

THE PRIVATE
COMPETITION
ENFORCEMENT
REVIEW

SIXTEENTH EDITION

Editors

Ilene Knable Gotts and Kevin S Schwartz

THE LAWREVIEWS

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This article was first published in February 2023
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Published in the United Kingdom
by Law Business Research Ltd
Holborn Gate, 330 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7QT, UK
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www.thelawreviews.co.uk

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ISBN 978-1-80449-154-6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publisher acknowledges and thanks the following for their assistance throughout the preparation of this book:

ACTECON

AFFLECK GREENE MCMURTRY LLP

ARNECKE SIBETH DABELSTEIN

CADWALADER, WICKERSHAM & TAFT, LLP

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CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	v
<i>Ilene Knable Gotts and Kevin S Schwartz</i>	
Chapter 1 ARGENTINA.....	1
<i>Miguel del Pino and Santiago del Río</i>	
Chapter 2 AUSTRALIA.....	12
<i>Tom Bridges</i>	
Chapter 3 AUSTRIA.....	22
<i>Bernt Elsner, Dieter Zandler and Vanessa Horacek</i>	
Chapter 4 BELGIUM.....	33
<i>Bruno Lebrun, Candice Lecharlier and Wafa Lachguer</i>	
Chapter 5 CANADA.....	50
<i>David Vaillancourt and Michael Binetti</i>	
Chapter 6 CHINA.....	66
<i>Fay Zhou, Xi Liao and Bowen Wang</i>	
Chapter 7 COLOMBIA.....	80
<i>Felipe Serrano and Juan Felipe Traber</i>	
Chapter 8 GERMANY.....	91
<i>Sebastian Jungermann</i>	
Chapter 9 INDIA.....	106
<i>Charanya Lakshmikumaran and Neelambara Sandeepan</i>	
Chapter 10 ISRAEL.....	120
<i>Eytan Epstein, Mazor Matzkevich and Inbal Rosenblum Brand</i>	

Contents

Chapter 11	JAPAN.....	150
	<i>Koki Yanagisawa</i>	
Chapter 12	POLAND.....	160
	<i>Natalia Mikołajczyk and Wojciech Podlasin</i>	
Chapter 13	TURKEY.....	171
	<i>Fevzi Toksoy, Bahadır Balkı, Ertuğrul Can Canbolat and Safa Uygur</i>	
Chapter 14	UNITED KINGDOM.....	182
	<i>Julian Stait, William Charles, Cormac Alexander, Emma Hogwood and Mark Padley</i>	
Chapter 15	UNITED STATES.....	198
	<i>Philip J Iovieno, Kristen J McAhren and Daniel Lumer</i>	
	ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....	217
	CONTRIBUTORS' CONTACT DETAILS.....	229

PREFACE

Private competition litigation can be an important complement to public enforcement in the achievement of compliance with competition laws. Antitrust litigation has been a key component of the antitrust regime for decades in the United States. The US litigation system is highly developed, using extensive discovery, pleadings and motions, use of experts and, in a small number of matters, trials, to resolve the rights of the parties. The process imposes high litigation costs (in terms of both time and money) on all participants but promises great rewards for prevailing plaintiffs. The usual rule that each party bears its own attorneys' fees is amended for private antitrust cases such that a prevailing plaintiff is entitled to its fees as well as treble damages. The costs and potential rewards to plaintiffs create an environment in which a large percentage of cases settle on the eve of trial. Arbitration and mediation are still rare, but not unheard of, in antitrust disputes. Congress and the US Supreme Court have attempted to curtail some of the more frivolous litigation and class actions by adopting tougher standards and ensuring that follow-on litigation exposure does not discourage wrongdoers from seeking amnesty. Although these initiatives may, on the margin, decrease the volume of private antitrust litigation in the United States, the environment remains ripe for high levels of litigation activity, particularly involving intellectual property rights, cartels and labour.

Until the past decade or so, the United States was one of the few outliers in providing an antitrust regime that encouraged private enforcement of the antitrust laws. Only Australia had been more receptive than the United States to suits being filed by a broad range of plaintiffs – including class action representatives and indirect purchasers – and to increased access for litigants to information and materials submitted to the antitrust authorities in a cartel investigation. Another example, albeit more limited, is Brazil, where there has been private litigation involving non-compete clauses since the beginning of the twentieth century, and monopoly or market closure claims since the 1950s. In the past decade or so, other regimes have begun to provide for private competition litigation in their courts, typically, as discussed below, only after (i.e., as a 'follow on' to) public enforcement. In some jurisdictions (e.g., Argentina, Lithuania, Mexico, Romania, Switzerland and Venezuela), however, private actions remain very rare, or non-existent (such as in Nigeria), and there is little, if any, precedent establishing the basis for compensatory damages or discovery, much less for arbitration or mediation. In addition, other jurisdictions (e.g., Switzerland) still have very rigid requirements for standing, which limit the types of cases that can be initiated.

The tide has clearly turned, however, with important legislation either recently having been adopted or currently pending in many jurisdictions throughout the world to provide a greater role for private enforcement. In Australia, for example, the government has undertaken a comprehensive review and has implemented significant changes to its private

enforcement law. The most significant developments are in Europe with the EU Member States implementing the EU's damages directive (Directive 2014/104/EU on certain rules governing actions for damages under national law for infringements of the competition law provisions of the Member States and of the European Union) into their national laws. The most notable areas standardised in most EU jurisdictions involve access to the competition authority's file, the tolling of the statute of limitations period and privilege. Member States continue to differ on issues relating to the evidentiary effect of an EU judgment and whether fines should be factored into damages calculations. Even without the damages directive, many EU Member States have increased their private antitrust enforcement rights.

The development of case law in jurisdictions also affects the number of private enforcement cases that are brought. In China, for instance, the number of published decisions has increased and the use of private litigation is growing rapidly, particularly in cutting-edge industries such as telecommunications, the internet and standard essential patents. By contrast, in Japan, private antitrust matters have remained rare. Moreover, in many other jurisdictions, there remain very limited litigated cases. For example, a growing number of private antitrust class actions have commenced in Canada but none has proceeded to a trial on the merits.

The English and German courts are emerging as major venues for private enforcement actions. The Netherlands has also become a preferred jurisdiction for commencing private competition claims. Collective actions are now recognised in countries such as Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Italy has also approved legislation allowing for collective damages actions and providing standing to sue to representative consumers and consumer associations, and France and England have taken steps to facilitate collective action or class action legislation. In addition, in France, third-party funding of class actions is permissible and becoming more common. In China, consumer associations are likely to become more active in the future in bringing actions to serve the public interest.

