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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 May 2008

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 27 mai 2008

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

Chair: Julia Munro
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 27 May 2008

Mardi 27 mai 2008

The committee met at 0901 in room 228.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Good morning. The standing committee is looking at its agenda for today. Our first order of business is the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, May 15. Ms. Van Bommel.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would move the adoption of the subcommittee report dated Thursday, May 15, 2008.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

The second item of business is the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, May 22.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would move adoption of the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, May 22, 2008.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all in favour? All opposed? The motion is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

ALINA LAZOR

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Alina Lazor, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will now move to the appointment reviews. Our first interview is with Alina Lazor, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board and the Custody Review Board. Ms. Lazor, please come forward.

Good morning, and welcome to the committee. As you may know, you have an opportunity should you wish to make an initial statement. Subsequent to that, we will have questions from the members of the committee. So if you are ready, you may begin.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself to you. I know that you have my curriculum and you have some information, but I would like to make an opening statement on my behalf.

I am Alina Lazor and I'm a clinician. I'm a child psychiatrist with over 35 years of experience in working with what we call multi-dimensional children, which is multi-problematic children, and their families.

I have been working in different capacities: as a staff psychiatrist in hospital, then a senior psychiatrist consultant, and then I was the clinical unit director of adolescent services for 18 years at the Whitby Mental Health Centre. In this capacity I was also involved in developing, with quite a good clinical team, a residential program for those children—day treatment, outpatient, satellite clinic. I was also involved in the community, in planning for children with mental health needs, with the coordination of services, and in several task forces which also all relate to the clinical issue of mental health.

In 1998 I retired but continued to do consultation services for the hospital. I also became more involved with the community because I very much believe that the service provided for this population is to empower children and their parents so they know what to look for, so they understand what the illness means, so they understand how they should manage it and so they understand the lifestyle that they should live.

Through education and practical transfers to practical skills training, I came to be more focused on that area. I'm running several groups for parents and for older adolescents who are able to perceive the education and understand what they are supposed to look for and what they are supposed to prevent—their vulnerable brain, that they could stay in the community and in the family, and avoid hospitalization and institutionalization.

During the last two years I have not been doing consultation for the hospital. I've been focusing completely on the community: working, training, workshops, and consultation for other mental health providers.

For several years I had been a member of the inter-ministerial placement advisory committee as a child psychiatrist and shared my clinical skills in those difficult cases.

I think I will stop at this time. Thank you for listening to me.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. This morning we'll begin questions with the official opposition. Ms. MacLeod?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We have none at this time. We wish you the best of luck. I see that Judy Finlay has been one of your references. Judy ranks very high in my books, so good luck.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Welcome, and thank you for coming in today, Dr. Lazor. I'm wondering if you had any experience in the work that you've already done with the Child and Family Services Review Board.

Dr. Alina Lazor: No, I did not have any experience with the Child and Family Services Review Board.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Are you aware of the new responsibilities that the board has been given under Bill 210?

Dr. Alina Lazor: Yes. I had been informed when I had the interview with the chairperson and the two vice-chairpersons from the review board. I had also been supplied with documentation about that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's interesting, as the member from the official opposition indicated and as I notice as well, that you have Judy Finlay down as one of your supporters, one of your references. I'm wondering if you've had any experience yourself with children's aid societies in the province of Ontario.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Only as a clinician, when the children were referred to me for some consultation or to assess the children. I also provide indirect consultation for the clinician within the children's aid society—mental health.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All right. So then you would know the kinds of situations that children's aid societies deal with on a regular basis and know that the Child and Family Services Review Board is in a position to undertake a role when there are appeals of the process of decision-making that occurs in the children's aid society. Again, I think we're all quite aware that children's aid societies quite often have a difficult job, but I'm wondering if, through your professional experience and the work that you've done in the past, you have any kind of perspective on whether or not the Child and Family Services Review Board is the best way to deal with oversight in children's aid societies in the province of Ontario.

0910

Dr. Alina Lazor: I think that every child and every family should have their way to appeal. I think this is the way to do it, through the independent appeals board, to look at it carefully and assess the situation. I feel very supportive.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So are you aware that most other provinces have an ombudsman that takes on that role, one that is a completely independent body and separate completely from the child welfare system?

