, for Morguard Investment, 20 ULC Management, SmartReit and Ivanhoe Cambridge
Clifton Prophet, for CIBC

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

MOTION to, inter alia, approve stalking horse agreement and SISP.

Penny J.:

The Motion

1 On February 8, 2016 I granted an order approving a SISP in respect of Danier Leather Inc., with reasons to follow. These are those reasons.

2 Danier filed a Notice of Intention to make a proposal under the BIA on February 4, 2016. This is a motion to:

- (a) approve a stalking horse agreement and SISP;
- (b) approve the payment of a break fee, expense reimbursement and signage costs obligations in connection with the stalking horse agreement;
- (c) authorize Danier to perform its obligations under engagement letters with its financial advisors and a charge to secure success fees;
- (d) approve an Administration Charge;
- (e) approve a D&O Charge;
- (f) approve a KERP and KERP Charge; and
- (g) grant a sealing order in respect of the KERP and a stalking horse offer summary.

Background

3 Danier is an integrated designer, manufacturer and retailer of leather and suede apparel and accessories. Danier primarily operates its retail business from 84 stores located throughout Canada. It does not own any real property. Danier employs approximately 1,293 employees. There is no union or pension plan.

4 Danier has suffered declining revenues and profitability over the last two years resulting primarily from problems implementing its strategic plan. The accelerated pace of change in both personnel and systems resulting from the strategic plan contributed to fashion and inventory miscues which have been further exacerbated by unusual extremes in the weather and increased competition from U.S. and international retailers in the Canadian retail space and the depreciation of the Canadian dollar relative to the American dollar.

5 In late 2014, Danier implemented a series of operational and cost reduction initiatives in an attempt to return Danier to profitability. These initiatives included reductions to headcount, marketing costs, procurement costs and capital expenditures, renegotiating supply terms, rationalizing Danier's operations, improving branding, growing online sales and improving price management and inventory mark downs. In addition, Danier engaged a financial advisor and formed a special committee comprised of independent members of its board of directors to explore strategic alternatives to improve Danier's financial circumstances, including soliciting an acquisition transaction for Danier.

6 As part of its mandate, the financial advisor conducted a seven month marketing process to solicit offers from interested parties to acquire Danier. The financial advisor contacted approximately 189 parties and provided 33 parties with a confidential information memorandum describing Danier and its business. Over the course of this process, the financial advisor had meaningful conversations with several interested parties but did not receive any formal offers to provide capital and/or to acquire the shares of Danier. One of the principal reasons that this process was unsuccessful is that it focused on soliciting an acquisition transaction, which ultimately proved unappealing to interested parties as Danier's risk profile was too great. An acquisition transaction did not afford prospective purchasers the ability to restructure Danier's affairs without incurring significant costs.

7 Despite Danier's efforts to restructure its financial affairs and turn around its operations, Danier has experienced significant net losses in each of its most recently completed fiscal years and in each of the two most recently completed fiscal quarters in the 2016 fiscal year. Danier currently has approximately \$9.6 million in cash on hand but is projected to be cash flow negative every month until at least September 2016. Danier anticipated that it would need to borrow under its loan facility with CIBC by July 2016. CIBC has served a notice of default and indicate no funds will be advanced under its loan facility. In addition, for the 12 months ending December 31, 2015, 30 of Danier's 84 store locations were unprofitable. If Danier elects to close those store locations, it will be required to terminate the corresponding leases and will face substantial landlord claims which it will not be able to satisfy in the normal course.

8 Danier would not have had the financial resources to implement a restructuring of its affairs if it had delayed a filing under the BIA until it had entirely used up its cash resources. Accordingly, on February 4, 2016, Danier commenced these proceedings for the purpose of entering into a stalking horse agreement and implementing the second phase of the SISP.

The Stalking Horse Agreement

9 The SISP is comprised of two phases. In the first phase, Danier engaged the services of its financial advisor to find a stalking horse bidder. The financial advisor corresponded with 22 parties, 19 of whom had participated in the 2015 solicitation process and were therefore familiar with Danier. In response, Danier received three offers and, with the assistance of the financial advisor and the Proposal Trustee, selected GA Retail Canada or an affiliate (the "Agent") as the successful bid. The Agent is an affiliate of Great American Group, which has extensive experience in conducting retail store liquidations.

