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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 27 September 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 27 septembre 2016

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

Chair: Cristina Martins
Clerk: Sylwia Przedziecki

Présidente : Cristina Martins
Greffière : Sylwia Przedziecki

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 27 September 2016

Mardi 27 septembre 2016

The committee met at 0902 in committee room 2.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Good morning, members. The committee is ready to start our work this morning. We have seven subcommittee reports that we are going to advance, and we're going to begin with Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, June 9, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): The subcommittee report that is dated Thursday, June 9, 2016, has been put forward. Any discussion on this? Are we all in favour? The motion is carried.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, June 16, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Do we have any discussion on this? All in favour? The motion is carried.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, June 30, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any discussion, members? We're all very, very co-operative today. All in favour? The motion is passed.

Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, July 28, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any discussion, members? All in favour? The motion is passed.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, August 11, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any discussion on this, members? All in favour? The motion is passed.

Mr. Gates, you have the final two.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, September 1, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any discussion, members? All in favour? The motion is passed.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, September 22, 2016.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Do we have any discussion, members? Are we all in favour? The motion is passed.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): We're now going to move to our appointments review. We have a number of intended appointees that we're going to hear from.

MRS. QADIRA JACKSON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Qadira Jackson, intended appointee as member, Council of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Our first intended appointee today is Qadira Jackson. She is nominated as member, Council of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. I would ask that you would come forward.

Thank you very much for being here. You are going to begin with a brief statement, if you wish. You're going to have 10 minutes to speak to our committee, and that will be followed by questions by our committee members. Begin any time.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Good morning, Madam Vice-Chair and members of the standing committee. I'd like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Qadira Jackson. I am a practising lawyer, and my main contribution to this board will be a fresh perspective drawn on my experiences in law, social work and mediation, coupled with extensive volunteering experience with various organizations.

Prior to becoming a lawyer, I earned a psychology degree, a social work degree and a certificate in dispute resolution from York University. I worked as a social worker for eight years in a variety of settings, including detention centres, foster homes, group homes, elementary schools and youth shelters.

I completed my law degree at the University of Windsor, where I was selected to be a mediator at the mediation clinic. This position allowed me to expand on

my experiences and what I learned during my certificate of dispute resolution program.

After completing law school at the University of Windsor, I started articling at the Canadian Association of Public Employees, where I was working on grievances, professional development and training, policy and appearances at the Human Rights Tribunal and labour board.

After completing articling, I founded and operated a practice focused on real estate, wills and estates, and corporate. Being a business owner requires one to wear many hats. In addition to servicing my clients, I developed a business by continuously networking and leveraging all contacts. The ability to negotiate and communicate concisely were crucial while managing my associates and staff.

I have also been encouraged to sit on many boards, where I have learned to be flexible and to collaborate with other board members. I understand the level of dedication and commitment expected to deliver great results while maintaining a cohesive environment.

I recently served as parliamentarian for the Canadian Association of Urban Financial Professionals, where I consulted with board members and non-executive members prior to drafting the by-laws that are currently used. As parliamentarian, I was also responsible for chairing meetings.

Through the role of community liaison at CABL, the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, I was responsible for making connections and maintaining relationships with people from other organizations. As the face of CABL, I regularly represented them at events, including the swearing-in of judges. Through this role, I have leveraged many contacts by partnering with the University of Toronto, student organizations, other law associations, the Ontario Justice Education Network and the Ontario Bar Association.

I have always been intrigued by how the Law Society of Upper Canada worked, so I found ways to get involved. I was selected as a member of the law society's Equity Advisory Group, whose mandate is to advise the Equity and Aboriginal Issues Committee in the development of policy options for the promotion of equity and diversity in the legal profession by identifying and advising the committee on issues affecting equity communities, both within the legal profession and relevant to those seeking access to the profession.

