

COURT OF APPEAL FOR ONTARIO

B E T W E E N :

**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 LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY OF SUDBURY**

FRESH AS AMENDED NOTICE OF MOTION FOR LEAVE TO APPEAL

TAKE NOTICE THAT THE MOVING PARTY, the CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES (“**CUPE**”) will make a motion to the Court of Appeal for Ontario on a date to be fixed by the Registrar of the Court at Osgoode Hall, 130 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N5.

PROPOSED METHOD OF HEARING: The motion is to be heard in writing or as otherwise directed by the Court.

THE MOTION IS FOR:

1. An order granting CUPE leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal for Ontario from the decision of Chief Justice Morawetz (the “**Motion Judge**”) dated February 26, 2021, which indefinitely maintained the Sealing Order originally granted on an interim basis on February 1st, 2021 and February 12th, 2021;

2. An order that this motion be heard on an expedited basis and waiving or abridging the time for notice, service and filing in connection with this motion;
3. An order validating the manner of service of the notice of motion and motion materials herein, if necessary;
4. Costs of this motion, to be fixed by the court; and
5. Such further and other relief as this Honourable Court deems fit.

THE GROUNDS FOR THIS MOTION ARE:

6. This case raises novel and important issues with respect to open court processes and the need for transparency and full disclosure of information by public institutions that seek protections under the *Companies Creditors Arrangement Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36 (“**CCAA**”). The proposed appeal raises serious and arguable grounds with respect to the use of sealing orders in CCAA proceedings and engages issues that are important to the parties and to these CCAA proceedings and are also significant to the public and the practice of insolvency law in general.

Background to the Sealing Order

7. On February 1, 2021, Laurentian University of Sudbury (“**Laurentian**” or the “**Applicant**”) applied for and was granted protection under the CCAA from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Commercial List).
8. CUPE represents a total of over 300 employees working at Laurentian.
9. The use of the CCAA by a publicly-funded educational institution in Ontario is

unprecedented and will have real risks and impacts on Laurentian's employees and other stakeholders, to the community of Sudbury and to Ontario's north. It also has significant implications for Ontario's post-secondary sector.

10. When seeking the initial order in this proceeding, Laurentian sought to seal certain correspondence it was relying on for the purposes of establishing its entitlement to use a CCAA proceeding to protect it from creditors and restructure its affairs. This correspondence is contained in Exhibits "EEE" and "FFF" to the Affidavit of Robert Haché made in support of the initial application, and is letters exchanged between the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and Laurentian on January 21, 2021 and January 25, 2021 (the "**Sealed Documents**").

11. In its factum in support of the Initial Order, Laurentian described the Sealed Documents as containing "information with respect to the Applicant and certain stakeholders of the Applicant, including various rights or positions that stakeholders of the Applicant may take either inside or outside of a CCAA proceeding" and argued that if the letters were not sealed, "stakeholders may react in such a way that jeopardizes the viability of the Applicant's restructuring".¹

12. On February 1, 2021, the Motion Judge, as part of the Initial Order, sealed the Sealed Documents.

¹ See paras. 112 and 113 of the Applicant's Factum, dated January 30, 2021, filed in support of the Initial Order.

13. As is the norm in CCAA proceedings, the Initial Order was granted on an *ex parte* basis.

14. Prior to the comeback hearing, Laurentian returned to court on February 5, 2021 and obtained an order appointing Justice Sean Dunphy for the purposes of conducting a mediation between Laurentian's stakeholders. This mediation is ongoing, and in accordance with the order appointing the mediator, is intended to deal with the following issues:

- a. the review and restructuring of the Applicant's existing academic programs;
- b. the review and restructuring of the faculty necessary to deliver the Applicant's restructured academic programs;
- c. a new collective agreement between the Applicant and LUFA, including resolving all outstanding grievances;
- d. the review and restructuring of the Applicant's Federated Universities' model;
- e. the framework for the Applicant's restructuring and future operations; and
- f. any other matters that are referred to the Court-Appointed Mediator by the Applicant, the Monitor, the relevant stakeholders or this Court;

15. On February 10, 2021, at the comeback hearing, several parties challenged the sealing order made in respect of the Sealed Documents, including CUPE, the union representing faculty at Laurentian (“**LUFA**”) and the federation of Ontario faculty associations of which LUFA is a member (“**OCUFA**”).