10 On February 4, 2016, Danier and the Agent entered into the stalking horse agreement, subject to Court approval. Pursuant to the stalking horse agreement, the Agent will serve as the stalking horse bid in the SISP and the exclusive

liquidator for the purpose of disposing of Danier's inventory. The Agent will dispose of the merchandise by conducting a "store closing" or similar sale at the stores.

11 The stalking horse agreement provides that Danier will receive a net minimum amount equal to 94.6% of the aggregate value of the merchandise, provided that the value of the merchandise is no less than \$22 million and no more than \$25 million. After payment of this amount and the expenses of the sale, the Agent is entitled to retain a 5% commission. Any additional proceeds of the sale after payment of the commission are divided equally between the Agent and Danier.

12 The stalking horse agreement also provides that the Agent is entitled to (a) a break fee in the amount of \$250,000; (b) an expense reimbursement for its reasonable and documented out-of-pocket expenses in an amount not to exceed \$100,000; and (c) the reasonable costs, fees and expenses actually incurred and paid by the Agent in acquiring signage or other advertising and promotional material in connection with the sale in an amount not to exceed \$175,000, each payable if another bid is selected and the transaction contemplated by the other bid is completed. Collectively, the break fee, the maximum amount payable under the expense reimbursement and the signage costs obligations represent approximately 2.5% of the minimum consideration payable under the stalking horse agreement. Another liquidator submitting a successful bid in the course of the SISP will be required to purchase the signage from the Agent at its cost.

13 The stalking horse agreement is structured to allow Danier to proceed with the second phase of the SISP and that process is designed to test the market to ascertain whether a higher or better offer can be obtained from other parties. While the stalking horse agreement contemplates liquidating Danier's inventory, it also establishes a floor price that is intended to encourage bidders to participate in the SISP who may be interested in going concern acquisitions as well.

The SISP

14 Danier, in consultation with the Proposal Trustee and financial advisor, have established the procedures which are to be followed in conducting the second phase of the SISP.

15 Under the SISP, interested parties may make a binding proposal to acquire the business or all or any part of Danier's assets, to make an investment in Danier or to liquidate Danier's inventory and furniture, fixtures and equipment.

16 Danier, in consultation with the Proposal Trustee and its financial advisors, will evaluate the bids and may (a) accept, subject to Court approval, one or more bids, (b) conditionally accept, subject to Court approval, one or more backup bids (conditional upon the failure of the transactions contemplated by the successful bid to close, or (c) pursue an auction in accordance with the procedures set out in the SISP.

17 The key dates of the second phase of the SISP are as follows:

- (1) The second phase of the SISP will commence upon approval by the Court
- (2) Bid deadline: February 22, 2016
- (3) Advising interested parties whether bids constitute "qualified bids": No later than two business days after bid deadline
- (4) Determining successful bid and back-up bid (if there is no auction): No later than five business days after bid deadline
- (5) Advising qualified bidders of auction date and location (if applicable): No later than five business days after bid deadline
- (6) Auction (if applicable): No later than seven business days after bid deadline

(7) Bringing motion for approval: Within five business days following determination by Danier of the successful bid (at auction or otherwise)

(8) Back-Up bid expiration date: No later than 15 business days after the bid deadline, unless otherwise agreed

(9) Outside date: No later than 15 business days after the bid deadline

18 The timelines in the SISP have been designed with regard to the seasonal nature of the business and the fact that inventory values will depreciate significantly as the spring season approaches. The timelines also ensure that any purchaser of the business as a going concern has the opportunity to make business decisions well in advance of Danier's busiest season, being fall/winter. These timelines are necessary to generate maximum value for Danier's stakeholders and are sufficient to permit prospective bidders to conduct their due diligence, particularly in light of the fact that is expected that many of the parties who will participate in the SISP also participated in the 2015 solicitation process and were given access to a data room containing non-public information about Danier at that time.