I was also recruited to be a community liaison to assist in the Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees project at the Law Society of Upper Canada. The purpose was to identify the challenges faced by racialized lawyers and paralegals and to consider strategies for enhanced inclusion at all career stages. The project required me to interview racialized licensees and report on the findings. I played a key role, for which I was credited in the Community Liaison Report to the Challenges Faced by Racialized Licensees Working Group.

When I'm not working, I enjoy being creative and innovating new things by completing do-it-yourself

projects, whether it's creating a new piece of furniture out of something old, designing and sewing my own clothing, or renovating and painting my house.

I believe that my diverse experiences to date can offer a different perspective and that I would be an asset to the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

0910

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Thank you very much. Our first round of questions for you will come from our government side. Mr. Fraser?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Chair. Ms. Jackson, thank you very much for being here this morning. You certainly have a lot of experience in a very short period of time. My only comment is that I think you'll bring that experience to and reflect that in the work that, if you are successful, you have in front of you with the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. I just want to thank you very much for being here this morning and taking the time to present to us.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Thank you.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'd also just like, with your permission, Madam Chair, to say how impressed we are by your lengthy list of credentials. My goodness—social work, multiple degrees, lawyer—so thank you very much for coming forward and helping to serve the people of Ontario.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Thank you.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're done.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I actually want to ask some questions. We still have the floor. Playing a little bit of musical chairs here.

I see that you have served as an articling student with CUPE. Can you tell me about that experience?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes. It was actually very interesting, especially compared to my other friends' experiences when we were sharing stories. On top of doing the legal work, I was involved in their convention. They happened to have one that year. I realized how political CUPE is. In that experience, I was able to work with a lot of people, including a lot of NDP members.

I've already listed some of the experiences that I've had. I worked on grievances and I worked at the labour board, but I also was able to be involved in protests and things that are out of typical articling positions. I was in Ottawa at the national office, and I was able to make a lot of contacts there. It was an interesting experience.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I see that you also have an interest in mentoring young black women. Can you talk to us about that?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes. In the interest of time, I shortened my list of credentials, I suppose, but one of the roles that I do currently have is that I'm the director of development for Black Pearls, which is a community service organization that mentors and educates young black women. We go out to schools and we go out to different organizations and we do presentations that would be relevant to young women. Some of the topics

include ways of communicating, healthy relationships, bullying, cyber-bullying, that sort of stuff.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Why are you interested in this position?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Why? Well, as I mentioned in my statement, I've always been interested in the law society, so after I got involved I had a better understanding of how it works. I realized that it has its own government and it has its own rules and procedures. I've watched convocations, so I was interested in being part of a regulatory body. I'm also interested in engineers because I find them interesting. I like innovating and creating and I believe that I think similarly, in a way, to many of the engineers that I've met.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Your credentials are very impressive. We appreciate the fact that you have a desire to serve your community and your province. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you, Ms. Vernile. Are there any more questions from the government side? No? So we will now go to Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Chair. I had a little difficulty understanding your position with CUPE or what you did with them. I wonder if you could get just a little closer to the microphone, if you don't mind.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Okay. I was an articling student. During my time there—I was there for 10 months so that I could learn what I needed to learn in order to get called to the bar. I was in Ottawa for part of the time and I was in Toronto for part of the time. My job was to write opinion letters.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Sorry, which?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Opinion letters.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Appeal letters?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Opinion.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Opinion letters. Okay.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I worked on training and professional development, especially in connection with the convention that I mentioned earlier. I helped with mediations and arbitrations. I went to meet with some of the employees to take their statements. I did some drafting. I went to the labour board—and research.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you. Can you give us one or two points on why you wanted this position, just the top two reasons that you wanted this position?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Number one, I wanted to be part of a regulatory body. I find it very interesting and I like the committees that come with it.

Secondly, as I said, I have a science background, even during university, and I tend to think in a way that's innovative and about creating things. I do like engineers and I have interesting conversations when I do meet them.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You spoke of having a business.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: What was that business?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Law.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Oh, your business is in law. Okay.

