

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-3

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-3

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 2 October 2018

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 2 octobre 2018

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Jocelyn McCauley

Président : John Vanthof
Greffière : Jocelyn McCauley

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4335

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 2 October 2018

Mardi 2 octobre 2018

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. SANDIE BELLOWS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Sandie Bellows, intended appointee as member, Niagara Parks Commission.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'd like to call this meeting to order. Good morning, everyone.

We have Sandie Bellows, nominated as member for the Niagara Parks Commission. Could you please come forward?

As you may be aware, you have the opportunity, should you choose to do so, to make an initial statement. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will start with the government, followed by the official opposition, with 15 minutes allocated to each recognized party. Any time you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

Could you please state your name for Hansard to start?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: My name is Sandie Bellows. I'm from St. Catharines, Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Go ahead. The floor is yours.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Hello, Chair and committee members. Thank you so much for this opportunity to present to you today. I am honoured to be considered for an appointment as a member of the Niagara Parks Commission.

I'm a single mother of two beautiful grown boys, Spencer and Colton. I'm currently a city councillor in the Niagara region for the city of St. Catharines. I'm a very active and hands-on, engaged councillor who cares about our community and does not back down when I know the right decision has to be made.

I have spent many years as a victims' rights advocate and have served my community as an elected official and in many volunteer capacities, including a few which I will mention. I'm an executive board member of Crime Stoppers Niagara and past vice-president for St. Catharines minor hockey. I'm currently a board member for St. Catharines minor female hockey. I've been tournament chair for Niagara Sports and Entertainment, and I've been instrumental in getting an MOU for illegal dumping with Niagara region and Crime Stoppers.

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to my home region of Niagara as a member of the Niagara Parks Commission.

Niagara is uniquely situated as one of Ontario's top tourism destinations—which maintains the shorelines of the Niagara River. We welcome over 14 million visitors a year, and growing. I have been an ambassador for tourism for Niagara for many years. I serve as a board member of the Niagara Grape and Wine festival, which just completed this weekend. We welcome thousands of visitors from—

Interruption.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Excuse me. There is going to be a vote, so we're going to have to recess until after the vote.

The committee recessed from 0903 to 0915.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'd like to call this meeting to order once again. Ms. Bellows.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Should I start from the beginning?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Start where you left off, please—about.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I was on such a roll.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We apologize for the bells of democracy.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No problem. Okay?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The floor is yours.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Thank you. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to my home region of Niagara as a member of the Niagara Parks Commission. I'm a local resident. I was born and raised in St. Catharines and have spent most of my entire life there.

Niagara Parks is uniquely situated as one of Ontario's top tourism destinations, which maintains the shoreline of the Niagara River. We welcome over 14 million visitors a year.

I have been an ambassador for tourism in Niagara for many years. I currently serve as a board member of the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, which just completed. We welcomed thousands of visitors from all over the world.

I'm also dedicated to enhancing residents' experiences at our local city parks, including working with various stakeholders, schools and residents to undertake cleanup, tree planting and other initiatives that support our parks and make local green spaces the best they can be.

I have a strong determination to preserve green spaces and enhance our local environment in parks—and importantly, the experience as a councillor of working with a decision-making body to move forward our goals and achieve great things for our community. I do commit to do the same in this role on the Niagara Parks Commission and would welcome any questions that you may have.

As a young girl, our family visited Journey Behind the Falls, the Whirlpool Aero Car, and the Maid of the Mist—now the Hornblower. We used to picnic at Queen Victoria Park as it was a beautiful place to have a picnic—safe and well preserved. We often had picnics, as well, as a family at Queenston Heights, and I did climb those stairs once. I have always been very close to Niagara parks, and taken drives through the Festival of Lights in the wintertime. I've also done some public speaking at the parks. Like I say, I'm dedicated and willing to do what we need to do to continue to enhance the Niagara Parks Commission.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you for your statement. The first round of questioning goes to the government. You have 11 minutes. Mr. Ke.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Hi. Thank you—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I can hardly hear.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for coming and appearing before the committee this morning. Our—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Can you hear me now?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes, thank you.

Interruption.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Once again, I apologize. It's not you; believe me.

The committee recessed from 0919 to 0920.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'd like to call the meeting back to order. We will break at about 10 minutes before we have to vote, if that's okay with everybody. Okay.

Once again, back to Mr. Ke.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Okay, let me continue. The Niagara Parks Commission is one of the very important agencies from our ministry. They have a \$21-million surplus and they have hired 1,700 employees; 300 are full-time and 1,400 are part-time.

