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(Hansard)**

A-32

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A-32

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 20 October 2020

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 20 octobre 2020

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Président : John Vanthof
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Tuesday 20 October 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Mardi 20 octobre 2020

The committee met at 0912 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting to order. I apologize; we had technical difficulties, but we will try to get back on schedule.

We are meeting to conduct a review of intended appointments. We have the following members in the room: MPP Miller and me. The following members are participating remotely—at the same time, I would like to ask each member to identify where they are and that they are indeed a member. First, MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. I am indeed MPP Will Bouma, and I'm in my office in Whitney Block.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Natyshak?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm Taras, and I'm in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Nicholls?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I am here—MPP Nicholls—in my office at Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Pang?

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm MPP Billy Pang. I'm in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Stiles?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, I'm here. I'm in my home office in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Tangri?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'm Nina Tangri, MPP in Mississauga—Streetsville in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Baber?

Mr. Roman Baber: It's MPP Roman Baber, and I'm in my home in the great riding of York Centre.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. And MPP Barrett?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Toby Barrett, MPP, in Port Dover.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Have I missed any MPPs?

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your

audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning.

As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Our first item of business is the subcommittee report dated October 8, 2020. We have all seen the report in advance, so could I please have a motion?

Mr. Norman Miller: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 8, 2020, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 2, 2020.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Any further discussion? Seeing none, I'd like to call a vote. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion carries.

Our next item of business is the subcommittee report dated October 15, 2020. We have all seen the report in advance, so could I please have a motion?

Mr. Norman Miller: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 15, 2020, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 9, 2020.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Any further discussion? Seeing none, I'd like to call a vote. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion carries.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. DOUGLAS ELLIS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Douglas Ellis, intended appointee as member, University of Ontario Institute of Technology—board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Our next order of business is the review of intended appointments. First, we have Douglas Ellis, nominated as a member of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology board of governors.

Welcome, Mr. Ellis. 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.

Welcome, sir. The floor is yours.

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much. Good morning to the members of the standing committee. I thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss my qualifications for admittance to the Ontario Tech University board of governors.

I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you, because I want the opportunity to share with you my passion to be a part of an institution whose technological breakthroughs and discoveries have not only changed the world in which we live today but that is harvesting the virtuosity of tomorrow's innovators.

Twenty years ago, the late Honourable Jim Flaherty, who was a friend and mentor to me when I was a young entrepreneur in Durham region, passionately believed in a dream that he had dubbed the MIT of the north. It was Minister Flaherty and Durham College president Gary Polonsky who saw the need for an educational institution uniquely suited towards the advancement of science, research and innovation, not just in Ontario but within the Canadian and global context of science and technology. Thanks to the passage of Bill 109, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act, 2002, this MIT of the north became what we all know as Ontario Tech University.

As a resident and business owner and community volunteer in Durham region who is presently a member of the Clarington Board of Trade, Oshawa chamber of commerce and, as well, a board member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario, it would be an honour to serve on the board of directors of Ontario Tech University.

A little bit about myself: I've been in the financial planning industry for 23 years now, with the last eight being licensed as an adviser with Sun Life and the principal owner of Ironside Financial Solutions Inc., a proud small business in Durham employing two other Ontarians. Since 2005, I have served as a reservist within the Canadian Armed Forces as a corporal and armoured crewman with the Ontario Regiment's Royal Canadian Armoured Corps.

Since 2015, I have been a member of various community boards and organizations, including the Clarington Board of Trade, the Oshawa chamber of commerce, and a volunteer, mentor and guest speaker with the business advisory council of Durham and Firehouse Youth Centre of Bowmanville, speaking on such topics as small business start-ups and financial literacy. This past summer, I was appointed to the College of Chiropractors of Ontario, where I will have the privilege of serving on the main council, as well as on the disciplinary committee.