16. By an endorsement dated February 12, 2021, the Motion Judge upheld the Sealing Order on an interim basis and informed the parties that he needed more time to prepare reasons on the issue.

17. On February 26, 2021, the Motion Judge released a supplementary endorsement addressing the issue of the maintenance of the Sealing Order. The Motion Judge upheld the Sealing Order, finding that the disclosure of the Sealed Documents “could be detrimental to any potential restructuring.”

18. The Motions Judge also noted that the “commercial” interest related to the Sealed Documents “transcends the direct commercial interest” of the Applicant and includes that of various wider stakeholders – some of whom have objected to the Sealing Order – including “faculty, students, employees, third-party suppliers, and the City of Greater Sudbury.” The Motions Judge did not include the Ontario Government’s interests as the largest funder of the Applicant, and primary funder of the public post-secondary institutions in Ontario, in this list of wider public interests.

19. Finally, the Motion Judge determined that it would not be appropriate “at this time”, to implement some type of alternative arrangement to the Sealing Order, as such an alternative “could negatively impact the mediation efforts being conducted by Justice Dunphy.”

20. No evidence has been filed with respect to the impact on the mediation process.

The proposed appeal

21. If leave is granted, this court would be asked to answer the following questions:

- a. Did the Motion Judge err in focusing solely on the Applicant's assertion of an important commercial interest and not balancing the various competing interests applicable to such order under *Sierra Club of Canada v. Canada*, [2002] 2 SCR 522 ("*Sierra Club*")?
- b. Did the Motion Judge err in allowing the Sealing Order without a sufficient evidentiary foundation?
- c. Did the Motion Judge err in concluding that the Sealing Order was justified as a result of speculative concerns about the impact the Sealed Documents might have on the outcome of the CCAA restructuring process?

The factors relevant to granting leave to appeal favour leave being granted

22. The issue of the propriety of the use of the Sealing Order is of significance to the practice, given the unprecedented use of the CCAA proceeding by a publicly-funded institution, and the importance of all parties to such a proceeding having a full understanding of the interactions between a public institution of this nature and the relevant governmental body that appoints some members of its governing body, is the primary funder of the institution and otherwise supports it and the sector in which it operates.

23. This issue is also significant to this proceeding, as the mediation and restructuring proceeding is continuing with one party, the Applicant, having access to a full record supporting the proceedings, while other parties, including employees, have a partial record and one that does not include any insight into the position of the major funding stakeholder of the Applicant, the Government of Ontario, with respect to an Ontario university in financial crisis.

24. The Applicant, the Monitor and the Motion Judge all acknowledge that the Sealed Documents are not only relevant to this proceeding, but also so significant that they could affect or change stakeholder positions.

25. That the Sealed Documents could change stakeholder positions in regard to the restructuring has been argued to support restricting access to the Sealed Documents. To the contrary, however, the admitted significance of the documents to the restructuring provides a strong rationale for their disclosure. If important documents that would have an effect on the positions of the parties are not being disclosed, the mediation and other restructuring negotiations are being conducted on a plainly uneven playing field, in which the Applicant has a full and complete record while other stakeholders are provided, quite deliberately, with a partial record, specifically so that they cannot act on a fully informed rational basis.

26. The proposed appeal is *prima facie* meritorious. The Motion Judge erred in ordering that the Sealed Documents be kept sealed and confidential from the parties to the proceeding, as:

- a. the Supreme Court of Canada in *Sierra Club* required a balancing of a

number of competing interests, including litigants' interests in a full and fair proceeding and achieving a just result through open and accessible court proceedings, the right to free expression, and the requirement that justice be done and be seen to be done and the concomitant need for public scrutiny and open courts; however, the Motion Judge adverted to none of these considerations and focused only on the Applicant's assertion of an important commercial interest and on a speculative lack of availability of alternative measures to protect the commercial interest;