19 Danier does not believe that there is a better viable alternative to the proposed SISP and stalking horse agreement.

20 The use of a sale process that includes a stalking horse agreement maximizes value of a business for the benefit of its stakeholders and enhances the fairness of the sale process. Stalking horse agreements are commonly used in insolvency proceedings to facilitate sales of businesses and assets and are intended to establish a baseline price and transactional structure for any superior bids from interested parties, *CCM Master Qualified Fund Ltd. v. blutip Power Technologies Ltd.*, 2012 ONSC 1750 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at para. 7.

21 The Court's power to approve a sale of assets in a proposal proceeding is codified in section 65.13 of the BIA, which sets out a list of non-exhaustive factors for the Court to consider in determining whether to approve a sale of the debtor's assets outside the ordinary course of business. This Court has considered section 65.13 of the BIA when approving a stalking horse sale process under the BIA, *Colossus Minerals Inc., Re*, 2014 CarswellOnt 1517 (Ont. S.C.J.) at paras. 22-26.

22 A distinction has been drawn, however, between the approval of a sale process and the approval of an actual sale. Section 65.13 is engaged when the Court determines whether to approve a sale transaction arising as a result of a sale process, it does not necessarily address the factors a court should consider when deciding whether to approve the sale process itself.

23 In *Brainhunter Inc., Re*, the Court considered the criteria to be applied on a motion to approve a stalking horse sale process in a restructuring proceeding under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*. Citing his decision in *Nortel*, Justice Morawetz (as he then was) confirmed that the following four factors should be considered by the Court in the exercise of its discretion to determine if the proposed sale process should be approved:

(1) Is a sale transaction warranted at this time?

(2) Will the sale benefit the whole "economic community"?

(3) Do any of the debtors' creditors have a bona fide reason to object to a sale of the business?

(4) Is there a better viable alternative?

Brainhunter Inc., Re, 2009 CarswellOnt 8207 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras. 13-17); *Nortel Networks Corp., Re*, 2009 CarswellOnt 4467 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at para. 49.

24 While *Brainhunter* and *Nortel* both dealt with a sale process under the CCAA, the Court has recognized that the CCAA is an analogous restructuring statute to the proposal provisions of the BIA, *Ted Leroy Trucking Ltd., Re*, 2010 SCC 60 (S.C.C.) at para 24; *Indalex Ltd., Re*, [2013] 1 S.C.R. 271 (S.C.C.) at paras. 50-51.

25 Furthermore, in *Mustang*, this Court applied the *Nortel* criteria on a motion to approve a sale process backstopped by a stalking horse bid in a proposal proceeding under the BIA, *Mustang GP Ltd., Re*, 2015 CarswellOnt 16398 (Ont. S.C.J.) at paras. 37-38.

26 These proceedings are premised on the implementation of a sale process using the stalking horse agreement as the minimum bid intended to maximize value and act as a baseline for offers received in the SISP. In the present case, Danier is seeking approval of the stalking horse agreement for purposes of conducting the SISP only.

27 The SISP is warranted at this time for a number of reasons.

28 First, Danier has made reasonable efforts in search of alternate financing or an acquisition transaction and has attempted to restructure its operations and financial affairs since 2014, all of which has been unsuccessful. At this juncture, Danier has exhausted all of the remedies available to it outside of a Court-supervised sale process. The SISP will result in the most viable alternative for Danier, whether it be a sale of assets or the business (through an auction or otherwise) or an investment in Danier.

29 Second, Danier projects that it will be cash flow negative for the next six months and it is clear that Danier will be unable to borrow under the CIBC loan facility to finance its operations (CIBC gave notice of default upon Danier's filing of the NOI). If the SISP is not implemented in the immediate future, Danier's revenues will continue to decline, it will incur significant costs and the value of the business will erode, thereby decreasing recoveries for Danier's stakeholders.