0920

Over the years, I've found these appointments and opportunities both beneficial and fulfilling, because I have always believed that as residents, business owners and community leaders, we have a responsibility to give back

to the communities in which we work and live. This responsibility can take many forms, whether it's charitable, voluntary, leadership or public service. I have learned from many mentors and community leaders that our communities grow in strength and prosperity when we all put our skills and strengths together in a collaborative effort.

During my time with the Canadian Forces—all soldiers are taught from day one that the vital principle that we live by is service before self. This is a central purpose that was evident to all Canadians when some of my colleagues were called on recently to proudly assist residents and essential health care workers in some of Ontario's long-term-care facilities in Operation Laser. Although I was not a part of Operation Laser, I am proud to wear the uniform of the Canadian Forces and remain ready to answer the call of duty when my country or community asks.

Lastly, I learned from my parents at a young age that whether I was in school, playing sports, helping to plant trees or picking up garbage in the community, you do not earn the right to ask for anything until you have selflessly given something first, starting with your time and your efforts.

It is with that final thought that I leave you, the honourable members of this committee—that I ask for the privilege to serve on the board of directors of Ontario Tech University, for it is not only my resumé of public and community service which I have based my life on, but also my own moral code as a resident, business owner, volunteer and parent. I remain fully vested in the present and future success of this university, and wish to serve on its board of directors and be a part of the future vision of cutting-edge innovations, growth and success not only within Durham region, but across our great province and country as a whole.

I thank you for your time.

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

Our first round of questioning will go to the government. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mr. Ellis, for volunteering for public service.

My question: As a financial planning professional, do you believe you're well suited to meet the expectations and standards of excellence that the Ontario Tech University board of governors would require?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Thank you for the question, sir.

I absolutely feel that I would be a great fit for the board of governors, for many reasons. Specifically, as a CFP professional, my own ethical and moral code mirrors that of the professional standards of my CFP regulatory body, which is FP Canada, as well as the code of conduct that is set out by Sun Life Financial, my employer.

At my own corporation, Ironside, we've implemented many compliance and service standards which are used today that not only meet the expectations but also, I feel, exceed the expectations of the corporation and of our regulatory body.

Ontario Tech University does pride itself on being a leading institution in the fields of science and innovation.

I believe that I share the same moral code and values as Ontario Tech University, and I believe I would be a good brand ambassador. Second, I think that the university, amongst many other colleges and universities in this COVID-19 era, is going to face many challenges that are going to be coming as of COVID-19, where they're forced to make ongoing decisions that are going to have to strike the right balance between student safety and faculty and staff safety, while maintaining a strong environment that's conducive to learning.

Most importantly, I think the experiences I can bring as a business owner, but also as a parent who has put one daughter through college—I have another son who's in his first year of college, and my youngest is in grade 9 and approaching college. Being a parent who has gone through those three stages of transition, with involvement in the post-secondary field, I have a lot of experiences that I can share, and I would welcome the opportunity to sit on the board and share my perspective and experiences with them.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you. I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Ellis, we understand that you have previous experience working with community organizations such as the Business Advisory Centre Durham and the Oshawa chamber of commerce. Would you elaborate on how those experiences could contribute to your role at the university?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Absolutely. Thank you for the question, MPP Pang. These are excellent organizations which I am honoured to have worked with.

I was privileged to be a part of the business advisory council of Durham in 2017, where I was asked to be a guest speaker and guest lecturer during their business owner symposium week. There were three sessions where I spoke to business owners and answered questions and mentored about the benefits of incorporating versus sole proprietorship, sharing my experiences that I went through with my own business.

I was also involved with the Oshawa chamber of commerce. For the last two years, since I've been a member, I've been involved in various networking events, been involved in sponsorship of different fundraisers, and worked very closely with some of the executive and the members of the Oshawa chamber.

All in all, I think, having some of those experiences, meeting and getting to know these people and experiencing a little bit of the governance in working is going to be a good stepping stone towards being a valued member of the board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): MPP Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Ellis, for coming here today and joining us.