Do you understand the time commitment involved in this position you're after?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I definitely do. In 2013, I was on five boards, and I was able to juggle that with owning my own practice. Right now I'm on less, and I'm definitely committed. Working for myself isn't easy, but it allows me to work hard when I want to work hard. If I want to take a day off, I can do that and make up for it on the weekend. So I definitely believe that I will be able to commit.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Okay.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Mr. Cho, please.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was a professional social worker before I became an MPP. I heard you saying that you served as a social worker. Could you tell us where and what kind of social work you did and how your social work experience will help you to carry out this important position?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I think that's a good question.

While I was at York University completing my social work degree, I did two placements, one at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, where I was working with an intake worker and we were dealing with apprehensions. I was right in there, going to court and taking the children to the hospital. It was a very difficult thing to see, but I've had a lot of experience with foster homes as well, and group homes, so a lot of the stories were not new to me. So I was able to work in a group, and children's aid is a bureaucracy, so I was able to understand how it's structured.

I think that working with children in group homes and foster homes and shelters kind of humbles you. It reminds you to always have a client-centred approach and to not have a power imbalance, which is inherent in being a lawyer. So I think the social work grounds me and it helps me to connect with people in general, which obviously would be beneficial in any situation.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you, Mr. Cho. Any further questions? No?

So we'll go to Mr. Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Good morning.

Mr. Wayne Gates: How are you? It's nice to see that you work with CUPE. It's always good to work with a good union like CUPE and do some of the work that you did, but this is a little different. You certainly have a very good resumé on what you've done over the course of your young life.

I'm going to ask you some questions on some things that have happened recently, and maybe you can help me out on what you think you could bring to the table. All right?

Given the failure of the Nipigon bridge earlier this year and that falling, regarding the contract of engineers who don't live in Ontario, would you support efforts to ensure that all infrastructure projects undertaken by the government of Ontario use engineers and engineering firms based in Ontario, considering this project has so far cost \$106 million and is now scheduled to cost anywhere between \$10 million and \$20 million more?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I have been following Nipigon, and I think it's unfortunate, obviously. I believe that it's important to have control or to regulate engineers. I think it's premature for me to make a definite statement, whether it's yes or no, but being able to have a tighter grip on engineers who are hired to do projects in Ontario is definitely important.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm going to ask you a few more on this thing because I think it's important. You've decided to get on this board, so I'd just like to see where you're at.

0920

Given the recent report into the failure of the Nipigon bridge that clearly indicated there were lapses in regulatory responsibility on the part of the Minister of Transportation and those handling the design and installation of certain components of the bridge, I'm wondering what role you see for the PEO in ensuring this doesn't happen again. What role do you see the minister play?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I've read your comments and I know that you believe that the government should have a bigger role in terms of overseeing these projects. I couldn't disagree with that. In terms of the role of the PEO, I'm not exactly sure at this point. It's kind of premature for me to understand how they could improve something like this, but I definitely do realize that it's something that they're going to have to look at in more detail because it falls under their jurisdiction.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just so I'm clear on where I'm at on this particular bridge, I don't want the signoff being done until after it is safe. The role is to make sure that we serve and protect the public as engineers, and my concern is that it was signed off knowing that it wasn't safe and that there were some defects. There were deficiencies when they opened it. It's a bit of a concern. It's why I'm asking these questions, because I think if you're going to go on a board of this importance, these are some of the issues that are going to be raised with you.

I'm going to ask you one more on this. Given that you are not currently an engineer, nor does your work history or your volunteer history indicate that you have ever worked as an engineer, I'm wondering what exactly led you to seek an appointment on this board?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: As I mentioned earlier, I want to be a part of a regulatory body. I believe that engineering is a good place for me because I have interest in what they do, but I also believe that, as with any board, it's important to have different perspectives. The law society also has people who are not lawyers on their board. They have laymen members. I think it's important to have different perspectives on any board.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I'm sure they certainly could use the expertise of a lawyer, considering what happened at the Nipigon bridge, that's for sure.

