

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-19

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-19

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 4 June 2019

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 4 juin 2019

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Jocelyn McCauley

Président : John Vanthof
Greffière : Jocelyn McCauley

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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

CONTENTS

Tuesday 4 June 2019

Subcommittee report	A-147
Intended appointments.....	A-147
Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy	A-147

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 4 June 2019

Mardi 4 juin 2019

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): The first item of business this morning is the subcommittee report dated May 30, 2019. We have all seen the report in advance, so could I please have a motion? Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, May 30, 2019, on the order in council certificate dated May 21, 2019.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Any further discussion? Seeing none, could we have a vote on the committee report? All those in favour? Any opposed? That is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. LALITHA POONASAMY

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Lalitha Poonasamy, intended appointee as member, College of Nurses of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Our next order of business: We have Lalitha Poonasamy—I hope I got that right—nominated as member for the council of the College of Nurses of Ontario. Could you please come forward? Good morning.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Good morning.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): 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 official opposition, followed by the government, 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. Welcome. The floor is yours.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you and answer any questions you'll have afterwards.

I wrote something down so I could try to keep it on track, but I forgot my glasses, so we'll just kind of wing it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Need these?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I can still kind of see.

Briefly taking you through some of my experiences that I think would be relevant for me to be appointed to the board of the College of Nurses of Ontario: My educational background is a degree at Brock University in child psychology and sociology. My intent was to go on to teachers' college, but as life sometimes takes a turn, mine took a turn one summer when I got a summer job as a receptionist at a small animation company in Toronto called Cuppa Coffee animation.

The company, if you wanted to call it that, was basically five friends who had a passion for arts, animation and creating things. They were doing small commercials, work for MuchMusic—this was back in the mid-1990s. They just had a great passion for the arts. However, I quickly realized they did not have a passion for bookkeeping or anything on the business side of things. Even though I was supposed to just answer phones and do light duties, I stepped up and started doing their accounting and, as they got busier, taking care of legal agreements and contracts.

One of the original animators and myself took that little company and, over the next 20 years, we grew it into the largest stop-motion animation company in North America—very exciting. We had over 250 employees. We were doing work for Disney, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, HBO—oh, my God—Warner Brothers, Cartoon Network, MTV, and so many more. I had to look up all the people we used to do work with, there were just so many. We were worldwide at this point. We were actually producing the most minutes in stop-motion animation for any company in the world at that time. I don't know if you know stop-motion. It's very long, intensive and everything.

The company grew, and my role in the company—in a company of that size, you just have so many different roles. I was involved in every aspect of it. In the end, I was mostly focused on finance, budgets and all legal agreements. But I still overlooked the whole company of 250 people. By that point, we had moved into our own building that was 50,000 square feet, so I was overlooking that. That alone is a job in itself. It was good times; exciting.

Obviously, myself and my partner couldn't do all of this ourselves, and we did it by surrounding ourselves with intelligent, highly driven people. We knew to ask the right questions. Sometimes we didn't even know what the right questions were, but we asked the questions. We laid out all the answers in front of us and tried to make the best

decision. Luckily, we made a lot of great decisions to get to where we were.

Before we bought our own building, we were part of an arts building in downtown Toronto called 401 Richmond. A lovely lady, Margie Zeidler, owned the building. She had a big heart and loved to give back to the community. She put out a notice to the tenants that she was going to donate space in the building for any of the tenants who wanted to get together to start a not-for-profit daycare. I jumped at this opportunity. I was not going to not get involved in this.

Like many times when something like this comes up for volunteer work, the first meeting—30, 40 people had shown up for the first meeting; all tenants; very excited. Most of them had kids, so having a daycare in their building would have been great. By the second meeting, there were seven of us. So our group of seven, we hired someone to guide us through the process of starting a not-for-profit, and someone who had expertise in child care.