Since 2015, you've served as a reservist in the Canadian Armed Forces. I believe your current rank is senior corporal. Can you tell us more about your time working with the Armed Forces and how that experience would help guide you in this role on the Ontario Tech University board of governors?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Absolutely, Ms. Tangri. Thank you for the question. In the last five years, I have risen from basic recruit, armed recruit, up to corporal, where right now I am presently the treasurer of our junior ranks mess. I am the second-in-command of our regimental kit shop, which is our regimental store. As well, I am on the unit fund committee and working very closely with our regimental sergeant major as, basically, her assistant, but also with the commanding officer of the regiment and the second-in-command of the regiment, working through our unit fund and some of the financial regulations that are set out by division in London.

It's very much an honour and somewhat unprecedented that someone of the rank of corporal, even though I am basically the same age as some of these folks—it's almost unprecedented that someone in the junior ranks would be working side by side with senior leadership in a lot of the planning and strategic initiatives. So I feel that my regimental background, as well as the experiences I've had in the last five years of working very closely with senior leadership, is going to make me very well suited to work with the senior leadership on the board.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Further questions from the government? Seeing none, we would like to pass to the next round of questioning.

We'll go to the official opposition. MPP Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, Mr. Ellis. Thank you so much for appearing before us this morning, albeit virtually. It's great to be able to have you here before us.

Mr. Ellis, I don't know if you're familiar with this committee, but as members of the opposition, we are tasked with vetting candidates not only on their experience and proficiency, but also on any potential conflicts that they might have. Unfortunately, as we've seen throughout the history of this government, there has been a pattern that has been established, so I'm going to ask you a couple of questions off the top to see if you might check some of those boxes—hopefully not, but we'll see. Please don't take offence; they're sort of pro forma questions.

Mr. Ellis, have you ever been a member of the Conservative Party of Canada or the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, or are you currently a member?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Thank you for the question.

I understand you need to do your due diligence, so I will be brief. Currently, for the first time, I think, ever, I am a member of the federal Conservatives—not of the provincial.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And have you ever made a financial donation to either your home riding association or the federal or provincial party of the Conservatives?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: As a business owner, I try to be impartial. It's important to work with community members and all three levels of government, regardless of their political affiliations. In the past, I have made donations to not just the Conservatives but also to the Liberal Party, again for those reasons.

0930

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Did you make a contribution—I know it showed \$857.39 to Christine Elliott's 2018

leadership campaign and \$125 to the Leeds–Grenville PC association in 2016. Does that ring a bell?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Leeds–Grenville I don't recall. Christine Elliott was—yes, I did attend a fundraiser, as I've attended fundraisers for colleagues and friends of all political parties.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Fair enough. That's okay. Thanks.

When you applied for this position, did someone reach out to you from within the Ontario PC Party? Any cabinet members, any MPPs, any of their officials or designates—

Mr. Douglas Ellis: I've been interested—oh, sorry.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Did you search this out of your own volition?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Yes. I was interested in serving on the board of Ontario Tech University. I wanted to take my community service to the next level. I went on the public provincial website and saw some positions that I was interested in applying for—the College of Chiropractors of Ontario was one of them as well—and I put my name in for the board of governors for Ontario Tech University.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So no one contacted you from within the ranks of the PC Party?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: I was contacted by the—once I put my application through, I waited. I was contacted by someone in the minister's office who asked me if I had the time and if I was still interested. I said yes to both and they said, "Okay." I waited for about another two to three weeks, then I received an email from the standing committee asking me to appear before you good folks today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Did you identify any potential conflicts of interest, fiduciary conflicts that you may have in your business holdings that might raise any concerns through this appointment?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: I don't see any perceived or potential conflicts because both my children were—my daughter was a graduate of Durham College. My son is attending Durham College. I wanted to maintain arm's-length, and that's why Ontario Tech University; I wanted to stay away from Durham. But I don't have any financial, personal or corporate dealings with the university. There are no perceived conflicts. I am familiar with when it is proper to recuse if something does come up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Excellent. Thanks so much.