Dr. Alina Lazor: No, I am not.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You're not aware of that?

Dr. Alina Lazor: No.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Did you ever speak to Judy Finlay about the extent to which the Child and Family Services Review Board has a review of appeals in children's aid situations?

Dr. Alina Lazor: No, Judy Finlay was the former chief advocate of the advocacy office.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I know.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Therefore, I have been in contact with her through IMPACT, the interministerial placement advisory committee, which is advising the advocacy office on several cases. My contact regarding the review board was mostly that she was suggesting that maybe my skills could be beneficial for the review board to be changed now or extend its capacity to deal with those appeals, but not in the detail.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not the specifics?

Dr. Alina Lazor: No.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Would it surprise you, then, to find out that she is publicly on the record many times indicating that the Child and Family Services Review Board is not the best way to go in terms of appeals for children's aid society problems?

Dr. Alina Lazor: I didn't know; I didn't discuss it with her. I didn't know. I cannot have any comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Okay. Just to let you know, she really does believe that that's the better place for these kinds of situations because, in fact, it's very narrow in scope, which you might be aware of if you've read through the documentation. The role of the Child and Family Services Review Board in terms of appeals of children's aid society decisions is very narrow in scope. It's really just procedural—not the nature of the decision, not the facts, not any of the circumstances around the decision that comes down or the issue that is being appealed, but rather just the procedural matters.

So in that vein, Ms. Finlay has been very, very critical of this province's lack of oversight by an ombudsman, by a completely separate, independent voice. Just in terms of perspective as you go forward on this very important board, I think you might be interested to know that she has some pretty strong opinions in that regard.

Are you at all concerned about your own experience with children's aid societies and whether or not that will have an effect on your ability to have an independent perspective?

Dr. Alina Lazor: I'm really quite an objective clinician. I had involvement with many other agencies as well. My involvement with children's aid societies is limited. I will have to watch and I will have to see.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You mentioned a little bit about your experience as a clinician with children's mental health. There's been a great deal of concern in the last couple of years about the lack of resources being put into children's mental health. Particularly this past couple of months, there have been some significant alarm bells being raised about the fact that there are not enough treatment programs, there are not enough clinicians, that the system is really not there to help children with mental health problems, mental health issues. Is that something that's your experience, as somebody operating in the field?

Dr. Alina Lazor: I think that we always have been short of services. I think that we are much better to identify those children; we are much better to save the premature children who could also have some pre-disposition to develop mental illnesses. I do believe that each child has a right to get treatment or services as

needed. I also am aware that there will never be enough money to do everything. But I think essential services, partnership, collaboration between the service providers is the way to go, and empowering the parents so that they know where, how and when they're supposed to advocate for their own children. Yes, there are not enough services for this population.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's unfortunate. I think that everybody would agree that—and as a clinician you would be someone who I would think could enlighten us if it's not the case. But everything that I'm reading indicates that early treatment is the best route.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Yes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt about it. The sooner you provide treatment for children and young people, the better their likely ability to cope in the future.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Absolutely; it's absolutely true. We are much more advanced with the treatment of very severe illnesses which they could develop, the major mental illnesses. When we treat them early, then we have a much better prognosis for those people and we can avoid too many hospitalizations. I agree.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can I just ask you, as I finish off my questions, if you have any affiliation with any political parties?

Dr. Alina Lazor: No, I do not.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You're completely independent. Can I just ask one last question around the children's mental health issue, because it's something that's of grave concern? In some of the articles I've been reading, there is an inference that even if there were more resources in terms of dollars, there are not the experts in the field to deal with the volume of children who need service. Is that your take on the situation, and if it is, do you have any recommendations or suggestions to start to deal with that problem?

Dr. Alina Lazor: Yes, I do. I agree that generally there are not enough clinicians, but there are not enough clinicians for our children's mental health services. I think that the suggestion will be to provide training. They don't produce enough child psychiatrists, and child psychiatrists are not the only people who are treating the kids. We need lots of paramedical and other staff and mental health providers. Increase the enrolment in those colleges and universities and also expose more family physicians to have a better understanding of mental health issues and education. If there is no manpower, you have to really try. I know that in some other countries they are trying to train lay people who are able to identify early difficulties so they are more knowledgeable about when to redirect those people. I think we have to spread it across the universities, colleges and community.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. We'll move on to the government.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank Dr. Lazor for coming in this morning, but we have no questions.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much for coming to the committee this morning. That ends the official part of the interview. Thank you very much for being here.