In 2018, the Niagara Parks Commission released a new 10-year strategy plan. The plan lays out a series of actions under four themes. The four themes are: (1) preserving and showcasing the region's rich heritage, culture and lifestyle; (2) leveraging and activating the region's natural wonders and iconic experiences; (3) supporting a dynamic business environment; and (4) taking the NPC's services to the next level.

The question is: In the broader sense, what is your vision for the Niagara Parks Commission? Thank you.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Thank you for the question. My vision for the Niagara Parks Commission: I have spoken and I've done some research. I know that right now, one of the visions is the marina in Fort Erie, and trying to come to a conclusion and moving that forward. But any building that has to be done has to be within the Niagara Parks structure and will enhance the natural beauty. We don't

want it to look like a concrete palace. We want to make sure that it's a good win for everybody in Niagara.

Like you said, there are lots of people who have jobs in the Niagara Parks Commission. Although we want to preserve our natural heritage and cultural heritage, we also want to make sure that it's a welcoming place for visitors.

I believe, with what has happened recently—we've had to put up barricades to make visitors safe, and it has really helped the flow of traffic. So safety will be an issue, I would think, going forward. But I'm glad to see that they're already on top of that.

With the new Hornblower experience, that has really helped. It has replaced the Maid of the Mist, and I hear that it has really done well, as well as the zip-lining.

We have to preserve our natural, but we also have to look forward as to what people are looking for, to enhance their experience when they come to the Niagara parks.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Okay, thank you. Most of the tourism visits to Niagara Falls now are only a one-day trip. They go there and come back. If we can attract them to stay one overnight, that would be good for this commission. Thank you.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes, absolutely. I think a lot of people will come to Niagara Falls. Depending on the weekend—because I know from experience—the room rate, the price, can double. So sometimes it's not affordable for some families to stay overnight, but they're still there. You might think that they're not staying, but they could be staying outside of the Niagara Falls area and then just driving in every day.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: You're welcome.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Further questions? Ms. Fee.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you for coming here today and meeting with us.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Thank you.

Mrs. Amy Fee: To me, the biggest thing is making sure that someone that you put into a position like this has experience in the community, is really attached to the community and understands what's going on at the ground level. Certainly, by what you're describing today, being a city councillor and the different experiences that you have—I'm just wondering if you could walk us through some of your community involvement that you think will be best for this role.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. As I mentioned, I am a city councillor. I do a lot of networking with different stakeholders, different communities; travel and tourism, especially being on the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, with the parade; welcoming visitors—I was a city ambassador for that. Also, being right there, the feet on the ground, knowing what's available, what people are looking for—my experience as a tournament chair, running international tournaments.

Also, with Niagara Grape and Wine, when these hockey families come in, they're always wondering what's going on, so we try and promote the area. And not just Niagara Falls, but Queenston Heights, all along the Niagara River;

what a beautiful drive that is for any family, just to get in the car. It doesn't cost anything but your gas to go along the Niagara River Parkway and see all the sites, because you can look at other parks everywhere else, and they're all commercialized. But, really, the heritage and the old hydro buildings—just to look at them; they're breathtaking. They're beautiful—and the festival of lights.

There's lots that we can all do to promote it, but by living and being there you're not just talking the talk; you're walking the talk. I have a lot of that to give to Niagara Parks.

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: You're welcome.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you for being here, Ms. Bellows. I've had the chance to explore a lot of the Niagara region. One of our very close family friends used to own the closest bed and breakfast to the falls, so we went many times. I have fond memories of our first trip on the Maid of the Mist; it was still called that at the time. We were quite worried, because my brother was very young at the time and we weren't sure if he was going to be fine on the boat, but we had a good time. Along with that, exploring some of the lovely wineries in the area, which have really come to characterize the Niagara region.

One of the things that struck me whenever I was there, and travelling with our family friend, is how passionate the people in the Niagara region are about protecting the area and helping it grow and flourish. Would you be able to tell us a little bit about your roots in the region and what sorts of things you've done to really put down those strong roots in terms of family, being involved in the community—all of those sorts of things?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. Well, I come from a family—I have two brothers and one sister. My brother was a former NHL hockey player. We always had lots of people coming down to see him and touring the area, so our family was like an ambassador to the parks.

Like I say, I've been a victims' advocate. I have spoken at the park itself. I have done some public speaking with the police services there at the Niagara Parks. I have taken tours there, just on my own.