You will be on the board of governors of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I would imagine that Ontario Tech University places a high degree of emphasis on research and technology and science-based data. I'm wondering, on a personal level, what your position is on climate change, specifically. Would you believe that human activity is the primary driver and cause of global climate change?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Well, I don't seek to push my own opinion or agenda onto anyone, including colleagues on the board. If discussion regarding climate change does come up, I will certainly do my own research and put forward some valid discussion, but I really don't have an opinion. I'm not here to push my opinion or my agenda on anyone today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm just wondering what your level of knowledge is currently. Global climate change presents the greatest risk to the planet and our species that we've ever encountered. I'm just wondering what type of scientific awareness and research awareness you're coming into—this one's a little bit of an easy one, given the troves of data that exist around pointing to human activity and burning fossil fuels as the main driver of global climate change. I would also argue that it presents the largest risk to our global economy. As someone who is in that industry, I'm sure you've come across articles from many publications and many financial institutes that point to the need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reduce our reliance on burning fossil fuels. I'm wondering where you come at that challenge. I certainly doubt that you will have to deal with that or come across that in your appointment. I just want to know where you're at. Do you believe that climate change is human-driven, through human activity, yes or no? We're not on the board here, so it's not a discussion. This is just between us to gauge what your understanding is of the issue.

Mr. Douglas Ellis: I do believe that we all have a moral and ethical responsibility to leave our country and, for that matter, the planet in a better state from which we inherited it. We owe an obligation to our children to make the world a better place.

As a CFP professional, I do pay close attention to a lot of companies that emphasize ethical investing, so I make that a practice.

Overall, I do feel that I would be a huge advocate for the board if they adapt methods of moving towards innovation that will help reduce greenhouse gases. Then I would absolutely do my research and absolutely be in favour of anything that will certainly make our world a better place.

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

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Ellis, for appearing before us today. We really appreciate it and also appreciate your service as a reservist and your volunteerism.

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Thank you, Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You're welcome. I had another question which was related to something my colleague raised, but I want to be clear—because I know you are also on the board of the chiropractors. Is that a government-appointed position as well? I'm sorry; I can't recall.

Mr. Douglas Ellis: It was one of many councils and opportunities that were on the Ontario public website. I believe there were about four or five pages of opportunities. I just tried to vet something that I honestly felt that I could lend a positive influence on. I didn't think anything on the law society or college of physicians and surgeons would be—I don't know how I would do on that. I just looked at something where I could definitely take my volunteerism to the next level and those two looked like a good fit.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. And that one was appointed—when were you appointed to that? I ask this—and I

apologize—because we do see all the appointments coming out, and there have been a lot. I apologize; I don't think we've seen you here before. So when was that?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: I was officially appointed, I think, in August of this year. I basically went through the same process. I applied online, waited to hear something and then I received something from the health board secretariat that said, “You are on the council.”

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate that. I'm sure you went through all the right steps on your end. We were trying to get the government to have this committee meet during the summer so we could do the same kind of review of all the appointees throughout the summer. Anyway, that didn't happen, unfortunately—and this is valuable. This is good. It's an important part of the process for Ontarians to be able to see that all these candidates are properly vetted by all the parties. I think you'd agree it's a really important part of the process. I hope we can do more of it. I appreciate your time here.

There have been some cuts to the university. One of those cuts was, I think, around \$10 million. This was the new tuition framework that the province announced in January 2019. There was a budget shortfall as a result of that tuition reduction, but also the cancellation of other supports for students.

0940

There was a budget shortfall at the university of about \$9 million and then \$12 million in 2021, which I think is concerning. What I'm seeing, as the education critic and as a parent myself—I have one daughter who is in university now and one in high school—is that students at university are struggling with this online format. Also, students in high school—I don't know if you have any children still in high school—are really struggling with that format. I think we're just beginning to see the impact of this pandemic and the government's—I'll say mishandling, but some may disagree—of schools during this period. I'm wondering how you think universities are going to be able to respond, especially since they are already facing some cuts now to some of their services, perhaps, to students. We've seen that in many universities. How are you going to be able to respond to the increased needs of new students coming in post-pandemic or, say, in the 2021 year, which may still be a pandemic year? What do you think are some of the challenges that universities are going to face in supporting students?