This is how I found myself on my first board. We successfully opened. It was called Studio 123 Early Learning Centre. We opened that—I think it was around 1999, and that daycare centre is still there today. It's something I'm very proud of. While I was there on the board, I was treasurer and president. When we bought our own building and moved away, I stepped down from the board. It was just too difficult; we were across town.

My other volunteer experience would be when I was at Brock University. I used to volunteer in the campus daycare. Also, I was a big sister with the Big Sisters of Toronto—there's a big brother over there.

Why am I interested in the board for the CNO? A few reasons. Four years ago, I retired. Retirement is great for about six months, and then you find yourself trying to look for something else of interest to keep growing—yes, just something of interest to keep growing and making a difference. Also, a friend of mine in cottage country—she's a councillor for the city of Kawartha Lakes and she sits on a few boards—was telling me, “You should do something.” This is how I found out about these appointee positions. I didn't even know about it. So I went home, went online, filled out the application—whatever I had to fill out—and one of the ministry staff reached out to me, and here we are today. I'm very excited about this.

I've mentioned my background in education, child care and volunteer work, and my extensive business and career experiences—which are all attributes to sit on a board—but you're still probably wondering why the college of nurses. Personal experience: My father was a doctor, so I grew up around the dinner table, listening to all his experiences, positive and negative. When I was a child, I used to follow him to the hospital when he was doing his rounds or to Extencicare and also many, many house calls. I guess I just wouldn't let him leave me at home. I wanted him to take me. And, I'll let you know, the doctor's lounge at Centenary Hospital had a Pac-Man machine back then, so there was a little incentive there. Having my dad as a doctor, I was always surrounded by health care

professionals—there'd be doctors, nurses, administrators. So that's how I grew up.

Then as an adult, my ex-father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law were all doctors in the UK. My mother-in-law was a nurse in the UK. Again, as an adult, I found myself sitting around dinner tables discussing the positives, the negatives, the challenges and everything. So that's where my underlying interest may lie in joining this board.

0910

That's probably it. It's probably better if you ask me questions, and then I can focus in more on what you want to know.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much for your opening statement.

The first round of questioning will go to the official opposition. Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, Ms. Poonasamy. How do I say your last name again?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Poonasamy. It's a tongue twister.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Poonasamy. That's awesome. Thank you. Congratulations on your imminent appointment. Thanks for appearing here before us today. We appreciate it.

A couple of questions: They are a little bit off the beaten path in terms of what you had presented, but as members of the opposition, we are duty-bound to ask them. Please don't take offence, but they are kind of quick and pointed questions.

Have you ever been a member of the Conservative Party of Canada?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Are you currently a member of any political party?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever donated to a political campaign?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I did.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Which one?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I think it was last year or the year before, to the PC Party.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Was it a candidate or to the party itself?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: It was a candidate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you remember which candidate?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes, Mike Harris Jr.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You had mentioned that a councillor had approached you in terms of informing you about government appointments and agencies. Do you remember which councillor had informed you?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: My girlfriend. She's a councillor for the city of Kawartha Lakes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you remember her name?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes: Kathleen Fagan-Seymour.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Had you ever applied for an appointment prior to that, or were you even aware of the appointments process?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No. She was actually trying to get me—my cottage/lake house is up in Bobcaygeon. That's her area, and she was trying to get me to go on a lot of councils, you know, the local things, and I was like, "Ehh"—you know, doing the flowers-in-December type thing. She just mentioned—she's on the OPP, I think, and I'm like, "How do you get on things like that?"