There will continue to be differences between jurisdictions regarding whether claimants must opt out of collective redress proposals to have their claims survive a settlement (as in the United Kingdom), or instead must opt in to share in the settlement benefits. Even in the absence of class action procedures, the trend in Europe is towards the creation and use of consumer collective redress mechanisms. For instance, the Netherlands permits claim vehicles to aggregate into one court case the claims of multiple parties. Similarly, in one recent case in Austria, several parties filed a claim by assigning it to a collective plaintiff. Some jurisdictions have not had any private damages awarded in antitrust cases to date, but changes to their competition legislation could favourably affect the bringing of private antitrust litigation seeking damages. Most jurisdictions impose a limitation period for bringing actions that commences only when the plaintiff knows of the wrongdoing and its participants; a few, however, apply shorter, more rigid time frames without a tolling period for the commencement of damages or injunctive litigation. Some jurisdictions base the statute of limitations on the point at which a final determination of the competition authorities is rendered (e.g., India, Romania, South Africa and Austria) or from when the agency investigation commences (e.g., Hungary). In other jurisdictions, such as Australia, it is not as clear when the statutory period will be tolled. In a few jurisdictions, it is only after the competition authority acts that a private action will be decided by the court. Of course, it will take time to determine the effect (if any) of Brexit in the United Kingdom, a jurisdiction that has been one of the most active and accessible global forums for private enforcement.

The greatest impetus for private competition cases is the follow-up litigation potential after the competition authority has discovered – and challenged – cartel activity. In India, for instance, as the Competition Commission becomes more active in enforcement investigations involving e-commerce and other high-technology areas, the groundwork is being laid for future private antitrust cases. The interface between leniency programmes (and cartel investigations) and private litigation is still evolving in many jurisdictions, and in some it remains unclear what weight to give competition agency decisions in follow-on private litigation cases and whether documents in the hands of the competition agency are discoverable (as in Sweden, for example). Some jurisdictions seek to provide a strong incentive for use of their leniency programmes by providing participants with full immunity from private damages claims. In contrast, other jurisdictions, such as the Netherlands, do not bestow any benefit or immunity in a follow-on damages action. These issues are unlikely to be completely resolved in many jurisdictions in the near term.

There is one point on which there is almost universal agreement among jurisdictions: almost all have adopted an extraterritorial approach premised on effects within their borders. Canadian courts may also decline jurisdiction for a foreign defendant based on the doctrine of *forum non conveniens* as well as comity considerations. A few jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, however, are prepared to allow claims in their jurisdictions when there is a relatively limited connection, such as when only one of a large number of defendants is located there. By contrast, in South Africa, the courts will also consider spillover effects from antitrust cartel conduct as providing a sufficient jurisdictional basis.

The litigation system in each jurisdiction reflects, to some extent, the respective perceptions of what private rights should protect. Most jurisdictions view private antitrust rights as an extension of tort law (e.g., Austria, Canada, France, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea and the United Kingdom), with liability arising for participants who negligently or knowingly engage in conduct that injures another party. Turkey, while allocating liability on the basis of tort law, will award treble damages as a punitive sanction in certain circumstances. Some jurisdictions treat antitrust concerns as a defence for breaching a contract (e.g., Norway and the Netherlands); others (e.g., Australia) value the deterrent aspect of private actions to augment public enforcement, with some (such as Russia) focusing on the potential for unjust enrichment by the defendant. In Brazil, there is a mechanism by which a court can assess a fine to be paid by the defendant to the Fund for the Defence of Collective Rights if the court determines that the amount claimed as damages is too low compared with the estimated size and gravity of the antitrust violation. Still others are concerned that private antitrust litigation might thwart public enforcement and may require what is, in essence, consent of the regulators before allowing the litigation or permitting the enforcement officials to participate in a case (e.g., in Brazil, as well as in Germany, where the competition authorities may act as *amicus curiae*).

Some jurisdictions (e.g., Chile, India, Turkey and Venezuela) believe that private litigation should be available only to victims of conduct that the antitrust authorities have already penalised. Interestingly, no other jurisdiction has chosen to replicate the United States' system of routinely awarding treble damages for competition claims; instead, the overwhelming majority of jurisdictions take the position that damages awards should be compensatory rather than punitive (Canada, however, does recognise the potential for punitive damages for common law conspiracy and tort claims, as does Turkey). In Venezuela, however, the plaintiff can obtain unforeseen damages if the defendant has engaged in gross negligence or wilful misconduct, and in Israel, a court recently recognised the right to obtain

additional damages on the basis of unjust enrichment law. Finally, in almost all jurisdictions, the prevailing party is compensated for some or all of its costs by the losing party, discouraging frivolous litigation.

Cultural views also clearly affect litigation models. Outside the European Union and North America, the availability of group or class actions varies extensively. A growing minority of jurisdictions embrace the use of class actions, particularly following a cartel ruling by the competition authority (e.g., Israel). Some jurisdictions (e.g., Turkey) permit group actions by associations and other legal entities for injunctive (rather than damages) relief. Jurisdictions such as Germany and South Korea generally do not permit representative or class actions, but instead have as a founding principle the use of courts for pursuing individual claims. In some jurisdictions (e.g., China, South Korea and Switzerland), several claimants may lodge a collective suit against the same defendant if the claims are based on similar facts or a similar legal basis, or even permit courts to join similar lawsuits (e.g., Romania and Switzerland). In Japan, class actions were not available except to organisations formed to represent consumer members; however, a new class action law came into effect in 2016. In contrast, in Switzerland, consumers and consumer organisations do not currently have legal standing and cannot seek recompense for damage they have incurred as a result of an infringement of the Competition Act. In Poland, only entrepreneurs, not individuals, have standing to bring claims under the Unfair Competition Act, but the Group Proceedings Act is available if no administrative procedure has been undertaken concerning the same case.

Jurisdictions that are receptive to arbitration and mediation as an alternative to litigation (e.g., Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, South Korea, Spain and Switzerland) also encourage alternative dispute mechanisms in private antitrust matters. Some courts prefer the use of experts and statements to discovery (e.g., in Chile; in France, where the appointment of independent experts is common; in Japan, which does not have mandatory production or discovery except in narrowly prescribed circumstances; and in Germany, which even allows the use of statements in lieu of documents). In South Korea, economic experts are mainly used for assessment of damages rather than to establish violations. The Norwegian Civil Procedure Act allows for the appointment of expert judges and advisory opinions of the EFTA Court. Other jurisdictions believe that discovery is necessary to reach the correct outcome (e.g., Canada, which provides for broad discovery; and Israel, which believes that 'laying your cards on the table' and broad discovery are important).

Views towards protecting certain documents and information on privilege grounds also cut consistently across antitrust and non-antitrust grounds (e.g., no attorney–client, attorney work-product or joint work-product privileges exist in Japan; pre-existing documents are not protected in Portugal; there is limited recognition of privilege in Germany and Turkey; and extensive legal advice, litigation and common interest privilege exist in the United Kingdom and Norway), with the exception that some jurisdictions have left open the possibility of the privilege being preserved for otherwise covered materials submitted to the antitrust authorities in cartel investigations. Interestingly, Portugal, which expressly recognises legal privilege for both external and in-house counsel, nonetheless provides for broad access to documents by the Portuguese Competition Authority.

Some jurisdictions view settlement as a private matter (e.g., France, Japan and the Netherlands); others view it as subject to judicial intervention (e.g., Israel and Switzerland). The culture in some jurisdictions, such as Germany, so strongly favours settlement that judges

will require parties to attend hearings and even propose settlement terms. Under Canadian law, there are consequences for failure to accept a reasonable offer to settle and, in some jurisdictions, a pretrial settlement conference is mandatory.