- b. *Sierra Club* was a case concerning public access to potentially confidential materials filed in a legal proceeding in which the litigants' access to the same confidential documents was uncontested; however, the Motion Judge applied the *Sierra Club* test to deny access to admittedly relevant documents to the litigants themselves without consideration of the controlling factors set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Sierra Club* and without consideration of the constitutionally protected interests of the litigants subject to the mediation;
- c. *Sierra Club* required that a claim of confidentiality in respect of a commercial interest be "well grounded in the evidence"; however, the Applicant's claims of confidentiality and damage by disclosure were made in argument and without any evidentiary support at all; and
- d. the purported damage that release of the Sealed Documents would cause was not damage to a self-standing commercial interest independent of this

proceeding, as in *Sierra Club*, but was a speculative damage to the outcome of the proceeding itself; however, it is premature to determine the preferred outcome of this CCAA process prior to a Plan of Arrangement and, under the CCAA, it is for the Applicant's creditors and stakeholders, and not the Motion Judge or the Monitor, to determine the direction and nature of the restructuring appropriate to this publicly-funded university serving the communities of Northern Ontario;

- e. the claimed basis for restricting access by some stakeholders to the Sealed Documents – that fully informed stakeholders may change their positions in a manner not considered desirable by the Applicant if they were provided with the Sealed Documents – is offensive to basic precepts of fair civil procedures, fair process, accessible Court proceedings, open public scrutiny, free expression and, in the context of a CCAA proceeding, serves to undermine what should be a transparent procedure conducted amongst parties with a full understanding of the issues.

27. The proposed appeal will not unduly hinder the progress of the CCAA proceeding. On the contrary, as long as the Sealed Documents remain confidential, the possibility of a successful restructuring is hindered as a key piece of information is being withheld from the relevant stakeholders.

Statutory Grounds

- a. Rules 1.04, 1.05, 61.03 and 61.03.1 of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

- b. Sections 2, 6, 11, 13 and 14 of the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* R.S.C. 1985, c. C-36.
- c. Such further and other grounds as the lawyers may advise.

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE will be used in support of the motion:

- 1. Orders and endorsement of the court made in this CCAA proceeding;
- 2. The Affidavit of Robert Haché, sworn January 30, 2021;
- 3. The Appointment of Mediator Order dated February 5, 2021; and
- 4. Such further and other evidence as counsel may advise and as this Honourable Court may permit.

March 15, 2021



Miriam Martin
Counsel for the Respondent,
Canadian Union of Public Employees

TO: SEE ATTACHED SERVICE LIST

SERVICE LIST

THORNTON GROUT FINNIGAN LLP 100 Wellington St. West, Suite 3200 TD West Tower, Toronto-Dominion Centre Toronto, ON M5K 1K7 D.J. Miller Tel: 416-304-0559 Email: djmiller@tgf.ca Mitchell W. Grossell Tel: 416-304-7978 Email: mgrossell@tgf.ca Andrew Hanrahan Tel: 416-304-7974 Email: ahanrahan@tgf.ca Derek Harland Tel: 416-304-1127 Email: dkharland@tgf.ca Lawyers for Laurentian University of Sudbury (Applicant) / Respondent on Motion	ERNST & YOUNG INC. 100 Adelaide Street West EY Tower Toronto, ON M5H 0B3 Sharon Hamilton Tel: 416-943-2153 Email: sharon.s.hamilton@ca.ey.com Michael Nathaniel Tel: 416-932-5837 Email: michael.nathaniel@ca.ey.com Lawyers for the Monitor/Respondent on Motion
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STIKEMAN ELLIOTT LLP 5300 Commerce Court West 199 Bay Street Toronto, ON M5L 1B9 Ashley Taylor Tel: 416-869-5236 Email: ataylor@stikeman.com Elizabeth Pillon Tel: 416-869-5623 Email: lpillon@stikeman.com Ben Muller Tel: 416-869-5543 Email: bmuller@stikeman.com Lawyers for the Monitor	LENCZNER SLAGHT ROYCE SMITH GRIFFIN LLP 130 Adelaide Street West, Suite 2600 Toronto, ON M5H 3P5 Peter J. Osborne Tel: 416-865-3094 Email: posborne@litigate.com David Salter Tel: 416-649-1818 Email: dsalter@litigate.com Lawyers for the Board of Governors of Laurentian University of Sudbury
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL McMurtry-Scott Building 720 Bay Street, 11th floor Toronto, ON M7A 2S9 Michelle Pottruff Tel: 416-528-1235 Email: michelle.pottruff@ontario.ca Lawyer for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities	HICKS MORLEY LLP 77 King Street West 39th Floor Toronto, ON M5K 1K8 Michael J. Kennedy Tel: 416-864-7305 Email: michael-kennedy@hicksmorley.com Labour Counsel to the Applicant