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Was the College of Nurses the only appointment vacancy that you applied for?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You applied for others?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: At the same time?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes. It gave you a checklist of your interests, and I checked off a few. There were a lot of interesting—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So other than your family relationship around health care and medicine, do you have any direct experience with health care?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Do you have any experience around developing professional standards for any type of industry, industrial standards or the like?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Standards: Well, I did mention my background being in the arts and the animation company and it being one of the biggest. I don't know if it was a formal board, but Sheridan College asked me to sit in on a lot of their meetings and guide how their curriculum was going to go. At the time, they didn't have a stop-motion curriculum, so I helped develop it for them. Is this what you're talking about?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, kind of. I just want to know if you've had experience in reviewing professional standards and if you've incorporated your education into the development of that, if you were on the front lines of doing that—

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I'm going to say yes, then.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. That's okay, fine. Through your course of education or your professional experience, have you ever taken a course or been certified in any measure of corporate ethics or public ethics, anything like that?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, okay—just around conflict of interest and harassment policy or discrimination policy, anything like that?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No. Running a huge company, I obviously had to do some human resources things.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sure, and know laws on the books kinds of things.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes, and also comply with—we use a lot of chemicals in stop-motion animation. You actually build sets and you build puppets and everything. That's why you need such a large space; you have big departments. I, for months, had to deal with complying

with health and safety to make sure we were venting everything properly and that all the employees were safe.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I do not doubt that you are a quick study, and I'm sure that you will be able to understand the complexities of nursing and the profession of nursing real quick, but can you give us one correlation between your professional career and what your role will be as a member of the board with the college of nursing? Where do you see a correlation there that can absolutely be an attribute to it? Other than the business and the management side, is there something that you could say?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Okay, good question. I think that with any industry—you can look at it as a business. One of the important things with boards is just to try to ask the right questions. You put all those answers in front of you, and you try to make sense of it.

With a board, it's great. I've actually looked up the College of Nurses board. Wow, it's made up of amazing people; just smart, smart people. I'm not going to go in knowing everything right away. There's going to be a ramp-up time, obviously, to learn things. But as far as any board decisions have to be made, I think it just comes down to asking questions, hiring the right people to sometimes guide you, and making informative decisions.

As far as nursing and anything in the medical thing, as far as my nursing would go, it's putting a Band-Aid on a boo-boo and that's it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The practical side of it, yes.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes, the practical side. I do know more. But, obviously, it's more of the interest of what's best for the public. With the changing environment, the growing population, the growing aging population, things are going to be changing. I think you have to just get people in, ask the right questions and hopefully make the right decisions.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you so much. I really appreciate you appearing before us and taking the time to come here. I wish you all the best.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm going to pass the rest of the time over to my colleague.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Okay.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hi. Good morning. Thank you for being here, and congratulations on your impending appointment.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you. It's exciting.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I believe Cuppa Coffee Studios is located in my riding, in the Junction Triangle, right? It's on Edwin Ave.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: It was. I left four years ago, when they were moving. We used to be at 53 Ontario Street, which used to be the old Partners' building, which was huge in the TV industry. When I left is when they were making the move to Edwin Street.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I thought, "Okay, this is where I'm going to step down."

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good timing.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: And it was actually good timing, yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: My colleague here has asked a lot of more significant questions about your appointment. I just want to provide a little background and understanding on why we ask some of these questions, which is that we have seen a pattern of what we would call patronage—partisan—appointments to boards and commissions by this government. It's not entirely surprising that a new government would want to put people in place who share their perspective on things, but we have seen quite a large number of people being appointed that way, which is why we ask these questions and why we're interested in things like connections via donations etc. I'm sure you can appreciate that. One of the roles of this committee is to actually provide that sort of accountability and transparency for the people of Ontario.

My colleague did talk a little bit, and ask you a little bit, about some of your background in this sector. I guess I was curious about whether or not you are familiar with some of the overall changes, quite significant changes, that are happening in the health care sector in Ontario, and if you have any comments on that.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, talking directly with the nurses' association—

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think we can look more broadly, because nurses, of course, exist within a broader health care sector.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes. Well, like I said, with the aging population, we all have elderly parents or—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry to interrupt, but we have limited time. I'm more interested in specifically the changes that the government is undertaking with regard to the restructuring of health care services in Ontario.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I think it's amazing, what I've read so far, as far as nurses taking on a bigger responsibility for—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you see that as part of their plan?
0920