As suggested above, private antitrust litigation is largely a work in progress in many parts of the world. Change occurs slowly in some jurisdictions, but clearly the direction is favourable to the recognition that private antitrust enforcement has a role to play. Many of the issues raised in this book, such as the pass-on defence and the standing of indirect purchasers, remain unresolved by the courts in many countries, and our authors have provided their views regarding how these issues are likely to be clarified. Also unresolved in some jurisdictions is the availability of information obtained by the competition authorities during a cartel investigation, from both a leniency recipient and a party convicted of the offence. Other issues, such as privilege, are subject to change through both proposed legislative changes and court determinations. The one constant across almost all jurisdictions is the upward trend in cartel enforcement activity, which is likely to be a continuous source for private litigation in the future.

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Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz

New York

February 2023

CANADA

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I OVERVIEW OF RECENT PRIVATE ANTITRUST LITIGATION ACTIVITY

i Jurisdictional challenge fails

The British Columbia Supreme Court rejected a jurisdictional challenge by foreign-domiciled defendants in *Cheung v. NHK Spring Co.*,² a 2022 price-fixing certification decision concerning the global market for hard drive suspension assemblies.

Hard drive suspension assemblies are small, inexpensive subcomponents of hard drives, and are contained in a wide variety of consumer electronics. The defendants in *Cheung* were based in Japan and controlled more than 95 per cent of the global market. The *Cheung* class action followed price-fixing guilty pleas in various jurisdictions across the world.

The defendants in *Cheung* challenged the British Columbia Supreme Court's jurisdiction because the parties had no presence in Canada, no direct sales in Canada (all hard drive manufacture direct purchasers were located overseas), there was no conspiracy in Canada, and there was no agreement to allocate the Canadian market. The Court rejected the defendants' arguments, holding that a conspiracy happens in British Columbia so long as a conspiracy causes damage in British Columbia. As a result, there was a 'real and substantial connection' between the alleged wrongdoing and the province of British Columbia, and the defendants' jurisdictional challenge failed.

The Court went on to certify the class action against the defendants. In so doing, the Court rejected the defendants' argument that the class claim was bound to fail because the criminal price-fixing provisions of the Competition Act as a matter of law cannot apply to a totally foreign alleged conspiracy.

ii Dual distribution agreement challenged

In the 2022 decision of *Williams v. Audible Inc.*,³ the British Columbia Supreme Court denied a summary judgment motion brought by the defendant, Apple Inc, in an antitrust conspiracy class action involving a dual distribution agreement for audiobooks between Apple and Audible Inc.

During the class period, Apple had an agreement with Audible pursuant to which Audible would sell its audiobooks through Apple's iTunes store, and it was prohibited from selling audiobooks through any other online channel that also sold music or music and video content. Audible was permitted to sell audiobooks on its own website.

1 David Vaillancourt and Michael Binetti are partners at Affleck Greene McMurtry LLP.

2 [2022] B.C.J. No. 1891 (SC).

3 [2022] B.C.J. No. 889 (SC).

Class counsel portrayed the agreement between Apple and Audible as being a criminal agreement between horizontal audiobook-selling competitors, while the defendants portrayed the agreement as being a pro-competitive vertical supply agreement between an audiobook supplier (who also happened to be an audiobook vendor) and an audiobook vendor. The Court held that the factual issue of whether the agreement was an illegal horizontal agreement or a pro-competitive vertical agreement could not be resolved on the conflicting summary judgment motion record and, therefore, the summary judgment motion was dismissed.

In spite of the victory on the summary judgment motion, class counsel failed on their simultaneous motion for certification. The certification motion was bound to fail because its economic expert, who provided evidence of a methodology to demonstrate harm and prove damages, was geared at an earlier abandoned theory of class counsel's case. Class counsel's request for an adjournment to put forward new evidence was denied and the motion to certify was dismissed.

iii Amendments to the Competition Act

The federal government implemented some targeted changes to the Competition Act in 2022, which touched on a few discrete areas of the Act, including creating a private right of action for abuse of dominance. Prior to this amendment, abuse of dominance could only be pursued by the Commissioner of Competition. In addition to these targeted changes, the government commenced a wholesale and in-depth review of the entire Act, which is expected to lead to more consequential amendments to the Act in the coming years.

II GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR PRIVATE ANTITRUST ENFORCEMENT

Like most competition regimes, Canada's Competition Act⁴ deals with three broad areas: coordinated conduct among competitors, unilateral conduct by firms with market power and mergers. Somewhat unusually, the Competition Act also deals with a variety of marketing practices, such as false advertising.

The Competition Act applies a mixture of criminal and civil (administrative) approaches to the areas it covers, as well as both public and private remedies.

Private actions for damages are only available for breaches of the Competition Act's criminal provisions. The key criminal provisions are conspiracies to fix prices, allocate markets or reduce output,⁵ bid rigging⁶ and false advertising.⁷

Importantly, unilateral conduct by firms with market power, such as abuse of dominance,⁸ exclusive dealing,⁹ tied selling¹⁰ and refusal to deal,¹¹ are not subject to criminal sanction. In fact, they are not even prohibited unless they cause a substantial lessening or prevention of

4 RSC 1985, c C-34.

5 Section 45.

6 Section 47.

7 Section 52.

8 Section 79.

9 Section 77.

10 *id.*

11 Section 75.

competition, in which case the Competition Tribunal can prohibit the conduct. Agreements between competitors that are not hardcore cartels (such as buy-side agreements)¹² or price maintenance are subject to the same treatment.

Section 36 of the Competition Act creates a civil cause of action for damage caused by breaches of the criminal provisions of the Act.¹³ To succeed, the plaintiff must prove that the defendant committed a criminal offence under the Competition Act, and that he or she suffered damage caused by the criminal offence. The standard of proof is on a balance of probabilities.¹⁴

A conviction is sufficient, in the absence of proof to the contrary, to prove that the defendant committed the offence.¹⁵ The plaintiff must show actual damage and that the damage was caused by the offence.¹⁶

Section 36 itself specifies two remedies: damages and costs. The amount of damages is limited to the actual loss suffered by the plaintiff, plus the costs of investigation and of the proceeding.

Actions under Section 36 are subject to a two-year limitation period that commences on the last day on which the offence was engaged in,¹⁷ or from the day on which criminal proceedings were finally disposed of. This two-year limitation period is subject to the principle of discoverability and will not run so long as the conduct remains undiscovered by the plaintiff.¹⁸

Both direct and indirect purchasers can sue and recover damages for price-fixing,¹⁹ as can umbrella purchasers.²⁰

Section 36 actions can be brought in the superior courts of any province, as well as the Federal Court of Canada.²¹ They can be structured as class actions under the class

12 *Latifi v. TDL Group Corp.*, [2021] B.C.J. No. 2419 (SC) at Paragraph 78; *Mohr v. National Hockey League* [2021] F.C.J. No. 796 at Paragraph 57.

13 Section 36 is also available to recover damages caused by violations of orders made under the Competition Act by the Competition Tribunal or a court. Indirect purchaser class actions under this branch are unlikely. Section 36 provides in part as follows:

Recovery of damages

36 (1) Any person who has suffered loss or damage as a result of

(a) conduct that is contrary to any provision of Part VI, or

(b) the failure of any person to comply with an order of the Tribunal or another court under this Act, may, in any court of competent jurisdiction, sue for and recover from the person who engaged in the conduct or failed to comply with the order an amount equal to the loss or damage proved to have been suffered by him, together with any additional amount that the court may allow not exceeding the full cost to him of any investigation in connection with the matter and of proceedings under this section.