Mr. Douglas Ellis: That's a great question, Ms. Stiles. I certainly do know where you're coming from. As I mentioned, I have a daughter who graduated from college, a son who is in his first year of college, and my youngest is in grade 9. So we are experiencing those challenges, as well.

I think the best thing I could bring is my perspective as a parent to the board and say that this pandemic is unprecedented, regardless of which political affiliation is in power; and everyone is trying to do the best they can for parents and students.

I believe that focusing at the grassroots level, asking if the board is able to ask students, “What can we do to

enhance your education experience through this pandemic and onward?”, is probably the best place to start—and then work from there.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): You have one minute left. Any further questions?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you for that response. I don't have any other questions.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. That concludes the questioning.

Mr. Ellis, thank you for coming. You're welcome to stay on for the rest of the meeting, but we'll move on to our next attendee.

Mr. Douglas Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. STEWART LYONS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Stewart Lyons, intended appointee as member, Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Next, we have Stewart Lyons, nominated as a member of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. Welcome, sir. 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.

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies for allowing me to have an opportunity to appear before you today. By way of introduction, my name is Stewart Lyons, and I am before you with regard to my candidacy for a board member position at the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario.

Currently, I serve as the CEO of a company called Bird Canada, which is an e-scooter-sharing company that offers environmentally friendly micro-mobility transportation solutions across Canada and in over 110 cities around the world. Previously, I was the SVP of emerging business at Sirius XM radio of the United States, focusing on growing its Automatic Labs software division, which is a San Francisco-based company that developed hardware and software for monetizing data in the connected vehicle space. Prior to that, I was the CEO of a company called TeraGo Networks, which is a TSX-listed company that is a national IT solutions firm that I grew into the largest Canadian cloud provider. I was also the co-founder and president of a company called Mobilicity, which was a national wireless telecom new entrant that grew rapidly from a business plan to eventually serve over 300,000 customers in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa. It eventually became part of Rogers Communications. I started my career bringing satellite radio to Canada in my first experience with Sirius XM, as I co-founded

Sirius XM Canada, leading its growth, its financing and sales and marketing efforts.

I've also been fortunate enough in my career to have received some accolades from colleagues, as I was privileged enough to have been named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40, which is a national program that celebrates the country's leaders of tomorrow who have reached a significant level of success but not yet reached the age of 40. I've also been selected in the past as one of Western University's extraordinary alumni. Also, I'm one of the University of Toronto's people who make a difference. I have an MBA and an LLB from Osgoode Hall Law School, and I'm a lawyer by training and a member of the Ontario bar.

The Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario is a relatively new regulatory body that, like many regulatory organizations, is facing unprecedented technological opportunities and challenges in the years ahead. The rapid digitization of billions of data points, the challenges posed by cyber security and data breaches and the impact of AI and machine learning and other new technologies on finance in general all create a perfect storm of change being thrust upon Ontario's regulatory environment.

Given my lengthy background in the world of software, hardware and information technology infrastructure, I feel I'll be able to provide assistance, guidance and a helpful viewpoint as the authority faces these issues. Further, I look forward to the challenge of deeply understanding the current environment and the path forward for the authority, especially as new issues come to the forefront, such as, obviously, COVID-19, which of course has had a meaningful impact on the insurance industry in particular and consequently will impact individuals and businesses across Ontario.

To that end, I am pleased to submit myself for consideration and look forward to any questions that you may have.

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

Our first round of questioning will go to the official opposition. Ms. Stiles. There you go.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I still can't hear.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I can't hear you either. Ms. Stiles, you have to unmute yourself. You're still muted.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We heard you for a second. Now you're off again. No, we can't hear you.