FOGLER, RUBINOFF LLP 77 King Street West, Suite 3000 Toronto, ON M5K 1G8 Martin R. Kaplan Tel: 416-941-8822 Email: mkaplan@foglers.com Vern W. DaRe Tel: 416-941-8842 Email: vdare@foglers.com Joseph Fried Tel: 416-941-8836 Email: jfried@foglers.com Lawyers for the DIP Lender, Firm Capital Mortgage Fund Inc.	BLAKE, CASSELS & GRAYDON LLP 199 Bay Street Suite 4000, Commerce Court West Toronto, ON M5L 1A9 Pamela L.J. Huff Tel: 416-863-2958 Email: pamela.huff@blakes.com Aryo Shalviri Tel: 416-863-2962 Email: aryo.shalviri@blakes.com Jules Monteyne Tel: 416-863-5256 Email: jules.monteyne@blakes.com Lawyers for Royal Bank of Canada
FASKEN MARTINEAU DUMOULIN LLP Bay-Adelaide Centre 333 Bay Street, Suite 2400 P.O. Box 20 Toronto, ON M5H 2T6 Stuart Brotman Tel: 416-865-5419 Email: sbrotman@fasken.com Dylan Chochla Tel: 416-868-3425 Email: dchochla@fasken.com Mitch Stephenson Tel: 416-868-3502 Email: mstephenson@fasken.com Lawyers for Toronto-Dominion Bank	CHAITONS LLP 5000 Yonge Street, 10th Floor Toronto, ON M2N 7E9 George Benchetrit Tel: 416-218-1141 Email: george@chaitons.com Gary Feldman Tel: 416-218-1130 Email: gary@chaitons.com Lawyers for Bank of Montreal

CAISSE POPULAIRE VOYAGEURS INC. 40 Elm Street, Unit 166 Sudbury, ON P3C 1S8 Richard Dupuis, Director Tel: 705-525-2373 Email: richard.u.dupuis@desjardins.com	ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA Department of Justice Ontario Regional Office The Exchange Tower 130 King Street West Suite 3400, Box 36 Toronto, ON M5X 1K6 Diane Winters Tel: 647-256-7459 Email: diane.winters@justice.gc.ca Lawyer for Canada Revenue Agency including Charities Directorate
RYDER WRIGHT BLAIR & HOLMES LLP 333 Adelaide Street West, 3rd Floor Toronto, ON M5V 1R5 David Wright Tel: 416-340-9070 Ext. 237 Email: dwright@rwbh.ca Labour Counsel for Laurentian University Faculty Association (LUFA)	GOLDBLATT PARTNERS LLP 20 Dundas Street West, #1039 Toronto, ON M5G 2C2 Clio Godkewitsch Tel: 416-979-4059 Email: cgodkewitsch@goldblattpartners.com Insolvency Counsel for LUFA
	Susan Philpott Tel: 416-979-6417 Email: sphilpott@goldblattpartners.com Charles Sinclair Tel: 416-979-4234 Email: csinclair@goldblattpartners.com Insolvency Counsel for LUFA and lawyers for Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), Local 667