14 *F. H. McDougall* [2008] SCC 53 at Paragraph 49.

15 Moreover, rules against collateral attacks on the result of proceedings that are concluded would likely bar any attempt by a person convicted of a criminal offence under the Competition Act to establish that no offence was, in fact, committed.

16 *Chadha v. Bayer Inc* [2001] O.J. No. 1844 (Div. Ct.) at Paragraph 69.

17 *Eli Lilly and Company v. Apotex Inc.*, 2009 FC 991 at Paragraph 728.

18 *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42 at Paragraphs 31–41.

19 *Pro-Sys Consultants Ltd v. Microsoft Corporation*, 2013 SCC 57.

20 *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42 at Paragraphs 76–78.

21 Section 36(3) grants jurisdiction to the Federal Court of Canada to hear Section 36 actions. The superior courts in each province are courts of inherent jurisdiction. They hear virtually all civil and important criminal matters, whether they are local, interprovincial or even international, and whether they involve provincial or federal law. The Federal Court of Canada has only limited statutory jurisdiction, mainly

proceedings statutes or rules in most Canadian provinces, as well as the Federal Court. In Ontario, for example, the Class Proceedings Act, 1992²² provides for certification of class actions, and several other provinces have similar legislation.²³ Historically, plaintiffs typically started at least three class actions for each case: one in Quebec, for a class of consumers and small businesses; one in British Columbia, for British Columbia consumers and businesses; and a national class in Ontario, covering Ontario and the rest of the country. In 2018, British Columbia changed from being an opt-in class action regime for out-of-province class members to being an opt-out jurisdiction for such class members. It remains to be seen whether this changes the filing strategy among the plaintiff class action bar going forward.²⁴ In 2020, Ontario implemented legislation to limit overlapping multi-jurisdictional class actions among Canadian provinces, allowing the Ontario court to grant remedies that would streamline the overall prosecution of claims being advanced, which could include granting an order staying the class action in Ontario.²⁵

Ontario's class action legislation is similar to (and indeed, modelled on) Rule 23 of the US Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.²⁶ The court considers the proposed class action

involving federal statutes, income tax, immigration and the like. It does not have jurisdiction over common law claims between private parties. The only significant private law jurisdiction of the Federal Court is over intellectual property, admiralty law and actions under Section 36 of the Competition Act. Because the Federal Court does not have jurisdiction over the common law claims typically associated with Section 36 private actions, such claims are only rarely advanced in the Federal Court.

22 SO 1992, c 6.

23 The following provinces have class proceedings legislation similar to Ontario's: British Columbia (Class Proceedings Act, RSBC 1996, c 50), Alberta (Class Proceedings Act, SA 2003, c C-16.5), Saskatchewan (Class Actions Act, SS 2001, c C-12.01), Manitoba (Class Proceedings Act, CCSM c C130), Quebec (Code of Civil Procedure, RSQ, c C-25, Book IX), New Brunswick (Class Proceedings Act, RSNB 2011, c 125), Nova Scotia (Class Proceedings Act, SNS 2007, c 28), and Newfoundland and Labrador (Class Actions Act, SNL 2001, c C-18). The Federal Court Rules allow class actions within the court's limited jurisdiction. In *Western Canadian Shopping Centres v. Bennett Jones Verchere*, [2001] 2 S.C.R. 534, the Supreme Court ruled that a class action could be brought even in the absence of class action legislation. Although Quebec was the first province to enact class action legislation, in 1978, its legislation limits the plaintiff classes to individuals and small corporations or associations (fewer than 50 employees).

24 Ontario had been the jurisdiction of choice for national class actions because it has an opt-out regime for national classes, whereas British Columbia required out-of-province members to specifically opt in. British Columbia has a 'no costs' regime, and may become the forum of choice for the plaintiff class action bar, given the procedural change. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador have adopted opt-in regimes.

25 Class Proceedings Act, 1992, SO 1992, c 6, Section 5(8).

26 Class Proceedings Act, 1992, Section 5 contains the test for certification. It reads in part as follows:

Certification

5(1) *The court shall, subject to subsection (6) and to section 5.1, certify a class proceeding on a motion under section 2, 3 or 4 if;*

(a) the pleadings or the notice of application discloses a cause of action;

(b) there is an identifiable class of two or more persons that would be represented by the representative plaintiff or defendant;

(c) the claims or defences of the class members raise common issues;

(d) a class proceeding would be the preferable procedure for the resolution of the common issues; and

(e) there is a representative plaintiff or defendant who,

(i) would fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class,

(ii) has produced a plan for the proceeding that sets out a workable method of advancing the proceeding on behalf of the class and of notifying class members of the proceeding, and

(iii) does not have, on the common issues for the class, an interest in conflict with the interests of other class members.

in light of the three goals of class actions: judicial economy, access to justice and behaviour modification. The importance of the common issues in relation to the claim as a whole is a factor in this analysis.²⁷ If resolution of the common issues would not significantly advance the litigation, and individual trials for each class member would be required, the action will not be certified.²⁸

III EXTRATERRITORIALITY

Price-fixing class actions potentially raise two different jurisdictional issues. The first is whether the court has jurisdiction over the claim. Courts have generally held that if an international price-fixing conspiracy has caused losses in Canada, Canadian courts have jurisdiction.²⁹

Courts in most Canadian provinces will take jurisdiction over matters that have a ‘real and substantial connection’ with that province. The party asserting that the court

Same

(1.1) *In the case of a motion under section 2, a class proceeding is the preferable procedure for the resolution of common issues under clause (1) (d) only if, at a minimum,*

(a) *it is superior to all reasonably available means of determining the entitlement of the class members to relief or addressing the impugned conduct of the defendant, including, as applicable, a quasi-judicial or administrative proceeding, the case management of individual claims in a civil proceeding, or any remedial scheme or program outside of a proceeding; and*

(b) *the questions of fact or law common to the class members predominate over any questions affecting only individual class members.*

The test in Manitoba (Section 4), Alberta (Section 5), Saskatchewan (Section 6) and Newfoundland and Labrador (Section 5) is almost identical to Section 5 of the Class Proceedings Act, except that these four statutes add ‘whether or not the common issue predominates over issues affecting only individual prospective class members’ (or similar) after the equivalent of Section 5(1)(c) of the Class Proceedings Act. The impact of this additional language has yet to be considered judicially, but it is unlikely to have much effect on the test. The British Columbia Class Proceedings Act expressly makes whether the common issues predominate over individual issues a factor in determining whether a class proceeding would be preferable (Section 4(2)(a)). The test in Quebec has the lowest threshold of all: there is no preferable procedure or predominance requirement; it is enough that there are common issues: Code of Civil Procedure, Article 1003(a). In one case, Quebec certified a case rejected by Ontario: contrast *MacLeod v. Viacom Entertainment Canada Inc* (2003), 28 CPC (5th) 160 (SCJ) with *Yadid v. Blockbuster Canada Co* [2003] JQ No. 2278 (SC).

27 *Hollick v. The City of Toronto* [2001] 3 S.C.R. 158. See also *Western Canadian Shopping Centres v. Bennett Jones Verchere* [2001] 2 S.C.R. 534, *Rumley v. British Columbia* [2001] 3 S.C.R. 184.