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, it's just that the system is going to—there's stress on the system, so wherever nurses like RNs can step up and do things, like prescribe topical medications and things like that—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you agree with an expansion of their regular—

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, they did this in 2017. I think it was passed already.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Some things have changed, but do you believe in a further expansion of the profession in terms of—

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: I'd have to have more information in front of me to give you an affirmative answer to that. But as times change, as the trends change—this is why there are boards like this, to make sure that the profession changes with the times and that the public's safety is there. I know that what was passed in 2017 did make sense to me. Nurse practitioners are taking on bigger roles, which in smaller areas, like where I spend a lot of my time—

Ms. Marit Stiles: I completely agree.

Just so I can be sure—you talked about some of your donations to the Conservative Party and to particular candidates. Have you been a volunteer in campaigns for the Conservative Party?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No? Not at all?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No political campaigns?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Now we will go to the government: Mr. Cuzzetto.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you for being here this morning. I'm very honoured to have you here today.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Could you please elaborate on your experience with Cuppa Coffee and how the experience makes you a candidate for this job?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, from a business perspective I was able to take a small company and grow it into one of the largest companies in its field in North America. Doing that, I had to educate myself on many things. I'm not an expert on animation. How did I end up running the largest company? Well, you find the right people. You put them in front of you, you ask the questions, you make informative decisions and keep your fingers crossed.

Sitting on a board: I've sat on boards. I've sat in a lot of boardrooms. As far as the College of Nurses, I know there's going to be a ramp-up time for me to understand. I'm not going to go into the first meeting knowing everything. There's going to be ramp-up time. I view myself as an intelligent person. I'm driven, and if I do put myself towards something, I'm going to do it. I'm not going to do it half-assed. It's like I'm all-in. That's just my personality.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Good. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Good morning.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Good morning.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Good to have you here this morning.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: You're talking about your volunteer group of over 30, and then the next meeting it was down to seven, so I view that as the Magnificent Seven.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Ah. Exactly.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: There you go.

You mentioned also about volunteering and being a Big Sister.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm a big supporter back in Chatham-Kent, my riding, of Big Brothers Big Sisters. They're both—Big Brothers and Big Sisters—big fund-raisers. I'm certainly—

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes. Amazing organization.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oh, they truly are.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: They make such a difference.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I even had a staffer who still remains a Big Brother.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: He's got his mug.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That's right. It's good to see.

Well, I digress, but let me get back on focus again for just a moment. You have an extensive history of volunteer work.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: What we'd like you to do is just expand on your experiences and the causes you are passionate about and how they relate to nurses.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: And how they relate to nurses?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, the causes and everything—I've always been involved in anything to do with children. It was because of my background going into child psychology, wanting to go to teachers' college. When I volunteered at the campus, I was first year and I went to the campus daycare and I said, "Hey, can I volunteer here a couple of days a week?" "Sure." They gave me the days and the times that I could come in.

So I did that for the whole year, and at the end of the year one teacher at the daycare goes, "Okay. Well, do you have your forms for me to fill out?" I'm like, "What forms?" She says, "Your forms for your credit, for your time that you had to do." I think in third year you had to do time. I said, "Oh, no, I'm first year." She's looking at me bewildered, and she's like, "Well, why are you here?" I'm like, "Because I wanted to be here." She looked at me like I had three heads. Anyway, I'm like, "No, not third year. Just wanted to give some of myself."

I also find when you volunteer—they call it volunteer work. Sure, there's work involved, but I find it rewarding. When you volunteer, when you can make a difference in a child's life at a daycare, at Big Sisters or as a volunteer on a board where you're setting a curriculum for students to follow to get better jobs, it's rewarding. You don't have to be paid to do that work. The reward, I think, sometimes is enough to make a difference.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, I think they say that if you enjoy what you do, you'll never work another day in your life.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Exactly.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I appreciate it. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Yes, thank you.

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning. Thank you, Ms. Poonasamy, for being here today. As a registered nurse, I wanted to thank you for volunteering for this opportunity. It is very important that citizens like yourself volunteer and give perspective.