WRIGHT HENRY LLP 200 Wellington Street West, Suite 602 Toronto, ON M5V 3C7 Tracey Henry Tel: 416-306-8275 Email: thenry@wrighthenry.ca Michael D. Wright Tel: 416-306-8270 Email: mwright@wrighthenry.ca Brendan Scott Tel: 416-306-8277 Email: bscott@wrighthenry.ca Lawyers for Laurentian University Staff Union (LUSU)	MCMILLAN LLP Brookfield Place 181 Bay Street, Suite 4400 Toronto ON M5J 2T3 Tushara Weerasooriya Tel: 416-865-7890 Email: tushara.weerasooriya@mcmillan.ca Stephen Brown-Okruhlik Tel: 416-865-7043 Email: stephen.brown-okruhlik@mcmillan.ca Matthew DeAmorim Tel: 416-945-8012 Email: matthew.deamorim@mcmillan.ca Lawyers for St. Joseph's Health Centre of Sudbury and St. Joseph's Continuing Care Centre of Sudbury
	Wael Rostom Tel: 416-865-7790 Email: wael.rostom@mcmillan.ca Peter Giddens Tel: 416-307-4042 Email: peter.giddens@mcmillan.ca Guneev Bhinder Tel: 416-307-4067 Email: guneev.bhinder@mcmillan.ca Lawyers for Canada Foundation for Innovation

DELL FINANCIAL SERVICES CANADA LIMITED 155 Gordon Baker Road, Suite 501 North York, ON M2H 3N5 Gregory J. Segal, Legal Counsel Tel: 416-758-3316 Email: gregory_segal@ dell.com	KOSKIE MINSKY LLP 20 Queen Street West Suite 900, Box 52 Toronto, ON M5H 3R3 Murray Gold Tel: 416-595-2085 Email: mgold@kmlaw.ca James Harnum Tel: 416-542-6285 Email: jharnum@kmlaw.ca Lawyers for Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
	Andrew J. Hatnay Tel: 416-595-2083 Email: ahatnay@kmlaw.ca Sydney Edmonds Tel: 416-595-2260 Email: sedmonds@kmlaw.ca Lawyers for Thorneloe University
LENOVO FINANCIAL SERVICES 5035 South Service Road Burlington, ON L7R 4C8 Randy Poulton, Regional Leasing Manager Email: customerservice@lenovofs.ca	DAVIES WARD PHILLIPS & VINEBERG LLP 155 Wellington Street West 40th Floor Toronto, ON M5V 3J7 Natasha MacParland Tel: 416-863-5567 Email: nmacparland@dwpv.com Natalie Renner Tel: 416-367-7489 Email: nrenner@dwpv.com Lender Counsel to the Applicant

BORDEN LADNER GERVAIS LLP Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower 22 Adelaide Street West, Suite 3400 Toronto, ON M5H 4E3 Alex MacFarlane Tel: 416-367-6305 Email: amacfarlane@blg.com Lydia Wakulowsky Tel: 416-367-6207 Email: lwakulowsky@blg.com Lawyers for Northern Ontario School of Medicine	DENTONS CANADA LLP 77 King Street West, Suite 400 Toronto-Dominion Centre Toronto, ON M5K 0A1 Kenneth Kraft Tel: 416-863-4374 Email: kenneth.kraft@dentons.com Daniel Loberto Tel: 416-863-4760 Email: daniel.loberto@dentons.com Lawyers for Queen's University
James W. MacLellan Tel: 416-367-6592 Email: jmaclellan@blg.com Lawyer for Zurich Insurance Company Ltd.	

SHEPPARD & CLAUDE 202-1173 Cyrville Road Ottawa, ON K1J 7S6 André Claude Tel: 613-748-3333 Email: aclaude@sheppardclaud.ca Lawyer for University of Sudbury	CASSELS BROCK & BLACKWELL LLP 2100 Scotia Plaza 40 King Street West Toronto, ON M5H 3C2 Joseph Bellissimo Tel: 416-860-6572 Email: jbello@casells.com Jed Blackburn Tel: 416-860-6725 Email: jblackburn@casells.com Natalie Levine Tel: 416-860-6568 Email: nlevine@casells.com Sophie Moher Tel: 416-860-2903 Email: smoher@casells.com Lawyers for Huntington University
SUDBURY NEUTRINO OBSERVATORY LABORATORY Creighton Mine #9 1039 Regional Road 24 Lively, ON P3Y 1N2 Tel: (705) 692-7000 Nigel Smith, Executive Director Email: n.j.t.smith@snolab.ca	MINING INNOVATION REHABILITATION AND APPLIED RESEARCH CORPORATION Cliff Fielding Building, Room CF203 935 Ramsey Lake Road Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6 Tel: (705) 675-1151 Jennifer Abols, President Email: jabols@mirarco.org

CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN MINING INNOVATION 105 Elm Street, Unit A Sudbury, ON P3C 1T3 Tel: (705) 673-6568 Douglas Morrison, President Email: dmorrison@cemi.ca	BAKER & COMPANY 130 Adelaide Street West, Suite 3300 Toronto, ON M5H 3P5 Mark G. Baker Tel: 416-777-0100 Email: mbaker@bakerlawyers.com Andriy Luzhetskyy Tel: 416-777-0100 Email: aluzhetskyy@bakerlawyers.com Lawyers for Laurentian University Students' General Association
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO 2 Bloor Street East, Suite 1400 Toronto, ON M4W 1A8 Linda Hsiao-Chia Chen, Legal Counsel Tel: 416-326-3333 Email: linda.chen@ipc.on.ca	CORFAB COMPANY LIMITED 1360 Kelly Lake Road Sudbury, ON P3E 5P4 John Corsi, President Tel: 705-522-9096 Email: jcorsi@jcorsi.com
F&M CAULKING LIMITED 10 Kenmore Avenue, Unit #1 Stoney Creek, ON L8E 5N1 Jeffrey Lucato, Manager Tel: 905-643-8085 Email: jlucato@fmcl.ca	ACCEL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS LIMITED 100 Haist Avenue Woodbridge, ON L4L 5V4 George Caufin, President Tel: 905-850-8668 Email: georgecaufin@accelectric.com

BIANCHI PRESTA LLP 9100 Jane Street Building A, 3rd Floor Vaughan, ON L4K 0A4 Domenic Presta Tel: 905-738-1078 Ext. 2223 Email: dpresta@bianchipresta.com Lawyer for 1033803 Ontario Inc. o/a Forma-Con Construction and Forma Finishing and B.B.M. Excavation Company Limited	PARISÉ LAW OFFICE 58 Lisgar Street, Suite 200 Sudbury, ON P3E 3L7 Réjean Parisé Tel: 705-674-4042 Email: pariselaw@unitz.ca Lawyer for Interpaving Ltd.
DEDIANA, ELORANTA & LONGSTREET 219 Pine Street Sudbury, ON P3C 1X4 James Longstreet Tel: 705-674-4289 Email: spisani@bellnet.ca Lawyer for Sandro Steel Fabrication Ltd.	
MINDEN GROSS LLP 2200-145 King Street West Toronto, ON M5H 4G2 Rachel Moses Tel: 416-369-4137 Email: rmoses@mindengross.com Lawyer for Royal Trust Corporation of Canada	MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE 777 Bay Street, 5th Floor Toronto, ON M5G 2C8 Jennifer Bell, Chief of Staff Tel: 416-327-4412 Email: jennifer.bell3@ontario.ca

SILVIA LAROCQUE 905 Cambrian Heights, Unit 36 Sudbury, ON P3C5R5 Tel: 705-675-1151 ext. 3804 Email: kennethlarocque@hotmail.com	ZAYO CANADA INC. 625, Rue Belmont Montreal, QC H3B 2M1 Abbi Dayton, General Counsel Tel: 416-644-6705 Email: abigail.dayton@zayo.com
MINISTRY OF FINANCE 777 Bay Street College Park 11 th Floor Toronto, ON M5G 2C8 Anthony R. Golding, Senior Counsel Tel: 416-938-5069 Email: anthony.golding@ontario.ca	CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES RECIPROCAL INSURANCE EXCHANGE 5500 North Service Road #901 Burlington, ON L7L 6W6 Stewart Roberts, Claims Manager Email: sroberts@curie.org Jillian Jarvis, Claims Examiner Email: jjarvis@curie.org
NATURAL SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA 350 Albert Street, 16 th Floor Ottawa, ON K1A 1H5 Dr. Danika Goosney, Vice-President Email: danika.goosney@nserc-crsng.gc.ca	SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL 350 Albert Street P.O. Box 1610 Ottawa, ON K1P 6G4 Martha Crago, Vice-President Email: martha.crago@mcgill.ca
CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH 160 Elgin Street, 10 th Floor Address Locator 4809A Ottawa, ON K1A 0W9 Anita Ploj, Senior Corporate Advisor Email: anita.ploj@cihr-irsc.gc.ca	CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION 55 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1100 Ottawa, ON K1P 6L5 Isabelle Henrie, Vice President Tel: 613-943-1123 Email: isabelle.henrie@innovation.ca