28 *Moubteros v. DeVry Canada Inc* (1998), 41 O.R. (3d) 63 at 73 (Gen. Div.); *Bywater v. Toronto Transit Commission* (1998) 27 CPC (4th) 172 at 181–82 (Ont. Gen. Div.).

29 *Vitapharm Canada Ltd v. F Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd* [2002] O.J. No. 298 (SCJ); *Sun-Rype Products Limited v. Archer Daniels Midland Company*, 2013 SCC 58 at Paragraph 46; *Fairhurst v. Anglo American PLC*, 2012 BCCA 257; but see *Bouchard v. Ventes de véhicules Mitsubishi du Canada Inc*, 2008 QCCS 6033, where the Quebec Superior Court held that an overcharge suffered in Quebec as a result of price-fixing is a pure economic loss that is not damage suffered in Quebec for the purposes of Article 3148(3) of the Quebec Civil Code. In addition, in *Shah v. LG Chem, Ltd*, 2015 ONSC 2628, the fact that damage was suffered in Ontario was insufficient to establish jurisdiction where the plaintiffs failed to show a ‘good arguable case’ that the defendant was a party to that conspiracy.

should assume jurisdiction has the burden of identifying the connecting factors that link the subject matter of the action to the jurisdiction. Certain connecting factors are considered presumptive: that is, if they exist, the court will have jurisdiction.³⁰

These presumptive factors are:

- a* the defendant is domiciled or resident in the province;
- b* the defendant carries on business in the province;
- c* the tort was committed in the province; and
- d* a contract connected with the dispute was made in the province.

However, as confirmed by a British Columbia court,³¹ these factors are merely presumptive and do not preclude an action against a foreign defendant that never had any business presence in the jurisdiction if the defendant allegedly participated in a conspiracy that affected the jurisdiction.

Because of the presumptive factors, and the court's consideration of the impact of the conduct, it is generally difficult for defendants to be successful on a jurisdictional challenge. However, in an April 2015 decision, two defendants successfully had a price-fixing claim against them dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. The judge found insufficient evidence showing a connection to Ontario, including insufficient evidence that the defendants did business in Ontario or were parties to the conspiracy, or that the product at issue would have made its way through the normal channels of trade to Ontario.³²

Quebec has codified a similar set of connecting factors that allow its courts to assume jurisdiction.³³

With respect to class members, the Court of Appeal for Ontario has held that Ontario courts have extraterritorial jurisdiction over absent foreign class members when:

- a* there is a real and substantial connection between the subject matter of the action and Ontario, and jurisdiction exists over the representative plaintiff and the defendants;
- b* there are common issues between the claims of the representative plaintiff and absent foreign claimants; and
- c* the procedural safeguards of adequacy of representation, adequacy of notice and the right to opt out are provided, thereby serving to enhance the real and substantial connection between absent foreign claimants and Ontario.³⁴

The second jurisdictional issue goes to the criminal offence under the Competition Act that serves as the basis for a claim. The offence of conspiracy under Section 45 is complete as soon as a prohibited agreement is reached. Implementation of the agreement is not one of the elements of the offence; nor are the effects of the agreement on competition. Where a price-fixing conspiracy is entered into outside Canada, it is at least arguable that the offence took place outside Canada, and thus outside the reach of Canada's criminal law jurisdiction,

30 *Club Resorts Ltd v. Van Breda*, 2012 SCC 17. This rule applies in Canada's common law provinces and territories.

31 *Ewart v. Hoegh Autoliners AS*, 2020 BCCA 181; *Cheung v. NHK Spring Co.* [2022] B.C.J. No. 1891 (S.C.) at Paragraphs 76–92.

32 2015 ONSC 2628.

33 Civil Code of Quebec, CQLR c C-1991, Article 3148.

34 2017 ONCA 792 at Paragraph 107.

which is territorial in nature.³⁵ The presence of Section 47 of the Competition Act, which makes it an absolute liability offence for Canadian subsidiaries to implement conspiracies entered into by their foreign parents, reinforces this argument. Against this, Canadian courts now take an expansive approach to criminal jurisdiction.³⁶ The question of whether a price-fixing conspiracy entered into outside Canada by foreign entities is an offence in Canada under Section 45 has yet to be determined.

Parties wishing to contest jurisdiction are required to bring their jurisdiction motions promptly, as their participation in any further steps in the proceeding (such as responding to the certification motion) will constitute attornment.³⁷

Because class actions have a preclusive effect against potential plaintiffs, the question of whether a court validly assumes jurisdiction over the entire plaintiff class also arises. It is well established that a class in, say, Ontario, can include plaintiffs from other Canadian provinces, even on an opt-out basis. Ontario's Class Proceedings Act expressly allows this, and other Canadian provinces will enforce any judgment arising out of the Ontario proceedings. Where a plaintiff class is proposed that includes members from outside Canada, the question becomes more difficult.

IV STANDING

i Standing with respect to criminal practices or breach of orders

Canada has an expansive concept of standing in private actions for damages in instances where there is an alleged violation of the criminal provisions of the Competition Act or breach of an order of the Tribunal or other court made under the Act. Section 36 of the Competition Act provides that any person who has suffered loss or damage as a result of such conduct may commence a private action to seek redress.

The Supreme Court of Canada has made clear that indirect purchasers have standing to sue and seek damages in price-fixing cases, subject to the caveat that indirect purchasers must be able to prove that they have actually suffered loss or damage as a result of the complained-about conduct.³⁸ A class member cannot recover damages merely based on the fact that there has been a price-fixing conspiracy, and that somewhere down the distribution chain the class member purchased a good that contained the price-fixed component.³⁹ Proof of loss is required for each member of the class in order to recover damages after trial.⁴⁰ This is typically done by way of expert economic evidence, as discussed below.

Similarly, umbrella purchasers – those class members who purchased goods in a price-fixed market but from a non-conspirator that was able to raise its own prices because

35 Criminal Code, RSC 1985 c C-46, Section 6(2) provides that no one shall be convicted of an offence outside Canada.

36 *R v. Karigar*, 2013 ONSC 5199.

37 *Momentous.ca Corp v. Canadian American Assn of Professional Baseball Ltd*, 2010 ONCA 722 [2010] O.J. No. 4595 at Paragraph 34.

38 *Pro-Sys Consultants Ltd v. Microsoft Corporation*, 2013 SCC 57, at Paragraph 131.

39 *id.*

40 *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42 at Paragraphs 112–21.

of the conspiracy – have a viable cause of action against conspirators, subject to being able to make out on the evidence at trial that the goods they purchased were indeed priced supra-competitively as a result of the conspiracy.⁴¹

ii Standing with respect to non-criminal restrictive trade practices

Canada has a limited scope for the private enforcement of non-criminal restrictive trade practices. Private party prosecution of such trade practices is available for instances of refusal to deal (Competition Act, Section 75), price maintenance (Competition Act, Section 76), exclusive dealing, tied selling and market restriction (collectively, Competition Act, Section 77) and abuse of dominance (Competition Act, Section 79). To commence a private prosecution before the Competition Tribunal, a party must first obtain leave of the Tribunal, which, pursuant to Section 103.1 of the Competition Act, will only be granted where the Tribunal has reason to believe that the party is directly and substantially affected in its business by the trade practice in question.