But I believe, with my city council experience, we've done a lot of—I believe that young people have to get engaged and involved with tree planting and taking them to see the native trees and the butterfly conservatory. There is so much to offer, but just getting the young people—and the older people, because, let's face it, Niagara has a lot of older adults, as they're called now—getting them engaged and making it a place that people can see things.

Affordable: It has to be affordable to everybody, because we want our local people are the ones that are going to support it. Sure, the tourists are there, but when it's off-season, that's your local people. I think having the lights there and just to be able to, like I say, picnic and park.

Like I say, my family has been there. I was born and raised in St. Catharines. The whole Niagara area—we're really proud of Niagara. We like as much green space as

possible, but we also have to grow with the times. Sometimes it's hard to get people, once they go past Burlington, to remember Niagara. But we're really proud of it, and we'll work hard to continue to bring people there and provide places for people to grow and see there.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: For sure. Thank you so much. You can certainly tell that you're very passionate about it, for sure.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Further questions? Ms. Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for appearing before us today. I also have some family and friends out in Niagara, mainly in Vineland. I've been to the Niagara wine festival and all sorts of things. I try to get out there when I can, when I'm not in Barrie–Innisfil.

As you know, our government, when we ran, we ran on restoring accountability and trust in government. It is overall one of our main priorities. One of the articles I had come across a few years ago was about a former Liberal appointee. It was discovered that he was charging the Niagara Parks Commission \$400,000 on flights, high-end hotels and pricey restaurants. This happened between the years 2006 and 2009. This included nightclubs and liquor store purchases.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): One minute left.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: He even claimed a pound of coffee as a meal. In your role, what would you do to restore accountability and trust again in this government agency?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Well, first of all, that would be totally unacceptable. As city councillors, we have a \$500 spending allowance. Sometimes I come close to that, sometimes I don't, depending on which conferences—but I think it's common sense. I think the day of the layers of fat are gone. People have to realize that these are taxpayers' dollars, so I would absolutely not tolerate that.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you. I appreciate the accountability and the trust; it's very important to our government moving forward.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. The time for the government is up.

The official opposition: Would you like to begin your questions?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Great. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you for coming here today—good morning.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: You're welcome. Good morning.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I have a few questions, which I'm going to start with, and then I'm going to hand it over to my colleague here.

Are you currently a candidate for regional council in St. Catharines?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes, I am.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So the election that's currently under way?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes, October 22.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Right. Are you familiar with the Niagara Parks Commission's code of conduct and the Public Service of Ontario Act?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Not 100%.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Are you familiar, then—you may not be familiar—with the requirement of the code of conduct and the act that candidates for elected office take an unpaid leave of absence, as per the Niagara Parks Commission code of conduct, throughout an election period? So you would be on a leave of absence until your re-election, if you are re-elected.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. So in three weeks, you mean?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Three weeks?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. That's right. So now you're familiar with that.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I am now. Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You're of course aware of the fact that there is only one seat on the board reserved for a Niagara region councillor and that that seat is appointed at the discretion of the council, not of cabinet.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: That's correct.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I wouldn't be part of the Niagara region.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Right, right.

Are you willing to withdraw yourself from this election in order to serve on the board, or do you intend to seek reappointment by the council if you are re-elected?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I'm sorry?

Ms. Marit Stiles: So if you're re-elected you would not be able to sit on this board, correct?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No—

Mr. Roman Baber: Just to clarify, this appointment is a provincial appointment; this is not a municipal appointment. So I would recommend that the member investigate the appointment before us and the nature of that appointment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our understanding is that—Chair? Our understanding is that if Ms. Bellows is re-elected to her council seat, then that would take precedence over the appointment—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Just wait a second—your mike is not on. Mr. Natyshak?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our understanding is that, if Ms. Bellows is re-elected and is successful in her municipal re-election campaign, then the appointment to this position, should she be nominated through the municipality, would be redundant and she would actually occupy that seat through her municipal lens rather than a government appointment—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Pardon—we need to recess because Mr. Natyshak's mike isn't working.

The committee recessed from 0933 to 0934.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay. Let's resume.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Our understanding is that there's a conflict here within the parameters set by the municipality and their appointment process. It's appointment

by municipality. If she occupies that seat, then she occupies a municipal appointment rather than a provincial appointment. So it would make this process redundant and take away that seat, potentially—we don't know the outcome of her election, nor do we know the outcome of the appointment through the municipal process.