I just wanted to remind the committee of the role of the council: "The college's council sets the direction for the regulation of the nursing profession in Ontario." While 21 members are elected in accordance with the bylaws, 14 of

which are RNs and seven are RPNs, there are 14 to 18 public members appointed by cabinet who provide a non-professional citizens' perspective. While they're expected to be interested in the affairs of the college as well as health policy, they are not assumed to be experts on the health profession. They have volunteered to regulate. So we do need your perspective, as a consumer of the health care system and as a regular citizen, to inform the College of Nurses.

You mentioned a few things, such as the aging population and the changes that are happening within our health care system. I think my colleague alluded to the expanded scope of practice when it comes to different professionals, and there were actually several of them mentioned in this year's budget. I know that when it comes to the RNs, that is being reviewed by the College of Nurses right now, when it comes to the additional role of prescribing. But what do you hope to accomplish during your time with the college? What are some of your interests and where do you see yourself contributing?

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Well, I'm not on the board. I don't know much about it, other than what I looked up. I did look up the president of the board and the two vice-presidents, and, oh, my God, these women are just brilliant. They're outstanding. The president, Cheryl Evans, is an RN and has her master's in science in nursing and also does lectures at McMaster, I believe. She is award-winning—these are highly intelligent, driven people. Heather Whittle, who is the vice-president: same thing; award-winning, does lectures at U of T. There is an Ashley Fox, who is an RPN—and their volunteer work alone, never mind the committees they sit on. Ashley Fox describes herself as a "Jack of all trades" on her LinkedIn page, and she really is. She's an amazing person. She's awesome—someone you'd even want to hang out with.

These are the nurses on the board who I think will be guiding where the board is going to go and make decisions. They already have their vision for 2020 that they're working on. I think their board's year is just up, so they'll start their new year. They've hired a company called Level5 Strategy Group to come up with new areas that they think they should be looking at.

It's a smart board, and like you said, it's made up of many nurses, nurse practitioners and public appointees. I'm not on the board yet, but I'm excited because these are really smart, driven people. So I can't tell you what part I will play until I'm there, and they'll say, "You're going to do this," or, "You're going to sit on that subcommittee."

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much. That concludes the time allotted for questioning by the government.

Thank you for your time. You may step down.

Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We will now consider the intended appointment of Ms. Lalitha Poonasamy, member for the council of the College of Nurses of Ontario. Ms. Fee.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Lalitha Poonasamy, nominated as member for the council of the College of Nurses of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Ms. Fee. Is there any further discussion? Seeing none, I would like to call for a vote. All those in favour? Opposed? Concurrence is passed.

0930

Our next order of business: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Brett Todd, selected from the May 10, 2019, certificate, is June 9, 2019. Do we—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry. A point of order.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Could we continue this before the—okay.

Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Brett Todd to July 9, 2019? I heard a no, so we do not have unanimous consent.

On a point of order: Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I think this week was the third attempt we've made to hold a subcommittee meeting of this committee. We've had no luck in nailing down Conservative members. In fact, one day we had an agreement, and nobody from the Conservative side appeared at the subcommittee meeting.

The purpose of that subcommittee meeting, as I've said here on numerous occasions now, is to try to find a way for us to do the work that is required of us, as members of provincial Parliament and as members of this committee.

I hope the other members opposite are actually listening to this, because I think it's really important.

We have attempted on numerous occasions to have a subcommittee meeting so that we could do the right thing and have a conversation about how we go about scheduling meetings at a time, or perhaps more committee meetings, to ensure that we can review the appointments that we've been asked to review, so that people can come here. We've had a very bad track record of getting government appointees here before this committee.

I just want to raise this as an ongoing concern, that the government members opposite don't seem to have time to sit down for a phone call of the subcommittee to meet and discuss this really important matter.