This is a question that I think is fair to ask, as well. As a member of the board of Professional Engineers Ontario, one of your obligations is to be nonpartisan in your role. Given that you are currently a vice-president of the Scarborough–Guildwood provincial Liberal riding association, I'm wondering if you have given any thought to how you ensure that you both are and appear to be nonpartisan.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I think that's a good question and—

Mr. Wayne Gates: So do I, actually.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: I definitely think that, based on my experiences—I have a lot of experience dealing with different people or different perspectives in general. More specifically, at CUPE I did mention that they don't hide the fact that they have ties to the NDP. I have contacts that are definitely members of all parties.

I've volunteered with campaigns for a mayoral candidate who was not a Liberal, and I definitely feel that, as many of you understand, working on the same committee, it's important to be nonpartisan. I think, based on my experiences and the friends I currently have—I even have family members in all three parties; interesting Thanksgiving dinner—I definitely believe that I can be, and am, nonpartisan.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just so I'm accurate in my statement, you are currently the vice-president?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: That's correct.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I'm just going to go back to the CUPE stuff. Now, you were a student at that time?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: That's correct.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You worked on their convention?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Were you sort of like an intern?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes, I was an articling student so it's a 10-month placement, which is mandatory to get called to the bar.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You don't have to tell me this, but was CUPE good enough to pay you?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Sorry?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Was CUPE good enough to pay you, as an intern?

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I just wanted to establish that. I believe that all interns should be paid, so I'm glad that they paid you. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much, Mr. Gates. That concludes the time allotted for this interview.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Jackson. You may step down. The concurrences will follow all the interviews today.

Mrs. Qadira Jackson: Thank you very much to everybody.

MS. RABIA KHEDR

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Rabia Khedr, intended appointee as member, Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Our next intended appointee today is Rabia Khedr, who is nominated as member, Ontario Human Rights Commission. If you could please step forward and take your seat at the table. I wanted to first start off by welcoming you and thank you very much for being here this morning.

You may begin with a brief statement, if you wish. Members of each party will then have 10 minutes to ask you questions. Any time used for your statement will be deducted from the government's time for questions, and after your deputation here today, questioning will start with the official opposition.

Thank you once again, Ms. Khedr. You may now begin.

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Thank you very much. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Rabia Khedr. I am here because I feel that in order to preserve our rights-based culture as a society, it's really, really important that we bring a range of diverse perspectives. That's why I've put my name forward to serve as a commissioner on the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

In my brief remarks, I'm going to take you through a bit of a journey of who I am, what I have learned along the way and what I feel I can bring to the table, to the discourse around human rights, particularly in Ontario.

I often speak to many, many different audiences, and I start off with putting out my little identity marker that packages who I am. I am very clearly—something that I have learned over the years in my journey—a racialized woman with a disability who has chosen to visibly express her faith as well. All these identity markers compound my experiences and barriers and accommodations that I may require within the systems and structures that I interact with.

I always say, "Thank God I grew up in Canada because Canada is the best, and I have the right to voice for more and make it even better." I landed in Ontario at the age of four, in the GTA, and eventually made Mississauga my home for most of my life.

In that journey, I had access to education. It wasn't perfect. I had to negotiate along the way. There were bumps in the road. I was, for lack of a better term, a guinea pig in the system, somebody with a visual impairment who hadn't treaded the waters of the Peel District School Board yet. It was a tremendous learning curve for me and those who taught me.

In that journey, however, as I said, I had access. Ultimately, I had the right to access education, which is something that I would not have had if I grew up in the village that I was born in. I would not have had the right to live with dignity because of the lack of access to education and, hence, the lack of access to reasonable participation in society. My education opened doors to a career and opened doors to community, family and leadership in the community.

I completed high school and went on to do a university degree at the University of Toronto in political science and industrial relations. I was planning a career in human resources, training and development, all that kind of lovely stuff. I studied employment law and all those matters that are relevant to understanding how rights operate in our society.