That's what our contention is, and we wonder if the government has considered this and if the candidate has considered this.

Mr. Roman Baber: So even if you were correct—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Shouldn't we be speaking through the Chair? I'm just curious—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The government had—*Failure of sound system.*

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We need to recess again.

The committee recessed from 0934 to 0953.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I would like to call the meeting to order.

Ms. Bellows, could you please approach the chair?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Should I come back now?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Please come forward. Thank you.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: We're here.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Don't worry; we're good now. It's almost 10:30, so there won't be any more—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. That's fine.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Hopefully, we're not interrupted again.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: That's okay.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The opposition had the floor. You have 11 minutes left on the clock.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: So can I finish answering your question from when we got cut off?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That's up to the questioners. If you would like to start a new round of questions—

Ms. Marit Stiles: We have other questions.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, we've got more questions. We'll move on.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: So you don't want me to explain the two? One's a provincial—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, we'll clarify it later on.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, thank you. I have a question for you. Are you familiar with the Auditor General's report that just came out about the Niagara Parks Commission?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It pointed out a lot of difficulties that we've touched on previously a little bit here: the weak governance, the operational practices, the HR policies. Do you want to talk just briefly about how you think you're going to actually help to address some of those issues raised by the Auditor General?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: First of all, are you speaking about what happened in 2009-10?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm speaking about the Auditor General's report that just came out a few days ago.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. I understand that there were some issues regarding the hiring practices and processes. I think that new processes and protocols will have to be in place. I understand that Niagara Parks is in a surplus this year, so things—I was told, when I read they were in a surplus—are moving ahead. The problems from the past have all been addressed and looked after.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Have you actually read the report itself, the Auditor General's report?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, I just read a brief about the surplus and the financial statements.

Ms. Marit Stiles: One of the issues that she raises is that—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Who is “she”?

Ms. Marit Stiles: That the Auditor General raises.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay.

Ms. Marit Stiles: One of the problems that the Auditor General raises is that municipal goals have been put ahead of regional interests. For example, the interest in attracting investment into municipalities instead of conservation interests has been raised. Do you feel that maybe partisan politics in particular have played a role in some of the decisions, some of the issues?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Absolutely, and I totally disagree with it. I've always, as a city councillor, been non-partisan, because that's what municipal politics is about.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay, thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much, Ms. Bellows, for being here. Sorry for the crazy interruptions.

Did you seek out this appointment or did somebody offer it to you within the government?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, I went online and looked at provincial appointments in our area. I applied through the secretariat online, and I applied for different appointments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You applied for multiple appointments?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How many?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I just put in a basic and interests were Niagara Parks, local, because I really don't want to be in Toronto every day.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you recall how many appointments you'd applied for online? How many different ones?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Like I say, I did a general. My interests were Niagara Parks, the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and criminal injuries compensation, I believe.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So nobody within the current government, the new government, had approached you or offered an appointment?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No. I asked if I could apply for appointments, because I just wanted to make sure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You asked? Who did you ask?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: The secretariat. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't in conflict with anything, so I just wanted to know how I would go about it. After I researched online, that's when I found the office number and called to see if it was okay that I could apply for appointments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What were your concerns about potential conflict?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: That I had run as a candidate in the last election, so I just wanted to make sure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So conscientious that you have acted as a partisan and now seeking out an appointment from the current government.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes, as a non-partisan. Yes. I wanted to make sure that that was aboveboard.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So you have, in the past, run as a candidate for the PC Party?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Absolutely.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Once or twice?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Twice: 2011, under Tim Hudak, and then 2018 under Premier Ford now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I assume, but I will ask the question—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Sure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —that you have made financial contributions and donations to the PC Party of Ontario?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Probably in 2011.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That was your most recent campaign?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, 2018 was my most recent campaign.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I always donate the maximum to my own campaign—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I did not, no.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You don't donate to your own campaign?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, I don't.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, that's good for you.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: My family does, but I don't. Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. That's good. Interesting.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I don't understand why it's laughable.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Because I always have to donate to my own campaign, so it's interesting—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Okay. It's just different outlooks, right?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes. I believe in myself and I invest in myself. That's why—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I believe in myself. But, like I say, I've just got my family, and I did a lot of fundraising.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So you received donations from various people?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever received donations from any developers who may have ties to the Niagara River corridor, either in your municipal runs or your provincial campaigns? Would they have been donors to your campaign?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I really don't know my donations off by heart. Developers in the Niagara corridor? Perhaps one.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you recall who it might be?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes. Rainer Hummel. I believe there was a donation of \$250.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We see that there are folks outside of government who always are trying to penetrate the inner workings of government through association or through donation. Do you sense that that might have been any motivation on the part of those donors?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They were just supporting your campaign?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Yes. People believe in me.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's very good. It's important.