As I have said on numerous occasions, Mr. Chair, we understand that any new government is going to want to put many new appointments in place. We understand that. But it is also the role of this committee and us, as MPPs, to do due diligence here in this committee, and to have a chance to interview the candidates and understand what they have to offer to Ontarians.

I think this is a really sad day for democracy, actually. This government is essentially blocking our privilege. I'm not going to use the word "contempt," but it borders on such.

I'd love to hear, Mr. Chair, from the members opposite about why it is that they can't even meet for a subcommittee to discuss this ongoing issue.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you, Ms. Stiles. Is there any further discussion regarding this issue? Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Chair. On that point—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Nicholls, I asked if there was any further discussion; you didn't indicate. Mr. Natyshak asked for the floor. After Mr. Natyshak is done, you are welcome to have the floor, sir.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Chair. I think my colleague raises a really important and fundamental point about the work that this committee does. As I understand it, this committee is unique in its construct in that it is not bound by orders in council in terms of having to extend itself and to determine its own work. That means that members of this committee are in full control of the schedule and the deputants which we seek and listen to and hear from.

It's evident, since this committee has been called, that the government has no intention of getting through the massive backlog that exists and giving a clear picture to Ontarians as to the credibility and the qualifications of the appointees they are naming and that need to appear before this committee. It is a shame. I have yet to see the likes of this action in this House in my tenure as an elected official.

We've given the government ample opportunity and chances. We've extended the olive branch. We've asked to meet in subcommittee, to try to figure out some sort of a schedule or a plan to start to chip away at the backlog and start to give some clarity and an opportunity for those deputants who wish to come and state their credentials and wish to come and tell us what their motivations are, just like the deputant we heard today. She had mentioned that she's excited to get going; we need to hear that from folks.

But this government and the members of this committee aren't doing their job, because we see them stalling that process. So I certainly want to get it on the record.

I hope that my colleagues across the way understand that it's important work. This is not a game to be played in this committee. This is really important work. You've been vested with some important tools to be able to do that work, and we wish that you would take advantage of them.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Any further discussion? Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: We do do our due diligence over on this side. We have a group of people that are working behind the scenes diligently to ensure the qualifications of individuals who have expressed interest, and we have seen individuals come forward to this committee for appointments who may have different coloured stripes, as I might say. To indicate that we're not doing our job—I do take offence to that.

Also, I do take offence to some of the insinuations from members on the opposite side who continually—it's just a continuation of what I see even in the Legislature during question period and during debate: accusations and name-

calling. I take offence to that. I think that that decorum has to greatly improve, or else you'll continue to see where we just—there you go; we see a shaking of the head. Again, I've never seen the decorum, over my last eight years, as I've seen it now. I would just certainly hope that the decorum in this place—totally, in this place as well as in the committee—will improve.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'm going to give Ms. Khanjin, and try to and keep equal—

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to ask the Clerk a question in terms of procedure. In the past when this committee has met, you cannot get through all of the appointments before committee. There is a process outside of this, the order-in-council process. Can you explain that process and how the backlog issue is not really—procedurally, the order in council does its role and this committee is complementary to that role.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): How it worked in the previous Parliament, under the standing orders—under standing order 108, the committee has the ability, with unanimous consent, to extend the deadline for any individual if the committee won't have time within the 30-day period to actually consider that. In the previous Parliament, that unanimous consent was extended by the committee in all cases except for one during the Parliament. But there is the second process, which is, like you said, complementary to it. So it can be done either way, and it's up to the committee to determine, with unanimous agreement, whether or not it will grant that UC.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: But an appointment would not be stalled or backlogged. If the person being appointed was not before this committee, it would not cause that person to not be appointed or a backlog. Correct?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): No, it doesn't delay the process in any way. Everything does go through within that 30-day period. It's only if the committee decides, with unanimous agreement, to extend that deadline for any number of days that they see fit that the process will be not delayed but extended.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: But there's a process that is in place for all of this, and it's a legislative process as well.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): Yes.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Just following up on that point, I just want to repeat what the Clerk has said here, which is that, under the previous government, unanimous consent was extended under standing order 108 to all instances of cases where an appointee was unable to appear within the initial allotted time. Is that correct?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I'm going to ask that we have a report on that tabled here. I think there may even be one that's prepared, and we could have that tabled.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): I can distribute it to committee members—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you very much. That would be much appreciated.