30 Third, the market for Danier's assets as a going concern will be significantly reduced if the SISP is not implemented at this time because the business is seasonal in nature. Any purchaser of the business as a going concern will need to make decisions about the raw materials it wishes to acquire and the product lines it wishes to carry by March 2016 in order to be sufficiently prepared for the fall/winter season, which has historically been Danier's busiest.

31 Danier and the Proposal Trustee concur that the SISP and the stalking horse agreement will benefit the whole of the economic community. In particular:

- (a) the stalking horse agreement will establish the floor price for Danier's inventory, thereby maximizing recoveries;
- (b) the SISP will subject the assets to a public marketing process and permit higher and better offers to replace the Stalking horse agreement; and
- (c) should the SISP result in a sale transaction for all or substantially all of Danier's assets, this may result in the continuation of employment, the assumption of lease and other obligations and the sale of raw materials and inventory owned by Danier.

32 There have been no expressed creditor concerns with the SISP as such. The SISP is an open and transparent process. Absent the stalking horse agreement, the SISP could potentially result in substantially less consideration for Danier's business and/or assets.

33 Given the indications of value obtained through the 2015 solicitation process, the stalking horse agreement represents the highest and best value to be obtained for Danier's assets at this time, subject to a higher offer being identified through the SISP.

34 Section 65.13 of the BIA is also indirectly relevant to approval of the SISP. In deciding whether to grant authorization for a sale, the court is to consider, among other things:

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

35 In the present case, in addition to satisfying the *Nortel* criteria, the SISP will result in a transaction that is at least capable of satisfying the 65.13 criteria. I say this for the following reasons.

36 The SISP is reasonable in the circumstances as it is designed to be flexible and allows parties to submit an offer for some or all of Danier's assets, make an investment in Danier or acquire the business as a going concern. This is all with the goal of improving upon the terms of the stalking horse agreement. The SISP also gives Danier and the Proposal Trustee the right to extend or amend the SISP to better promote a robust sale process.

37 The Proposal Trustee and the financial advisor support the SISP and view it as reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

38 The duration of the SISP is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances having regard to Danier's financial situation, the seasonal nature of its business and the fact that many potentially interested parties are familiar with Danier and its business given their participation in the 2015 solicitation process and/or the stalking horse process.

39 A sale process which allows Danier to be sold as a going concern would likely be more beneficial than a sale under a bankruptcy, which does not allow for the going concern option.

40 Finally, the consideration to be received for the assets under the stalking horse agreement appears at this point, to be *prima facie* fair and reasonable and represents a fair and reasonable benchmark for all other bids in the SISP.

The Break Fee

41 Break fees and expense and costs reimbursements in favour of a stalking horse bidder are frequently approved in insolvency proceedings. Break fees do not merely reflect the cost to the purchaser of putting together the stalking horse bid. A break fee may be the price of stability, and thus some premium over simply providing for out of pocket expenses may be expected, Daniel R. Dowdall & Jane O. Dietrich, "Do Stalking Horses Have a Place in Intra-Canadian Insolvencies", 2005 ANNREVINSOLV 1 at 4.

42 Break fees in the range of 3% and expense reimbursements in the range of 2% have recently been approved by this Court, *Nortel Networks Corp., Re*, [2009] O.J. No. 4293 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras. 12 and 26; *W.C. Wood Corp., Re*, [2009] O.J. No. 4808 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at para. 3, where a 4% break fee was approved.

43 The break fee, the expense reimbursement and the signage costs obligations in the stalking horse agreement fall within the range of reasonableness. Collectively, these charges represent approximately 2.5% of the minimum consideration payable under the stalking horse agreement. In addition, if a liquidation proposal (other than the stalking horse agreement) is the successful bid, Danier is not required to pay the signage costs obligations to the Agent. Instead, the successful bidder will be required to buy the signage and advertising material from the Agent at cost.