Ms. Bellows, the parks commission is responsible for areas including conservation and preservation of green spaces. Have you ever spoken to or met with developers who had inclination or intention or proposals to develop properties adjacent to or nearing any of the Niagara parks—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You can't recall that anyone ever talked about potential development who may have wanted to meet with you?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, nor have I met with any.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's pretty much the extent of my questions for you. My colleague might want to elaborate a little bit.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm trying to understand the remuneration for this position, which I understand is a per diem. Do you have a sense of how much people in this position have earned previously in previous years?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I did look at remuneration, and I saw that some had zero dollars. The chair, I believe, when I looked, was under \$30,000 last year—the latest figures.

Ms. Marit Stiles: According to the Auditor General's reports, there have been, under expenses perhaps—that maybe were not per diems, but other perks to the role.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: To be honest with you, I haven't looked into that. I'm not here to make money. I'm here to better our community.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, but you can understand—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I understand where you're coming from because of what happened in the past, absolutely.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Not only that, though. I think it is also our job, as representatives, to ask the difficult questions. These are the kinds of things that people are concerned about sometimes.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Absolutely, especially in Niagara.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm sure. It's: Are you beholden to corporate interests, particularly developers? That's why my friend was asking those questions. You can understand, then, I'm sure, why we would have concerns about donations to your campaigns from developers, particularly in this kind of role, where we've noted that the Auditor General has said specifically—actually, in this report that

just came out a couple of days ago—that there has been a real issue with municipal goals around investment outweighing the conservation goals of the commission.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: I don't think it's just developers. I think you have to look at the unions and where their ties are, too. But the way I look at it is that you have to govern and you have to be truthful and honest to yourself. I've never taken a dime from anybody; I've never taken a bribe, nor do I plan to.

I have a good reputation in St. Catharines and the Niagara area. Especially since I was the victim of a crime, I've always tried to help victims through this with no remuneration. I volunteer hours and hours and hours to help people move forward. There is no way that I could ever be tied to any wrongdoing because I don't believe—like I say, I don't just walk the walk; I walk the talk as well.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I just have one more question.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): You have about a minute and a half left.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ms. Bellows, there has been a lot of talk about regional positions in regional councils and the makeup of municipal councils. MPP Oosterhoff has spoken about some potential reductions in the regional council in your area. Have you spoken to MPP Oosterhoff about what potentially might be coming down the pipe from this—

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No, I haven't. I've stayed right out of it.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): One minute.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you spoken to any elected official about that?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do we still have time on the clock, Chair?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Chair?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): Yes, it's a point of order.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Point of order: Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Point of order: I don't see how that question is relevant to the Niagara Parks Commission.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): It's the purpose of the loyal opposition to ask questions. It's their time to ask questions. That's not a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How much time?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Forty-five seconds.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: During the election campaign, a video surfaced of then-candidate Ford speaking with developers and promising to open up green space in the greenbelt. He then had to retract and backtrack on that. Does that give you any cause for concern, that their ultimate motive would be opening up these spaces and appointing people to positions who might be more inclined or motivated to do that because of their partisan stripes?

Ms. Sandie Bellows: No. I know that meeting took place at the chamber of commerce in St. Catharines, I be-

lieve it was, and right away he retracted that. That conversation happened earlier than the meeting in St. Catharines, and he told them that he was not going to develop the green space.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The time for questioning has concluded.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order—no, I guess I'd like to request from legislative research, perhaps, some more information about the nature of this appointment in relation to, and how it's potentially impacted by, the municipal election that's currently under way.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That's a legitimate question.

Ms. Sandie Bellows: Can I answer that? I have the answer to that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, but I would like legislative research—it's just a request.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The time has concluded. That's a question to legislative research.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, it's just a request for legislative research. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That concludes the time allocated for questions. Thank you very much for the much-interrupted session. You may step away from the table.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair, I'd like to make a motion. Pursuant to standing 108(f)8, I request that concurrence on the vote on Sandie Bellows be deferred.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The motion is in order. The deferral of the concurrence vote on Sandie Bellows is deferred for seven calendar days.

We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1007.

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