I ended up, however, working very briefly on a career in human resources. The universe had a different master plan for me that I had avoided to the best of my abilities, given the fact that I had enough disability experience personally: being blind, having two adult brothers with intellectual disabilities and a variety of needs and being their advocate, and having a younger sister for whom I blazed the trail so she could have it easier.

I ended up working in disability services and grass-roots communities advocating for rights, and really understanding how one's unique identity markers informed our whole experience, that we, as individuals with different disabilities, weren't just disabled individuals, but we had a whole range of elements that impacted the barriers that we experienced to participation and the accommodations that we needed.

0930

I ended up working for the CNIB. At the CNIB, an interesting issue that I tackled, which comes before the Human Rights Tribunal frequently, is the issue of service animals and people who are uncomfortable with them for interesting reasons. Particularly, in this case, I helped to bring together a number of spiritual leaders from within the Muslim community to talk about guide dogs and individuals who are blind, and that in fact, there was no conflict interacting with a guide dog that has a job to do. That's one of my priority issues that I hope I have the opportunity to work on when I'm given the opportunity to serve on the commission.

Going forward, I ended up working with the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario doing research, bringing people together, and educating individuals in communities on the rights of individuals with disabilities and how race, culture, gender etc. played a part in their lived experiences.

Fast forward, I continued working in disability rights. I went on to form non-profit organizations and establish a charity. I run the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities and Deen Support Services, providing direct service to individuals with disabilities, addressing gaps in the system, particularly for people with developmental disabilities.

I also run a council in Peel, the Muslim Council of Peel, representing a number of faith-based institutions in order to, again, raise awareness, educate and have a strategy to deal with issues arising around Islamophobia.

At the age of 40, being a mother of four, I decided to go back to school. I thought, I've gone enough to university campuses to lecture and speak; it's time to actually earn a graduate degree. I went and did a master's in critical disability studies at York University, again looking at individuals in Ontario and their experiences, so documenting people's narratives.

Really, I identify myself as an advocate and as an activist. I truly believe in the fact that we have a responsibility to ensure rights for everyone around us. It's not just about me exercising my rights; it's about me ensuring that my neighbour, my friend, my colleague or the stranger on the street has their rights ensured, too.

I'm a definite champion of disability rights. I served on the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council of Ontario. I also served as an adviser around diversity, culture and disability to our former Lieutenant Governor, David C. Onley. I have chaired the city of Mississauga's accessibility advisory committee for two terms—cumulatively, eight years—and continue to sit on it. I also sit on the region of Peel's accessibility advisory committee.

As an independent consultant, I've published articles. I speak to media. I've participated in broadcasts and documentaries often around disability, women's rights and issues of Islamophobia etc. I've presented at numerous conferences. I have provided training to hundreds of people around the AODA, the integrated customer service standards. I've worked on research projects.

I've worked with organizations looking at helping them develop a diversity and inclusion lens. Most recently, I worked on a project with York region. I've worked with private banks. I've worked in the not-for-profit sector and at the level of grassroots communities, with all communities.

I'm a big believer in our multicultural reality as a nation. I am a big believer in engaging all communities to address any social issues. I really feel strongly that we have to be cutting-edge when it comes to human rights, to lead the discourse; that it's really important, given the changing demographics that we have in our communities and our society, with the constant immigration and population growth etc.—

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): You have one minute.

Ms. Rabia Khedr: The world calls Ontario home and Canada home. It's important that we be proactive to identify and remedy competing interests and continue to educate and raise awareness around our individual civic responsibility to ensure rights.

I feel that I'm the right fit to bring a unique perspective on intersectionality when it comes to human rights in Ontario and developing policy further.

I'm excited that I have been given this opportunity to share who I am, and I welcome any questions. Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you very much. We appreciate you being here and sharing your journey with us this morning.

I'm going to give the floor to the official opposition for questions. Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's always interesting, sitting on this committee, when a witness comes up and answers most of the questions I had written down with their preamble. I certainly appreciate that.