MCKENZIE LAKE LAWYERS 140 Fullarton Street Suite 1800 London, ON N6A 5P2 Michael J. Peerless Tel: 519-667-2644 Email: mike.peerless@mckenzielake.com Emily Assini Tel: 519-672-5666 Ext. 7359 Email: emily.assini@mckenzielake.com Class Counsel for Representative Plaintiff	NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT CANADA LLP 222 Bay Street, Suit 3000 Toronto, ON M5K 1E7 Evan Cobb Tel: 416-216-1929 Email: evan.cobb@nortonrosefulbright.com Lawyer for Ernst & Young Inc. in its capacity as Monitor of Bondfield Construction Company Limited
ALLAN SNELLING LLP 340 March Road, Suite 600 Ottawa, ON K2K 2E4 David Contant Tel: 613-270-8600 Email: dcontant@compellingcounsel.com Lawyer for Cy Rheault Construction Limited	HUGH CONNELLY LAW 92 CentrepoinTE Drive Nepean, ON K2G 6B1 Hugh Connelly Tel: 613-723-7007 Email: info@hughconnellylaw.com Lawyer for Lindsay Lotan
HAMEED LAW 43 Florence Street Ottawa, ON K2P 0W6 Yavar Hameed Tel: 613-232-2688 Email: yhameed@hameedlaw.ca Lawyer for Issyakha Camara	DEVRY SMITH FRANK LLP 95 Barber Greene Road, Suite 100 Toronto, ON M5C 3E9 David Schell Tel: 416-446-5096 Email: david.schell@devrylaw.ca Lawyer for Zhiju Zhu

DIAMOND AND DIAMOND LAWYERS 255 Consumers Road, 5th Floor Toronto, ON M2J 1R4 Simon Diamond Tel: 1-800-567-4878 Ext. 207 Email: simon@diamondlaw.ca Lawyer for Petra Spencer	LAMER STICKLAND LLP 101 Worthington Street East North Bay, ON P1B 8G6 Geoffrey Larmer Tel: 705-478-8100 Email: larmer@larmerstickland.com Lawyer for Nina Kucheran and Mary-Catherine Kucheran
CITY OF GREATER SUDBURY P.O. Box 5000, Station ‘A’ 200 Brady Street Sudbury, ON P3A 5P3 Carolyn A. Dawe, Assistant City Solicitor Tel: 705-674-4455 Ext. 4545 Email: carolyn.dawe@greatersudbury.ca	MARSH CANADA LIMITED 120 Bremner Boulevard, Suite 800 Toronto, ON M5J 0A8 Murray Davidson, Senior Vice-President Tel: 416-349-4354 Email: murray.s.davidson@marsh.com
MARKEL CANADA LIMITED 200 Wellington Street West, Suite 400 Toronto, ON M5V 3C7 Maeve O’Malley, Senior Claims Specialist Tel: 416-601-2477 Email: maeve.omalley@markel.com	DOOLEY LUCENTI LLP 10 Checkley Street Barrie, ON L4N 1W1 Scott R. Fairley Tel: 705-792-7963 Email: sfairley@dllaw.ca Lawyer for Cladco Limited