Just one further note, which is that I think it's important that we all understand here that the matter we're raising isn't about whether or not a member can still be appointed under an order in council; it's whether or not the people of Ontario have a chance to see that person be reviewed and that we as parliamentarians have an opportunity to ask important questions and understand better the credibility and the qualifications of the appointees.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you, Ms. Stiles. Just a clarification: You've asked for a report to be brought forward to this committee. Would you like that to be a request of the entire committee or a personal request? Would you like to ask the committee to ask for that request?

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, I would personally like to request that that be distributed to all members of the committee.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): But for that report to be created, we need agreement by the full committee. So are you asking for that report for the committee?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd like to personally ask for that report, and then I guess I can just do what I—yes, fair enough. Okay. I'll do that. Thank you—for just me.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Just on this point of order.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I listened to my colleagues across the way and I appreciate their perspective. On both their points, they feel quite comfortable that, despite deputants not appearing before this committee, they're confident that those deputants and those appointees fill the criteria, and that's great that they feel that way.

Mr. Nicholls, with all due respect, pointed to some internal staff who do the selection process and do some vetting. Again, with all due respect, sir, they are not elected officials. They are not duty bound to ask difficult questions and to vet fully the folks who are intended appointees. That's your job; that's our job; we were elected to do that.

If you want to turn this committee into a rubber stamp, which is what we see you doing, then that's your prerogative, but it is our prerogative to raise that issue and to inform Ontarians that that's what you're doing with the appointments process. And it doesn't sit well with Ontarians. They want to see fully nuanced and they want to see some accountability and transparency in this process, and you're not giving it to them. That's what we're asking you for.

To Ms. Khanjin's question, I think you proved our point exactly. Because of the constructs of this committee, despite deputants appearing before us, they do go through the process. It seems like you're relying on that loophole pretty exclusively to get your folks through, because the people whom we have seen—we have proven there's quite a track record of patronage here. You hear the questions. I know they're uncomfortable for you to hear when we ask if they have any partisan affiliation to your party or the federal party, or your candidates or have been a candidate.

We know that that's uncomfortable for you, but that's the track record that you're putting forward. We think it's a disservice to not only this committee and to the history of this committee, but also to the people of the province.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Seeing no further discussion, could I ask committee members if it is worth the effort to try and put another subcommittee together to discuss this issue?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Of course. It's our job.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, please. Absolutely. Any time.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Is it the will of the committee to put a subcommittee together?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yep.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Can I have a vote on that? I hear that some members of the committee are in favour, so we will try to put another subcommittee together to further discuss this issue. Thank you.

There is no further business. The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0944.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Chair / Président

Mr. John Vanthof (Timiskaming–Cochrane ND)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Taras Natyshak (Essex ND)

Mr. Roman Baber (York Centre / York-Centre PC)
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto (Mississauga–Lakeshore PC)
Mrs. Amy Fee (Kitchener South–Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud–Hespeler PC)
Mr. Vincent Ke (Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord PC)
Ms. Andrea Khanjin (Barrie–Innisfil PC)
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans L)
Mr. Taras Natyshak (Essex ND)
Mr. Rick Nicholls (Chatham-Kent–Leamington PC)
Mr. Jeremy Roberts (Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean PC)
Ms. Marit Stiles (Davenport ND)
Mr. John Vanthof (Timiskaming–Cochrane ND)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Aris Babikian (Scarborough–Agincourt PC)
Mr. Parm Gill (Milton PC)
Ms. Natalia Kusendova (Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre PC)

Clerk / Greffière

Ms. Jocelyn McCauley

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Andrew McNaught, research officer,
Research Services