One thing I'm interested in: You talked about guide dogs. I belong to the Lions Club in Monkton, the little

town I'm from, and we have sponsored the cost of training these dogs. Have you received a lot of complaints about the use of these dogs in public places? Is this something you've worked on?

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Generally, there doesn't seem to be an issue. Where there's an issue is, in Ontario, it's often—and those issues have gone before the human rights commission and the tribunal; the commission in the past and the tribunal more recently—around guide dogs in taxis, for example. Unfortunately, most of the taxi drivers are of Muslim backgrounds and they're confused with their spiritual obligations and cultural nuances. So there's a lot of educating that needs to be done there. But the average person is very comfortable. I think they understand when there is a working animal.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We're very fortunate to have a school in Oakville, which I've been to. It's amazing to see these animals and the trainers doing their work. So I was interested in your experiences with the guide dogs, and I certainly hope that if there's any problem, it is not a big issue, that proper steps can be taken to educate the public as to what they do.

Have you been given any guidance as to the time commitments involved with this position?

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Yes. It's a part-time function. It fits well within my responsibilities. My responsibilities are very flexible. My motto in recent years, as I've gotten to a stage in my life where I've really seen nothing, is, "I don't waste time seeing; I spend time doing." So I'm not processing unnecessary information. Keeping me busy is good.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We could all take that kind of advice.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Mr. Cho.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you very much for applying for this position. I was reading your résumé and I was very impressed. You've overcome so many challenges and you're applying for this important position.

I don't know if this is a fair question but I'm going to ask you anyway, if you could answer: When you become a member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, what kind of change would you like to bring to that organization so that people in a situation like yours could benefit?

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Again, there are 15 to 17 prohibited grounds of discrimination. My forte, or deeper understanding of them, is how they intersect and how those intersections multiply the barriers that individuals face in our society. I think that's the unique perspective that I have to offer in any policy development and discourse and education work that's taken on by the commission.

0940

I also would, certainly—just the sheer fact that a blind, brown woman who covers her head can make it to this position and speak at the same time is a powerful message to individuals who face barriers in our society.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Another question: I saw you do a lot of motivational speeches to different people and groups. I have a news group. I'd like to invite you there, but it's a very poor organization. You do provide speeches without getting honorariums? It's a personal thing—

Ms. Rabia Khedr: All the time. I come from the not-for-profit sector. I really am lousy at negotiating money. I can negotiate anything but money. Give me transportation, I'm there.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you, Mr. Cho. Mr. Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's an art to have a not-for-profit and not be able to negotiate. It's kind of tough.

I certainly did enjoy your 10 minutes—absolutely incredible. I will agree with a couple of things that you said before I ask you a couple of questions. Canada, without a doubt, is the best country in the world. I also believe that we should be proactive; we have to educate and make people more aware. The other words that you said that really stuck with me is that you want to be a champion for the rights for everybody, and I think that's just nice to hear.

I'm going to ask you just a couple of questions. Given your lived experience as a person with disability and a Muslim, I'm wondering if there are any particular experiences you have had, or have heard about others having, that you will bring to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and hope to be able to address through your appointment.

Ms. Rabia Khedr: I'm sorry; can you just repeat that last half? The experiences that I've had or I've heard of?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, that you could bring to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and hope to address through it.

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Well, again, like I said, the discussion around policy and intersecting identities, that's really important to me.

As I mentioned, the whole issue of service animals: There is no conflict within my faith when it comes to service animals. Some of our service providers are really confused around that. I really want to be able to offer education and raise awareness so that we don't have to have those cases coming forward by individuals who are blind or individuals who have a seizure disorder or an anxiety disorder and are using a service animal and are going to their doctor, their dentist or taking a cab and have to encounter unfortunate attitudes that then prevent them from getting to their appointment on time, etc. That's one area that I'm definitely very interested in working further on.