Leave to commence a private prosecution under Section 103.1 is rarely sought and even more rarely granted.

V THE PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

In Canadian class actions, the discovery process occurs after the class action has been certified. The certification motion is procedural in nature, and there is no thorough probing of the merits at the certification hearing and no right to pre-certification discovery.

The discovery process occurs in two stages. The first stage is documentary discovery, wherein parties must disclose and produce all non-privileged relevant documents that are in their power, possession and control. ‘Documents’ is very broadly defined and includes all relevant electronic data. As a general principle, the obligation to produce documents is tempered by the principle of proportionality, which is directed by the size and complexity of the case at hand. Because price-fixing class actions are typically factually complex, with plaintiffs seeking a large quantum of damages, documentary production is usually extensive.

In *Imperial Oil v. Jacques*,⁴² the Supreme Court held that plaintiffs in a price-fixing class action were permitted to obtain as part of the production process wiretap evidence obtained by the Competition Bureau in the course of the Bureau’s criminal price-fixing investigation. This decision will make it easier for plaintiffs to obtain information disclosed to a criminal defendant in the Crown brief in follow-on price-fixing class actions. However, plaintiffs do not have *carte blanche* to obtain production of the entire investigatory file of the Bureau, and the Bureau has stated that it will oppose such requests.⁴³

A British Columbia court held that information provided to the Bureau by third parties not involved in the litigation was protected from disclosure in a civil action by way of public interest privilege.⁴⁴

Oral discovery follows the production of documents. In some jurisdictions, such as Ontario, a party is limited to having to produce one representative to be discovered, who must

41 *ibid.*, at Paragraphs 76–78.

42 2014 SCC 66.

43 *Canada (Attorney General) v. Thouin*, 2017 SCC 46; www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/04314.html (last accessed 6 January 2023).

44 *Pro-Sys Consultants Ltd v. Microsoft Corp*, 2016 BCSC 97.

take steps to inform himself or herself about matters within the collective corporate knowledge in advance of being examined. Even with such preparation, there are generally questions at discovery that go beyond the knowledge of the corporate representative, necessitating the need for the examinee to give undertakings to seek information and documentation from other sources within the corporation. In some instances, members of the class beyond just the representative plaintiff will be subjected to oral discovery, for example in a situation where different groups of class members are in a different situation from the representative plaintiff, and the defendants require access to such evidence to properly present a defence.⁴⁵

Other Canadian jurisdictions, such as Alberta, have a more expansive right of discovery covering multiple corporate representatives, which is more in line with the deposition process in the United States.

Oral discovery of non-parties is typically available only with leave of the court. Members of the Competition Bureau investigatory team are not obliged to attend discoveries in follow-on civil litigation to answer questions about criminal investigations under the Competition Act.⁴⁶

The process of discovery is similar for matters before the Competition Tribunal. Parties in proceedings before the Tribunal are required to make documentary production and to participate in oral discovery.⁴⁷

VI USE OF EXPERTS

The use of experts is commonplace in Canadian competition proceedings, both in class actions in the civil courts and in reviewable matters before the Competition Tribunal. The most common types of experts put forward in competition proceedings are expert economists and industry-specific experts.

In class actions, experts are used at the certification stage and also at trial. On the certification motion, the plaintiff bears the burden of demonstrating some basis in fact to show that the alleged criminal conduct caused harm to each purchaser level encompassed by the proposed class.⁴⁸ This is typically done by way of economic modelling and proposed methodologies by an expert economist.

On the certification motion, the plaintiff's expert does not need to actually quantify the overcharge paid by indirect purchasers: the quantification of the overcharge is done at trial with a full evidentiary record. Rather, on certification, the expert must present a methodology that establishes that the overcharge has been passed down through the distribution chain to the indirect purchaser level.⁴⁹ On the certification motion, the expert's methodology must only offer a realistic prospect of establishing loss on a class-wide basis. At trial, class members are required to prove loss to obtain recovery.⁵⁰

Defendants on a certification motion have a high hurdle in refuting a plaintiff expert's methodology and will only succeed if they are able to show that the plaintiff expert's

45 *Coburn and Watson's Metropolitan Home (cob Metropolitan Home) v. Bank of Montreal* [2018] B.C.J. No. 3665.

46 *Canada (Attorney General) v. Thouin*, 2017 SCC 46.

47 Competition Tribunal Rules, SOR/2008-141, Sections 60 to 64.

48 *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42 at Paragraph 102.

49 *id.*

50 *ibid.* at Paragraphs 116–21.

methodology is implausible. The Supreme Court has held that, on the certification motion, it is not the role of the certification judge to resolve conflicts between experts, which makes it difficult (although not impossible) for defendants to succeed in a battle between economists at certification.⁵¹

One strategy employed by defendants in responding to a certification motion is to put forward evidence from an industry expert to demonstrate that, contrary to the theoretical approach of the plaintiff's economic expert, based on how the industry actually works (including the mechanics of the distribution chain) any overcharge would not have been uniformly or consistently passed on through various points of the distribution chain, or would not have made it to the ultimate end purchaser of a price-fixed good. The strategy here (as well as with an economics expert) is to demonstrate that there are complexities in pass-on that the plaintiff expert has not, and indeed cannot, consider or capture, such that the class would include those who have suffered no harm.

In proceedings before the Competition Tribunal, complex economic evidence is tendered by both sides geared at demonstrating the effect on competition (or lack thereof) concerning the reviewable practice at issue in a given proceeding. The Tribunal itself is also empowered to appoint independent experts to assist it regarding 'any question of fact or opinion relevant to an issue in a proceeding'.⁵²

VII CLASS ACTIONS

Class action legislation has been enacted by all provinces except Prince Edward Island, although not in the territories.⁵³ In 2002, the Federal Court also created specific class proceeding provisions; however, this was not done through independent legislation but rather through the amendment of the Federal Court Rules.

i Requirements for certification

Although there are some differences in the precise language used in the class action legislation enacted in the various jurisdictions, generally a class action will be certified if the following criteria are met:

- a* the pleadings disclose a cause of action;
- b* there is an identifiable class of two or more persons;
- c* the claims of the class members raise common issues;
- d* a class proceeding is the preferable procedure for the resolution of the common issues; and
- e* there is a representative plaintiff who can fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class, and a workable plan for advancing the proceeding.

In Quebec, which is a civil law jurisdiction, there are two primary distinctions: a numerosity requirement and no specific requirement that the proposed class action meet the preferable procedure test.

51 *Pro-Sys Consultants Ltd v. Microsoft Corporation*, 2013 SCC 57 at Paragraph 126.

52 Competition Tribunal Rules, SOR/2008-141, Section 80.

53 Class actions are permitted to proceed in jurisdictions without class action legislation under local rules of court.

ii Notice

Notice to class members is an important component of the class proceeding process. Because individual class members are not active participants in the conduct of the action, notice provides the only real mechanism to inform class members of decisions made by the court in respect of major steps in the litigation. Notice is typically provided through publication in national media, industry magazines, distribution to industry associations, direct mailings to persons involved in the industry and on class counsel websites. The extent and types of notice will vary depending on the nature, scope and value of the claims. Although not an exhaustive list, notice is given in the context of certification and settlement, and in respect of the claims process.