44 In the exercise of its business judgment, the Board unanimously approved the break fee, the expense reimbursement and the signage costs obligations. The Proposal Trustee and the financial advisor have both reviewed the break fee, the expense reimbursement and the signage costs obligations and concluded that each is appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances. In reaching this conclusion, the Proposal Trustee noted, among other things, that:

- (i) the maximum amount of the break fee, expense reimbursement and signage costs obligations represent, in the aggregate 2.5% of the imputed value of the consideration under the stalking horse agreement, which is within the normal range for transactions of this nature;
- (ii) each stalking horse bidder required a break fee and expense reimbursement as part of their proposal in the stalking horse process;
- (iii) without these protections, a party would have little incentive to act as the stalking horse bidder; and
- (iv) the quantum of the break fee, expense reimbursement and signage costs obligations are unlikely to discourage a third party from submitting an offer in the SISP.

45 I find the break fee to be reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

Financial Advisor Success Fee and Charge

46 Danier is seeking a charge in the amount of US\$500,000 to cover its principal financial advisor's (Concensus) maximum success fees payable under its engagement letter. The Consensus Charge would rank behind the existing security, *pari passu* with the Administration Charge and ahead of the D&O Charge and KERP Charge.

47 Orders approving agreements with financial advisors have frequently been made in insolvency proceedings, including CCAA proceedings and proposal proceedings under the BIA. In determining whether to approve such agreements and the fees payable thereunder, courts have considered the following factors, among others:

- (a) whether the debtor and the court officer overseeing the proceedings believe that the quantum and nature of the remuneration are fair and reasonable;
- (b) whether the financial advisor has industry experience and/or familiarity with the business of the debtor; and
- (c) whether the success fee is necessary to incentivize the financial advisor.

Sino-Forest Corp., Re, 2012 ONSC 2063 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras. 46-47; *Colossus Minerals Inc., Re*, *supra*.

48 The SISP contemplates that the financial advisor will continue to be intimately involved in administering the SISP.

49 The financial advisor has considerable experience working with distressed companies in the retail sector that are in the process of restructuring, including seeking strategic partners and/or selling their assets. In the present case, the financial advisor has assisted Danier in its restructuring efforts to date and has gained a thorough and intimate understanding of the business. The continued involvement of the financial advisor is essential to the completion of a successful transaction under the SISP and to ensuring a wide-ranging canvass of prospective bidders and investors.

50 In light of the foregoing, Danier and the Proposal Trustee are in support of incentivizing the financial advisor to carry out the SISP and are of the view that the quantum and nature of the remuneration provided for in the financial advisor's engagement letter are reasonable in the circumstances and will incentivize the Financial advisor.

51 Danier has also engaged OCI to help implement the SISP in certain international markets in the belief that OCI has expertise that warrants this engagement. OCI may be able to identify a purchaser or strategic investor in overseas markets

which would result in a more competitive sales process. OCI will only be compensated if a transaction is originated by OCI or OCI introduces the ultimate purchaser and/or investor to Danier.

52 Danier and the Proposal Trustee believe that the quantum and nature of the success fee payable under the OCI engagement letter is reasonable in the circumstances. Specifically, because the fees payable to OCI are dependent on the success of transaction or purchaser or investor originated by OCI, the approval of this fee is necessary to incentivize OCI.

53 Accordingly, an order approving the financial advisor and OCI engagement letters is appropriate.

54 A charge ensuring payment of the success fee is also appropriate in the circumstances, as noted below.

Administration Charge

55 In order to protect the fees and expenses of each of the Proposal Trustee, its counsel, counsel to Danier, the directors of Danier and their counsel, Danier seeks a charge on its property and assets in the amount of \$600,000. The Administration Charge would rank behind the existing security, *pari passu* with the Consensus Charge and ahead of the D&O Charge and KERP Charge. It is supported by the Proposal Trustee.

56 Section 64.2 of the BIA confers on the Court the authority to grant a charge in favour of financial, legal or other professionals involved in proposal proceedings under the BIA.

57 Administration and financial advisor charges have been previously approved in insolvency proposal proceedings, where, as in the present case, the participation of the parties whose fees are secured by the charge is necessary to ensure a successful proceeding under the BIA and for the conduct of a sale process, *Colossus Minerals Inc., Re*, 2014 CarswellOnt 1517 (Ont. S.C.J.) at paras. 11-15.