But, as I said, my forte is the idea of intersectionality: how a range of identity markers inform the experiences of individuals. This is something that I really learned, developed and honed through ERDCO, the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario. They were established simply because a racialized woman with a

disability and of a non-Christian faith was terminated from her employment. When she went on to seek supports, each organization or institution that she turned to kept turning her away because they were compartmentalizing her identity markers as disability or as race or as gender. No one was able to address the complete experience that she had gone through.

Mr. Wayne Gates: When Accessibility Ontario, with the disability act, was made law in 2005, it called on the Ontario government to ensure that all services were fully accessible by 2025, to ensure that no public money was spent in such a way as to increase barriers for people with disabilities, and to actually enforce the laws and regulations contained within the act. How do you think the government is doing on those three goals?

Ms. Rabia Khedr: I'd be lying if I said they were perfect and right on the money. We have a long way to go. Again, the standards set out requirements, but really, it's the will of organizations. We can do the bare minimum, or we can do a really tremendous job if we are truly committed.

Initially, when the accessible customer service standard was introduced and public sector organizations, the MUSH sector, were asked to provide training to their staff, some did live workshops and online workshops—I did live workshops for the University of Guelph around accessibility—and some institutions circulated a pamphlet. So it really comes down to the will of the people charged with the responsibility to implement accessibility within their environment. We need to continue supporting accessibility champions who will ensure that not only the letter of the law is being adhered to, but really the flavour and the intent behind the law, that we are truly creating an inclusive and accessible society. There is work to be done still.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you. This will be my last question, but I think it's really for us as well, my fellow MPPs. How is the government doing right here at Queen's Park, and shouldn't we be a leader in accessibility?

Ms. Rabia Khedr: I think Mr. Onley helped ensure a lot of accessibility at Queen's Park that didn't exist before. We've come a good way. I guess a little thing we noticed walking over here was, there's a path to walk to, but you have to jaywalk. So maybe having a crosswalk that's more accessible would be helpful to people. I could not make my way to Queen's Park from the subway from the outside on my own if I wasn't guided by someone. So there is still some work to be done—even right here.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Thank you, Mr. Gates. I'm going to turn it over to the government side, which has 30 seconds. Mr. Qaadri, please.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Rabia. Salaam aleikum and welcome to Parliament. I think all of us are very heartened and frankly even slightly stunned by your qualifications. It sounded like we were listening to Hillary Clinton. We welcome you and look forward to

you serving Ontarians in the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Shukria.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): That concludes the time for this interview. Thank you very much. You may step down now.

Ms. Rabia Khedr: Thank you.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): We will now consider the concurrence for Mrs. Qadira Jackson, who is nominated as member, Council of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. Would someone please move the concurrence? Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Ms. Martins, for the opportunity of moving concurrence on two such outstanding candidates, and they are as follows: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Qadira Jackson, nominated as member, Council of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Is there any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. We want to congratulate Ms. Jackson.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Congratulations, Mrs. Jackson.

Next concurrence—

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): We will now consider the concurrence for Ms. Rabia Khedr—and I apologize if I don't pronounce that correctly—who is nominated as member, Ontario Human Rights Commission. Would someone please move the concurrence? Mr. Qaadri.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I notice both our intended appointees today have variations of the name Qaadri, but in any case, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Rabia Khedr, nominated as member, Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): Is there any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. Congratulations, Ms. Khedr.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mrs. Cristina Martins): I believe there are some extensions that we need to agree upon right now. The Clerk is now distributing paper.

We have a couple of deadline extensions. They are the following:

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Douglas D. Ferguson, nominated as member, Trillium Gift of Life Network? It expires today, September 27, and we are going to be extending it to October 27, 2016. Do we have unanimous agreement on that? Yes.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Raymond Hession, nominated as member, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board? His certificate deadline expires today as well: September 27, 2016. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend to October 27, 2016? Agree? Thank you.

There is one more. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Margaret Reynolds, nominated as member, Landlord and Tenant Board (Social Justice Tribunals Ontario)? Her certificate expires today: September 27, 2016. We're seeking unanimous agreement to extend to October 27, 2016. Agree? Perfect. Thank you very much.

The committee is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0952.

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