Dr. Alina Lazor: Thank you.

SHEENA SCOTT

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Sheena Scott, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Our second interview today is with Sheena Scott, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board and Custody Review Board. Good morning and welcome to the committee.

Ms. Sheena Scott: Good morning.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): As you may have observed, you have an opportunity to make a few statements, and then we'll entertain questions from the committee members. If you're ready, please begin.

Ms. Sheena Scott: Certainly. Good morning, and thank you. I am a lawyer and have been a lawyer for 20 years. For more than half of that time, I worked exclusively in the field of children, youth and the law. I was lawyer and then executive director of a legal clinic for children and youth. My work covered all of the areas addressed by the two boards except for adoption. Child placement issues were a significant part of my practice.

I also sat on the interministerial provincial advisory committee for five years and was chair for one year. I then moved on, briefly, to work at the Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy, where I did mostly legal research and writing. I also participated in two child welfare reviews, one in the north and one in the Niagara region.

I then became the director of legal services at the African Canadian Legal Clinic, where I was until 2006. In that capacity, I remained involved in issues pertaining to children and youth, in education, human rights, youth justice, child custody and child welfare contexts. I also provided training to the African Canadian youth justice program on the Child and Family Services Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

0920

At the end of April, just recently, I completed 14 months on contract as counsel for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, practising administrative law, and although my focus did broaden, I did remain involved in issues pertaining to children and youth. Recently, I worked on a case in which all the parties were seeking access to Youth Criminal Justice Act records for the purposes of a hearing before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. That was in a context in which all the parties, even the youth, wanted the records before the tribunal in aid of the proper administration of justice. That's an issue that might actually arise in the two boards that we're dealing with today.

In addition to my legal work, I have published and done projects on issues relating to children, youth and the law on a variety of topics, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, youth justice, children's

mental health and child welfare. I have also provided training and taught at the college and university levels. Most recently, in terms of public speaking, my emphasis has been on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

So by way of brief introduction, I'll stop there. I would very much welcome the opportunity to sit on the two boards, and I thank you for your time this morning.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. We'll begin with Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks very much. I'm just curious how you knew about the position.

Ms. Sheena Scott: Certainly. I actually applied for the chair's position. There was an ad in the *Globe and Mail* in 2006, I believe, in May. I applied in June and I had an interview at the Public Appointments Secretariat in the summer of 2006. It's a bit of a long story.

After the interview, they contacted me and asked me if I'd be interested in positions other than the chairship. I indicated that I would and asked that my application be considered for other positions. Then, in the fall of 2007, I was contacted for an interview in December. I had an interview at the board with the chair and, I believe, the two vice-chairs.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Excellent. There's no doubt that you have significant experience that would serve you well in this appointment.

I don't know how long you were here during the last interview, but I have some concerns around the scope of the board's ability to review children's aid society complaints, pretty much. The issue is that there is no oversight of the children's aid society in the province of Ontario, save for a very scoped and narrow ability for complaints to be appealed to the board. This is something that was debated significantly during Bill 210—amendments to the Child and Family Services Act—and our child advocate at the time was very concerned about this and thought that, like most other provinces, Ontario should have complete, independent oversight of the children's aid society.

My question is twofold. Your experience, particularly in administrative law: Do you believe that the proper oversight exists for complaints to children's aid societies or appeals of those complaints, and do you believe that the parameters under which the Child and Family Services Review Board can review those matters are wide enough to get justice for people who have concerns about the way their cases have been handled through the children's aid societies?

Ms. Sheena Scott: It's not something I have a particular position on. I do know that the Child and Family Services Review Board does have limited jurisdiction in terms of the complaint process and whether or not it's properly exercised and whether or not children and families have been heard in the process. I am aware that there is a limited scope of review.