Notice of certification is particularly important in jurisdictions that have an opt-in process. In these jurisdictions, class members who fall within the defined class of persons have to take steps to become part of the action. This is distinct from opt-out jurisdictions where, once a class has been certified, any member of the defined class is presumed to be part of the proceeding unless they take steps to opt out of the proceeding.

When one or more defendants in an action settle with the plaintiff, a notice of settlement will be published in advance of the settlement approval hearing to permit people to consider the settlement and allow a class member to object to the settlement. Objectors may make submissions in writing or at the hearing. Although objectors may make submissions, they do not gain party status with accompanying rights of appeal. Settlements must be approved by the court, which must satisfy itself that a settlement is fair, reasonable and in the best interests of the class.

iii Settlements in class proceedings

Settlements before trial are the norm in competition class actions. Settlements are negotiated between the parties, often using settlements of related proceedings in the United States as benchmarks for settlement quantum. Where the settlement amount owed to each individual class member is quite small, distribution of the settlement funds may be made *cy pres*⁵⁴ to organisations such as charities.

Unlike the United States, there is no procedure similar to a multi-district litigation process. The effect of this is that where class actions are commenced in various provinces (often with plaintiff counsel working cooperatively in the different jurisdictions), settlements must be approved in each jurisdiction. There is a growing trend to conduct these hearings via videoconference with the different jurisdictions participating at the same time. In these circumstances, each judge sits within his or her own jurisdiction, with all participants linked by video or telephone. In its 2016 decision in *Endean v. British Columbia*,⁵⁵ the Supreme Court ruled that superior court judges can sit outside their home provinces. This decision will facilitate the management of national class actions, including private antitrust class actions.

54 Short for *cy pres comme possible*, or 'as close as possible'.

55 2016 SCC 42.

VIII CALCULATING DAMAGES

Section 36 of the Competition Act provides for the recovery of damages, by individuals or companies, incurred as the result of a violation of the Act's criminal provisions.⁵⁶ The damage recovery permitted by Section 36 is compensatory in nature only; class members must have suffered actual loss or harm as a result of the alleged breach of the Act by the defendant.⁵⁷ This means that it is not sufficient for a private defendant to simply point to anticompetitive conduct that did not affect it. It also permits the plaintiff to recover the costs of any investigation into the matter.

Plaintiffs' claims for damages under Section 36 of the Competition Act are often accompanied by claims grounded in tort based on breaches of the Act. These claims permit, in principle, the recovery of punitive damages as well as damages through restitutionary principles. The Supreme Court has confirmed that such equitable and common law claims may be pursued alongside Competition Act damages.⁵⁸

To date, none of the contested actions based on Section 36 has made it to trial. Consequently, there are no decisions providing judicial guidance on the appropriate methodology for damages calculations or other damages-related issues. Most judicial commentary in respect of damages has been in the context of class certification and settlements.

The most common approach used for damages calculations is based on an analysis of the difference in price between the alleged cartel pricing and a competitive price that would have been in play but for the cartel. That price differential is used to estimate the amount of the 'overcharge'. Typically, expert evidence, including regression analysis (or, in the case of an expert's report at certification, regression modelling), is relied on to estimate the quantum of overcharge as well as to address pass-through (or pass-on) issues.

IX PASS-ON DEFENCES

In 2013, the Supreme Court heard a trilogy⁵⁹ of cases that addressed, among other things, the availability of indirect purchasers to maintain a cause of gain against alleged cartel members, particularly given that the pass-on defence had earlier been rejected by the Court.⁶⁰ Until the trilogy, lower courts had generally avoided dealing with the problems associated with indirect purchaser claims. The Supreme Court held that the rejection of the defensive use of pass-on did not entail, as a necessary corollary, the rejection of the offensive use of pass-on. Both direct and indirect purchasers can make a claim and, unlike in the United States, for example, such claims can be joined in one action.

⁵⁶ Part VI, Sections 45 to 62.

⁵⁷ *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42 at Paragraphs 116–21.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, at Paragraphs 85–89.

⁵⁹ *Pro-Sys Consultants Ltd v. Microsoft Corporation*, 2013 SCC 57; *Sun-Rype Products Limited v. Archer Daniels Midland Company*, 2013 SCC 58; *Infineon Technologies AG v. Option consommateurs*, 2013 SCC 59.

⁶⁰ See *British Columbia v. Canadian Forest Products Ltd.*, [2004] 2 S.C.R. 74 and *Kingstreet Investments v. New Brunswick (Department of Finance)*, 2007 SCC 1.

X FOLLOW-ON LITIGATION

The Competition Act creates a statutory cause of action for anyone who has suffered loss as a result of a criminal breach of the Act.⁶¹ Damages under this provision are limited to actual damages suffered, plus costs.

The Competition Act provides that proof of a criminal conviction can be used as proof of the offence in a subsequent private action.⁶² Although a plaintiff can obtain evidence disclosed to a criminal accused as part of a crown brief during the discovery process, a plaintiff will not have access to the Competition Bureau's investigatory file and cannot serve members of the Bureau with summons for oral discovery.⁶³

When there is no prior criminal conviction, a plaintiff can still bring a civil claim against the defendant, but must prove all elements of the case on a civil standard (i.e., on a balance of probabilities).⁶⁴ Plaintiffs typically also plead various ancillary common law and equitable causes of action in bringing private actions under the Competition Act. Because these other causes of action are not available in the Federal Court, private actions are almost always commenced in provincial superior courts.

Private actions are commonly structured as a class action under provincial class proceedings statutes. Private actions can be structured as class actions in any of Canada's 14 legal jurisdictions (10 provinces, three territories and the Federal Court), although each jurisdiction has its own particular rules.

Some of the Competition Act's civil provisions – notably abuse of dominance, refusal to deal, tied selling, exclusive dealing and market restriction – allow for private enforcement by affected firms; however, before commencing an application, the injured party must obtain leave (permission) from the Competition Tribunal. One of the requirements for obtaining leave is a certification by the Commissioner of Competition that the matter is not the subject of an inquiry or application by the Commissioner to the Tribunal.

There is no right of private action under the anticompetitive agreements or merger provisions of the Competition Act.

XI PRIVILEGES

i Solicitor–client privilege

The solicitor–client privilege protects communications between solicitor and client that are made in confidence for the purpose of giving or receiving legal advice. This privilege belongs to the client and is a permanent right; it survives the retainer and even past the client's death. Communications with in-house counsel containing legal advice or for the purpose of obtaining legal advice are subject to the solicitor–client privilege so long as the communications are made in the context of performing the function of legal counsel to the company. This privilege does not apply when the communications are made while in-house counsel is acting in some other non-legal capacity.

61 Section 36(1).

62 Section 36(2).

63 *Imperial Oil v. Jacques*, 2014 SCC 66; *Canada (Attorney General) v. Thouin*, 2017 SCC 46.