58 This is an appropriate circumstance for the Court to grant the Administration Charge. The quantum of the proposed Administration Charge is fair and reasonable given the nature of the SISP. Each of the parties whose fees are to be secured by the Administration Charge has played (and will continue to play) a critical role in these proposal proceedings and in the SI. The Administration Charge is necessary to secure the full and complete payment of these fees. Finally, the Administration Charge will be subordinate to the existing security and does not prejudice any known secured creditor of Danier.

D&O Charge

59 The directors and officers have been actively involved in the attempts to address Danier's financial circumstances, including through exploring strategic alternatives, implementing a turnaround plan, devising the SISP and the commencement of these proceedings. The directors and officers are not prepared to remain in office without certainty with respect to coverage for potential personal liability if they continue in their current capacities.

60 Danier maintains directors and officers insurance with various insurers. There are exclusions in the event there is a change in risk and there is potential for there to be insufficient funds to cover the scope of obligations for which the directors and officers may be found personally liable (especially given the significant size of the Danier workforce).

61 Danier has agreed, subject to certain exceptions, to indemnify the directors and officers to the extent that the insurance coverage is insufficient. Danier does not anticipate it will have sufficient funds to satisfy those indemnities if they were ever called upon.

62 Danier seeks approval of a priority charge to indemnify its directors and officers for obligations and liabilities they may incur in such capacities from and after the filing of the NOI. It is proposed that the D&O Charge be in an amount not to exceed \$4.9 million and rank behind the existing security, the Administration Charge and the Consensus Charge but ahead of the KERP Charge.

63 The amount of the D&O Charge is based on payroll obligations, vacation pay obligations, employee source deduction obligations and sales tax obligations that may arise during these proposal proceedings. It is expected that all of these amounts will be paid in the normal course as Danier expects to have sufficient funds to pay these amounts. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the D&O charge will be called upon.

64 The Court has the authority to grant a directors' and officers' charge under section 64.1 of the BIA.

65 In *Colossus Minerals* and *Mustang*, *supra*, this Court approved a directors' and officers' charge in circumstances similar to the present case where there was uncertainty that the existing insurance was sufficient to cover all potential claims, the directors and officers would not continue to provide their services without the protection of the charge and the continued involvement of the directors and officers was critical to a successful sales process under the BIA.

66 I approve the D&O Charge for the following reasons.

67 The D&O Charge will only apply to the extent that the directors and officers do not have coverage under the existing policy or Danier is unable to satisfy its indemnity obligations.

68 The directors and officers of Danier have indicated they will not continue their involvement with Danier without the protection of the D&O Charge yet their continued involvement is critical to the successful implementation of the SISP.

69 The D&O Charge applies only to claims or liabilities that the directors and officers may incur after the date of the NOI and does not cover misconduct or gross negligence.

70 The Proposal Trustee supports the D&O Charge, indicating that the D&O Charge is reasonable in the circumstances.

71 Finally, the amount of the D&O Charge takes into account a number of statutory obligations for which directors and officers are liable if Danier fails to meet these obligations. However, it is expected that all of these amounts will be paid in the normal course. Danier expects to have sufficient funds to pay these amounts. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the D&O charge will be called upon.

Key Employee Retention Plan and Charge

72 Danier developed a key employee retention plan (the "KERP") that applies to 11 of Danier's employees, an executive of Danier and Danier's consultant, all of whom have been determined to be critical to ensuring a successful sale or investment transaction. The KERP was reviewed and approved by the Board.

73 Under the KERP, the key employees will be eligible to receive a retention payment if these employees remain actively employed with Danier until the earlier of the completion of the SISP, the date upon which the liquidation of Danier's inventory is complete, the date upon which Danier ceases to carry on business, or the effective date that Danier terminates the services of these employees.

74 Danier is requesting approval of the KERP and a charge for up to \$524,000 (the "KERP Charge") to secure the amounts payable thereunder. The KERP Charge will rank in priority to all claims and encumbrances other than the existing security, the Administration Charge, the Consensus Charge and the D&O Charge.