As to whether or not there should be further review, that's something that the Legislature may want to continue to examine further and assess.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In terms of the work that you've done with children, child welfare and children's rights, do you have any personal belief as to whether or not there is a necessity within our child welfare system for a kind of arm's-length oversight system?

Ms. Sheena Scott: Generally speaking, arm's-length independent oversight is something that's consistent with international and domestic law. That's all I could really say on that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's fine. I appreciate that.

I'm wondering if you could expand a little bit on the role that you play with the Sparrow Lake Alliance.

Ms. Sheena Scott: The Sparrow Lake Alliance meets annually, typically. It's kind of a think tank or information-sharing venue for people in children's services. I played an active role for about a year as co-chair of a forensic task force. That was looking at issues for youth in custody. Other than that, I haven't played an active role. I did speak at the conference last year when someone else backed out.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Okay. Thanks very much. As I said, my main goal was to get a feel for whether or not the people appointed to this board fully understand the restrictions that exist around their ability to review particularly children's aid society complaints. I think your resumé very clearly indicates that you have many skills to offer, and I want to wish you all the best in your appointment to this board. You have good work to do.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mrs. Van Bommel.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Chair, and also I want to say thank you, Ms. Scott, for appearing before the committee this morning. I think you're eminently qualified for this position, so thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. MacLeod.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome, Ms. Scott. I reviewed your resumé. It's also noteworthy that Judy Finlay was a reference of yours, which I really appreciate. I also want to congratulate you for all the work that you've done on behalf of children and youth in Ontario. I'm very interested to see that you've worked on the UN convention of the children. I want to congratulate you, and the official opposition will be endorsing your candidacy.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. That concludes the interview, and we certainly appreciate you taking time to come and appear before us. Thank you.

Ms. Sheena Scott: Thank you all very much.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Should we take a recess?

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will take about a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 0927 to 0935.

HEATHER HUNTER

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Heather Hunter, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): The committee has come together, and we'll now do our third and final interview today, which is with Heather Hunter, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board. Good morning and welcome to the committee.

Ms. Heather Hunter: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): As you may be aware, you have the opportunity to make a few comments. After that, we will entertain questions from various committee members. When you're ready, please begin.

Ms. Heather Hunter: Good morning. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am from Huntsville, Ontario, where I have my primary residence. I have dedicated my life's work to the children's, youth justice, family and related sectors, and to advocacy for children and families.

Over the past 40 years I have held progressively responsible and senior positions, including program manager positions at Chedoke Hospital, now McMaster health sciences, and Thistleton Regional Centre as the director of TREADD, which is treatment, research and education for autism and developmental disorders. I have been the executive director of two children's mental health/youth justice agencies and one developmental services organization in the past, and I was, until September 2007, the chief executive officer of Banyan Community Services, formerly known as Hamilton East Community Services, for 11 years. This organization provides a wide range of youth justice programs and services, children's mental health programs, foster care, a seniors' program and various community-based programs, including a camp in the Kawarthas.

Throughout my time at Banyan in particular I have been responsible for the incarceration, care and rehabilitation of some of the most troubled, complex and, some would say, dangerous young people in the province, while ensuring the community's safety as well. The responsibility provided me with a perspective that few people may have the opportunity to experience.

I am aware of, and dedicated to, best practice standards, and I am thoroughly acquainted with complaint procedures. The challenges over the past several years have been the shift from the Young Offenders Act to the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the subsequent ministry changes, and the development of evidence-based, intervention/prevention programs working with children under 12 already in conflict with the law but who cannot be charged, to endeavour to redirect their energy and their behaviour toward pro-social activities. This program was evaluated by the Offord centre in Hamilton, and I am extremely proud of my achievement in this important, groundbreaking program and its evaluation, which was first funded by Justice Canada and subsequently by the province. It has established the benchmark provincially and federally for early intervention/prevention crime strategies for young children.

0940

My work with the province between 1980 and 1990 involved transfer payment oversight, licensing, budget negotiations with child welfare, children's mental health, youth justice, then YOA, developmental services and then-called children and youth institutions. I led the policy training for the province, when I spent time in the policy division, for the implementation of the residential placement advisory committee provisions of the Child and Family Services Act across the province, and participated in the safeguards review, which significantly influenced residential standards of care for children and youth in this province. I also participated in and led numerous operational reviews of programs in several sectors across the province over the years, including section 68 child welfare complaint reviews.