GOODMANS LLP Bay Adelaide Centre 333 Bay Street, Suite 3400 Toronto, ON M5H 2S7 Gale Rubenstein Tel: 416-597-4148 Email: grubenstein@goodmans.ca Bradley Wiffen Tel: 416-597-4208 Email: bwiffen@goodmans.ca Michael Wilson Tel: 416-597-4130 Email: mwilson@goodmans.ca Lawyers for Financial Services Regulatory Authority	MCKENZIE LAKE LAWYERS LLP 140 Fullarton Street, Suite 1800 London, ON N6A 5P2 Michael J. Peerless Tel: 519-667-2644 Email: mike.peerless@mckenzielake.com Matthew D. Baer Tel: 519-667-2646 Email: matt.baer@mckenzielake.com Emily Assini Tel: 519-672-5666 Email: emily.assini@mckenzielake.com Lawyers for Sarah Connell
ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR ONTARIO Crown Law Office - Civil 720 Bay Street, 8th Floor Toronto, ON M7A 2S9 Shahana Kar Tel: 416-571-2100 Email: shahana.kar@ontario.ca Jonathan Sydor Tel: 416-689-8279 Email: jonathan.sydor@ontario.ca Lawyer for Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario	KSV RESTRUCTURING INC. 150 King Street West, Suite 2308 Toronto, ON M5H 1J9 David Sieradzki Tel: 416-428-7211 Email: dsieradzki@ksvadvisory.com Bobby Kofman Tel: 416-282-6228 Email: bkofman@ksvadvisory.com Financial advisors for LUFA

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS 2705, promenade Queensview Drive Ottawa, ON K2B 8K2 Sarah Godwin Tel: 613-820-2270 Email: godwin@caut.ca	THORNELOE UNIVERSITY 935 Ramsey Lake Road Sudbury, ON P3E 2C6 Tel: (705) 673-1730 Dr. John Gibaut, President Email: president@thorneloe.ca
GOWLING WLG (CANADA) LLP 1 First Canadian Place 100 King Street West, Suite 1600 Toronto, ON M5X 1G5 Virginie Gauthier Tel: 416-844-5391 Email: virginie.gauthier@gowlingwlg.com Thomas Gertner Tel: 416-369-4618 Email: thomas.gertner@gowlingwlg.com Lawyers for Lakehead University	XEROX CANADA LTD. 20 York Mills Road, Suite 500 Toronto, ON M2P 2C2 Stephanie Grace, Senior Legal Counsel Tel: 416-250-3917 Email: stephanie.grace@xerox.com
POWER LAW LLP 130 Albert Street, #1103 Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4 Francis Poulin Tel: 613-702-5569 Email: fpoulin@powerlaw.ca Charlotte Servant-L'Heureux Tel: N/A Email: cservantlheureux@powerlaw.ca Lawyers for the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario / Respondent on Motion	AIRD & BERLIS LLP Brookfield Place 181 Bay Street, Suite 1800 Toronto, Ontario M5J 2T9 Steven L. Graff Tel: 416-865-7726 Email: sgraff@airdberlis.com Jonathan Yantzi Tel: 416-865-4733 Email: jyantzi@airdberlis.com Lawyers for the David Harquail and the Harquail family, The Goodman Family Foundation, Rob McEwen and The Bharti Charitable Foundation / Respondent on Motion

FARBER GROUP INC.

150 York Street, Suite 1600
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3S5

Allan Nackan Tel: 416-496-3732 Email:
anackan@farber.com

Hylton Levy Tel: 416-496-3070 Email:
hlevy@farbergroup.com

Financial advisors for Thorneloe University /
Respondents on Motion

**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 LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY OF SUDBURY**

Court of Appeal File No. M52287

Court File No. CV-21-656040-00CL

COURT OF APPEAL FOR ONTARIO

Proceeding commenced at Toronto

**NOTICE OF MOTION FOR
LEAVE TO APPEAL**

Miriam Martin LS#: 67555T

1378 Triole St
Ottawa, Ontario K1B 3M4
Tel: 613-237-0115
Fax: 613-237-7936
Email: mmartin@cupe.ca

Counsel to the Moving Party,
Canadian Union of Public Employees