64 *F. H. McDougall* [2008] SCC 53 at Paragraph 49.

ii Litigation privilege

Litigation privilege applies to work-product and communications that are made specifically in contemplation of existing or anticipated litigation. Litigation privilege also applies to communications with third parties where the dominant purpose of the communication is to assist with existing or anticipated litigation. This privilege, and the protections flowing therefrom, ends with the resolution of the action.

iii Settlement privilege

Settlement privilege attaches to communications between parties made on a without prejudice basis that relate to settlement or were made for the purpose of attempting to resolve a dispute. In these circumstances, communications will be protected from disclosure to the court by settlement privilege, subject to certain exceptions.⁶⁵

iv Case-by-case privilege: the Wigmore test

Communications or documents that do not fall within one of the class privileges discussed above can be nonetheless subject to privilege if the party claiming privilege can demonstrate that the communication or document should remain confidential based on four criteria, known as the Wigmore test:

- a the communications must originate in a confidence that they will not be disclosed;
- b this element of confidentiality must be essential to the full and satisfactory maintenance of the relationship between the parties;
- c the relationship must be one that in the opinion of the community ought to be sedulously fostered; and
- d the injury that would inure to the relationship by the disclosure of the communications must be greater than the benefit thereby gained for the correct disposal of litigation.⁶⁶

The onus is on the party seeking to prevent disclosure to demonstrate on a balance of probabilities that each criterion has been met.

XII SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES

Settlements are actively encouraged by Canadian courts, and many jurisdictions have mandatory mediation requirements in their civil procedure rules. Most class actions commenced to date have not proceeded to trial, and are settled before and after class certification. Moreover, owing to the multi-jurisdictional nature of class actions in Canada, we are seeing an increased use of global settlement agreements, which serve to resolve the actions in each of the jurisdictions by way of one settlement agreement.

Settlements of class actions require court approval (with some exceptions).⁶⁷ With respect to class actions, the settlement process usually occurs in two stages: certification as

⁶⁵ For example, if there is a dispute about the existence, interpretation or enforceability of a settlement agreement, the privilege will not apply, and the relevant documents, including settlement communications, will be producible before the court.

⁶⁶ *Slavutych v. Baker* [1976] 1 S.C.R. 254.

⁶⁷ In Ontario and Quebec, prior court approval, even prior to certification, is required for a proposed class action to be settled or discontinued. The same is true for actions commenced in Federal Court. In the other statutory jurisdictions, court approval is required only after certification has been granted.

against a party for the purpose of settlement and notice to class members regarding the settlement hearing, and approval of the settlement agreement itself. Objectors, including non-settling defendants and class members, can make submissions at each stage, and can voice their concerns about the fairness or reasonableness of the agreement or to ensure that certain protections are included within the order to appropriately protect their interests.

There is generally close judicial scrutiny of class action settlement agreements in Canada and Canadian courts have not hesitated to refuse to provide their approval if they deem an agreement to be unfair.⁶⁸ Although most provincial legislation does not specify criteria for approving a settlement, the test at common law is whether the settlement is ‘fair, reasonable and in the interests of all those affected by it’.⁶⁹ Ontario mandates that the court consider certain factors in determining whether to approve a settlement, and these factors largely mirror the common law test.⁷⁰

In determining whether to approve a class action settlement, the court will consider a number of criteria, including:

- a* the likelihood of recovery or success if the case were litigated;
- b* the amount and nature of discovery or investigation;
- c* the terms and conditions of the settlement;
- d* recommendations of counsel;
- e* future expense and likely duration of litigation;
- f* recommendations of neutral parties or experts;
- g* the number and nature of objections from class members;
- h* the presence of good-faith bargaining; and
- i* the absence of collusion.⁷¹

XIII ARBITRATION

As long as all litigants consent – or at least those who are willing to have their portions of a litigated case determined – parties may submit a matter to a private arbitrator or panel of arbitrators.

Submitting a matter to arbitration would afford litigants the latitude to select the arbitrator or arbitrators, maintain confidentiality, and tailor evidentiary and procedural rules, although not all these options are mandatory or provided for at law. The key, however, is that the process must be a voluntary one. Most provincial consumer protection statutes forbid terms in consumer contracts that require disputes to be submitted to arbitration.

A note about class actions: a private antitrust claim has never been submitted to or attempted to be submitted to arbitration. Much as would be the case with class settlements, the courts would have to approve any request to submit a matter to arbitration as being in the interests of the class members. Instead of arbitration, lawyers have been engaging mediators

68 For example, the Ontario Superior Court refused to approve a settlement agreement between Quiznos franchisees, the defendant franchisers and food supplier Good Food Service Inc, finding that the scope of the release was too broad, given the nominal amount of damages.

69 *Dabbs v. Sun Life Assurance Co of Canada* [1998] O.J. No. 1598 (Gen. Div.) at Paragraph 9.

70 Class Proceedings Act, 1992, SO 1992, c 6, Section 27.1(7).

71 *Dabbs* at Paragraph 13; see also *Haney v. Iron Works Ltd v. Manufacturers Life Insurance Co* (1998), 169 DLR (4th) 565 (BCSC) at Paragraph 23.

in an attempt to resolve class actions during the early stages, such as before a class certification motion or prior to certification, but before further substantive steps are undertaken, such as discovery.

XIV INDEMNIFICATION AND CONTRIBUTION

Generally, rules of court, or the Rules of Civil Procedure in Canadian provinces that govern the administration of justice, specifically permit claims for cross-party and third-party claims for contribution and indemnity. Limitation statutes sometimes prevent such claims from being advanced after the expiry of the applicable limitation period, such as two years, but parties are usually permitted to extend, or toll, limitation periods by agreement. Tolling a limitation period in Quebec, to the extent that such a notion is permissible under Quebec's Civil Code, is not so straightforward.

In the case of private antitrust cases, plaintiffs' counsel have argued that civil defendants should not be permitted to make claims for contribution and indemnity. Although no court has specifically dealt with this issue, and despite the provisions specifically permitting such claims in the various rules of court, the argument for denying contribution and indemnity is premised on the fact that where conduct complained of is covered by the criminal provisions of the Competition Act, and because in the criminal context defendants are not permitted to claim contribution and indemnity among themselves, then the same rule should apply in civil courts. Differing burdens of proof between civil and criminal acts will have to be considered by the courts if this issue is decided, as well as the fact that private competition claims also allege various common law torts, such as the tort of civil conspiracy, which obviously does not rise to the level of criminal conduct in and of itself.

Further complicating the issue is that defendants who settle competition class actions usually, as part of their settlement, require and obtain an order from the court barring any future proceedings against them, including any cross-claims or claims for contribution and indemnity. The trade-off that is usually satisfactory to the courts is that the plaintiffs will be precluded from seeking from any non-settling defendants the proportionate share of the settling defendants' liability. If the non-settling defendants are precluded by way of a court order from seeking contribution and indemnity, the logic holds, then they should not be burdened with the liability of the settling defendants.

XV FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK

The Supreme Court's 2019 decision in *Godfrey*⁷² provided significant clarity on many outstanding issues in Canadian price-fixing jurisprudence. In effect, the Supreme Court removed or curtailed many of the arguments typically used by defendants in resisting certification. *Godfrey* will make it easier to certify price-fixing class actions. In contrast, the Ontario amendments to its class proceedings legislation will impose new challenges on class counsel. Given the relative rarity of contested price-fixing certification decisions, it remains to be seen how the Ontario amendments and the *Godfrey* decision will interface, in terms of both decided cases and the strategy of litigants.

72 *Pioneer Corp. v. Godfrey*, 2019 SCC 42.