I have responded to requests to intervene and assume leadership in some very difficult situations over the past 25 years. I have always done so in a professional, fair and balanced manner, respecting the rights of all parties involved.

I was a graduate of the child and youth worker program at Thistleton Regional Centre many years ago and a graduate of the clinical behavioural sciences program at McMaster health sciences. I have deep respect and understanding of the child and youth sector, youth justice, and child welfare sectors, which are relevant pertaining to the mandate of the Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board. I'm a strong advocate for accountability and transparency in the provision of care and custody. As well, I strongly support dispute resolution processes.

I have, of course, been vitally aware of the board and its mandate for many years because of my involvement in the child and youth sector. I had determined, after my retirement from direct operations last fall, to continue to be involved in a meaningful and relevant manner, using the skills and knowledge gained over many years caring for children and youth. It seemed to me that a perfect match for me would be the Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board. Simply, I wish to continue to serve.

In conclusion, I believe that my leadership, experience, compassion, adaptability, and knowledge of the legislation and its recent amendments and of the service delivery sectors, will be an asset to the board. I would be honoured to serve as a member of the Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board. Thank you very much indeed.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. We'll begin with the government and Ms. Van Bommel.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Ms. Hunter, for appearing before the standing committee this morning. We have no questions.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. MacLeod.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Ms. Hunter, for appearing before us today. I appreciate your going through your background. I read with interest your

resumé. I have just two quick questions. How did you find out about this position?

Ms. Heather Hunter: I had known about the board, Ms. MacLeod, for some time. I was retiring from running direct operations and I decided that I wanted to pursue staying involved in a meaningful way. So I heard about it because in the service system one knows about the Child and Family Services Review Board. As well, we did have youth call the Custody Review Board. So I was fully aware of the board.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Just one final question: Have you been active politically in the past?

Ms. Heather Hunter: Several years ago I was a member of the Liberal Party. However, I have donated to all three parties over the years in specific support of individuals.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro): Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you for coming in, Heather. Nice to see you again. Heather, I had a couple of questions around—you mentioned in your comments the amendments to the Child and Family Services Act that were recently put in place, so I'm kind of wanting to get at that. But first I have a few general types of questions for you.

In your opinion, acknowledging your breadth of experience in child protection and in child welfare, do you believe there is appropriate oversight right now in child welfare and protection in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Heather Hunter: I think that the province has endeavoured to provide very sound mechanisms for oversight. Our child welfare partners have done a very good job of recognizing that there needs to be monitoring of the system, as it were. I think the implementation of the complaint procedures, the panels, was a very good idea, and I think it provides a safety net for everyone. I'm not sure I'm answering your question the way—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's all right. I have a few more, so we might get at it a little bit more specifically.

In your discussion, you said you're quite aware of the board. Have you actually ever had direct experience with the board yourself?

Ms. Heather Hunter: No. We have had children in one of our facilities, a custody program—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: But you did say you have some experience with negotiation, mediation, arbitration, that kind of process.

Ms. Heather Hunter: I think, in my role, certainly the senior positions that I've held, I have had to employ practices of negotiation strongly.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Absolutely. One of the criticisms that came up during the hearings and debate on Bill 210 was around the narrow scope of the Child and Family Services Review Board in terms of its capacity to deal with the complaints of children's aid societies.

Ms. Heather Hunter: Yes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's something that the child advocate at the time and many others were trying to urge the government to reconsider, that the narrow scope prevents, in some cases, very real and difficult situations

where there is dispute from actually getting any kind of hearing. Do you have any comments on that observation?

Ms. Heather Hunter: My understanding would be that there would be an opportunity for resolution of disputes prior to the issue coming before the board. I think every opportunity needs to be taken for early resolution, if possible. The board in some ways is the last appeal process, and every effort should be made to negotiate and resolve issues prior to that. I would totally support that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, and I would agree with you. I guess the challenge is that currently in the province of Ontario, unlike many other provinces, there is nothing other than the procedural type of appeal that goes to the board, which is strictly based on whether or not the actual children's aid society in question followed its own procedures. Do you know what I'm saying? In other provinces, the Ombudsman has another level of oversight. That's something that has been advocated for in this province for quite some time. Again, recognizing and acknowledging the good work that children's aid societies do in this province, it seems to be an anomaly in Canada that Ontario doesn't have this independent oversight mechanism that goes beyond the procedural type of complaint that can be taken to the board in the matter of children's aid society decisions. Any comments on that?