75 Key employee retention plans are approved in insolvency proceedings where the continued employment of key employees is deemed critical to restructuring efforts, *Nortel Networks Corp., Re supra*.

76 In *Grant Forest Products Inc., Re*, Newbould J. set out a non-exhaustive list of factors that the court should consider in determining whether to approve a key employee retention plan, including the following:

- (a) whether the court appointed officer supports the retention plan;

- (b) whether the key employees who are the subject of the retention plan are likely to pursue other employment opportunities absent the approval of the retention plan;
- (c) whether the employees who are the subject of the retention plan are truly "key employees" whose continued employment is critical to the successful restructuring of Danier;
- (d) whether the quantum of the proposed retention payments is reasonable; and
- (e) the business judgment of the board of directors regarding the necessity of the retention payments.

Grant Forest Products Inc., Re, [2009] O.J. No. 3344 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras. 8-22.

77 While *Grant Forest Products Inc., Re* involved a proceeding under the CCAA, key employee retention plans have frequently been approved in proposal proceedings under the BIA, see, for example, *In the Matter of the Notice of Intention of Starfield Resources Inc.*, Court File No. CV-13-10034-00CL, Order dated March 15, 2013 at para. 10.

78 The KERP and the KERP Charge are approved for the following reasons:

- (i) the Proposal Trustee supports the granting of the KERP and the KERP Charge;
- (ii) absent approval of the KERP and the KERP Charge, the key employees who are the subject of the KERP will have no incentive to remain with Danier throughout the SISP and are therefore likely to pursue other employment opportunities;
- (iii) Danier has determined that the employees who are the subject of the KERP are critical to the implementation of the SISP and a completion of a successful sale or investment transaction in respect of Danier;
- (iv) the Proposal Trustee is of the view that the KERP and the quantum of the proposed retention payments is reasonable and that the KERP Charge will provide security for the individuals entitled to the KERP, which will add stability to the business during these proceedings and will assist in maximizing realizations; and
- (v) the KERP was reviewed and approved by the Board.

Sealing Order

79 There are two documents which are sought to be sealed: 1) the details about the KERP; and 2) the stalking horse offer summary.

80 Section 137(2) of the *Courts of Justice Act* provides the court with discretion to order that any document filed in a civil proceeding can be treated as confidential, sealed, and not form part of the public record.

81 In *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada (Minister of Finance)*, the Supreme Court of Canada held that courts should exercise their discretion to grant sealing orders where:

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

[2002] S.C.J. No. 42 (S.C.C.) at para. 53.

82 In the insolvency context, courts have applied this test and authorized sealing orders over confidential or commercially sensitive documents to protect the interests of debtors and other stakeholders, *Stelco Inc., Re*, [2006] O.J. No. 275 (Ont. S.C.J. [Commercial List]) at paras. 2-5; *Nortel Networks Corp., Re, supra*.

83 It would be detrimental to the operations of Danier to disclose the identity of the individuals who will be receiving the KERP payments as this may result in other employees requesting such payments or feeling underappreciated. Further, the KERP evidence involves matters of a private, personal nature.

84 The offer summary contains highly sensitive commercial information about Danier, the business and what some parties, confidentially, were willing to bid for Danier's assets. Disclosure of this information could undermine the integrity of the SISP. The disclosure of the offer summary prior to the completion of a final transaction under the SISP would pose a serious risk to the SISP in the event that the transaction does not close. Disclosure prior to the completion of a SISP would jeopardize value-maximizing dealings with any future prospective purchasers or liquidators of Danier's assets. There is a public interest in maximizing recovery in an insolvency that goes beyond each individual case.

85 The sealing order is necessary to protect the important commercial interests of Danier and other stakeholders. This salutary effect greatly outweighs the deleterious effects of not sealing the KERPs and the offer summary, namely the lack of immediate public access to a limited number of documents filed in these proceedings.

86 As a result, the *Sierra Club* test for a sealing order has been met. The material about the KERP and the offer summary shall not form part of the public record pending completion of these proposal proceedings.

Order accordingly.