Ms. Heather Hunter: Gosh, I don't know what to say. I think that the board is a viable third party, arm's-length, neutral body that can provide, particularly when the board is comprised of people who really are very understanding and sympathetic to systemic issues—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't want to give you the wrong impression. I'm not critical of the individuals on the board and whether or not they have the capacity or the skills. In fact, you and the other two members who were here today to talk about this were very skilled and had lots of capacity to deal with it. The issue is that the scope of the issues you're allowed to deal with under the mandate that you have is very restrictive, and you will never be able to hear those other kinds of broader complaints against children's aid, in particular, because there is no capacity to do that within your mandate. If you feel uncomfortable with that question, I understand completely.

Ms. Heather Hunter: I just think that's a decision that needs to be taken at a policy level. It's certainly not for me to be able to comment on. I don't purport to be an expert.

0950

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No; absolutely.

You had mentioned in your remarks your work with ministries in the past. Can you enlighten us on that a little bit?

Ms. Heather Hunter: During the time I was employed by the province?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes.

Ms. Heather Hunter: My experience with the province started with heading the newly formed hard-to-serve unit in Toronto, which was a unit of individuals who

received referrals for kids who were falling between the cracks in service. The objective was to ensure placement of these children in children's mental health centres or developmental services. That started my time with the province.

I also headed the special services at home, a special needs program, for Metro Toronto—which was a huge undertaking, I might add. I then moved to program supervisor for a wide range of organizations over many years. It was a great time to be a program supervisor because we worked in a very mutually respectful and dynamic environment. I spent one year in the policy division and—sorry, I didn't bring my resumé with me. I can't remember sometimes. I also participated in the safeguards review team, which travelled the province and looked into the quality of care and quality of standards of care for kids in residential services at the time. It was a great experience; I feel very blessed to have had it, frankly.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can I ask one last question?

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): One last question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's one I asked of some of the other candidates as well. In terms of the current concern in the area of children's mental health, would you have any particular insights or suggestions into how we, as a province, can start getting more in tune with the needs of younger children in particular and getting them mental health services at an earlier age so that their futures are a lot brighter than what we currently have in the province of Ontario?

Ms. Heather Hunter: I'd be very happy to respond to that. Having been involved most recently with a crime prevention program for young children and having been involved many years ago with Stothers Centre for Children and Families, which was a children's mental health centre for preschool children, I can say that I think that we should endeavour to listen to what is happening in the children's mental health sector as it pertains to the waiting lists, as it pertains to some very difficult children waiting for care, waiting for treatment. I'm very sympathetic to my colleagues in children's mental health. They have a very difficult task in trying to prioritize kids who come with very complex needs. I certainly support my colleagues in that sector. I think it's a very difficult time.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): That concludes the time set aside. Thank you very much for coming this morning.

Committee members, we will now deal with concurrences. We will now consider the intended appointment of Alina Lazor, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I move concurrence of the appointment of Alina Lazor.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mrs. Van Bommel. Any discussion? If not, all in favour?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Brown, Hillier, Horwath, Levac, MacLeod, Ramsay, Sandals, Van Bommel.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Opposed? The motion is carried.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Sheena Scott, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I move concurrence in the appointment of Sheena Scott.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Concurrence in the appointment has been made by Mrs. Van Bommel. Any discussion?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Brown, Hillier, Horwath, Levac, MacLeod, Ramsay, Sandals, Van Bommel.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Opposed? The motion is carried.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Heather Hunter, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board/Custody Review Board.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I move the concurrence of the appointment of Heather Hunter.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mrs. Van Bommel. Any discussion?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Brown, Hillier, Horwath, Levac, Ramsay, Sandals, Van Bommel.

The Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed? The motion is carried. Congratulations to our intended appointees.

That concludes our business on intended appointments. I would just remind the committee that next week we will meet here at 9:30. This committee stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0956.

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