Can we switch to Mr. Natyshak, and then—Mr. Natyshak?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Boom. How's that?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We can hear you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you very much, Mr. Lyons. Were you on the line for the previous appointee?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: No, I was only brought on for the last couple of minutes, unfortunately.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Thanks for being here, and thanks for your interest in the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. It seems like you come with a whole bunch of experience. Your experience at Sirius XM Canada is quite interesting to me, as a subscriber. I love Sirius XM. I love channels 100 and 101; it's probably why I continue to subscribe, because those get me on my travels from my riding—Belle River, Essex county—to Toronto on a weekly basis. Anyway, I digress.

We have some pro forma questions because, as members of the opposition, we have found a pattern of appointees who have a connection, either financially or politically, to the current government. These make up a cohort of donors and failed candidates and riding executives and just a clear line of partisanship that is difficult to ignore when it comes to these appointments. So I have to ask you these questions; please don't take offence, but they're important.

Have you ever been, or are you currently, a member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario or the federal Conservative Party?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Yes, I think I'm still a standing member of—I have been certainly in the past, and I think I'm still a standing member of the Ontario PC Party.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Have you ever donated to either of those parties—either the provincial or national or on a riding level?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Yes, I've donated to both. I also donated to the Liberal Party in the past, as well, many years ago, depending on candidacy. But I've definitely donated to the federal PCs and the Ontario PCs.

0950

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you have any idea what that cash value would be, how much you've donated over the years?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I don't. I couldn't tell you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our records show you're over about \$7,000 in lifetime donations to both of those entities. Does that come close to what you might have done?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Possibly, sure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Did anyone contact you, anyone internally in the Ontario government, to entice you to apply for this position?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: No, I made myself known to the minister's office that I was interested in serving—the Minister of Finance, who I have known for a long time in a professional sense—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The current Minister of Finance you'd spoken to?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: While he was the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: No, I've known him well before his role in the Ontario government for many years.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So you had a discussion with the current Minister of Finance—

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I did not have a discussion with him, but I made it known to his office that I would be interested in serving, and they came back and asked me

what I thought of this organization. I thought I could assist and—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: But did you call his office, or did they call you?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I think I initially put myself—I contacted his appointments secretary, and then it went from there.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. So there was somewhat of a discussion or communication in terms of where you would be best-fitted to serve on an agency or board, and this was the one you sort of nailed down?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Yes, there wasn't really—they basically came back and suggested this. The minister, having known a little of my background and certainly known me in a professional sense probably suggested that—although I never did speak to him directly on it. This is what came back, so I offered to put my name forward.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As a member of the board, you'll have to inform me, or maybe we'll ask the Clerk or the Chair to get us this—this is a question that I should know the answer to but I don't, so hopefully you will know. I'm assuming you have current holdings in an investment portfolio.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I do.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And is there a requirement to put those holdings into a blind trust as a member of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority? Do you know if there is?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I don't know that. I don't know off the top of my head.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have to imagine that there is some sort of potential conflict there somehow. If you're on the board that regulates financial services and you are a holder of stocks and various financial vehicles, there has to be some sort of delineation there. What are your thoughts around that?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: That's a great question, and it's certainly a relevant one. I think it would have to depend on, in relative terms, whether there is any potential source of conflict and whether someone's portfolio had the kind of holdings in it that would be potentially affected by changes made by the authority—and in other different agencies as well and whether they require similar requirements at the federal level or other levels. I'm not an expert on other agencies and what they do. But, yes, it's a good question, for sure.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Was there any requirement for you to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, and did you identify any prior to your appointment?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I was asked the question, certainly, to list any kind of potential conflicts, and I have done that and there wasn't really anything that came back as a conflict.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. I'm going to cede the rest of my time to my colleague MPP Stiles. I thank you very much for appearing before us.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Thank you, and I appreciate your support of Sirius XM.

Laughter.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: For sure; thanks.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): MPP Stiles. Can you hear us?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay. We can hear you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can hear you; I just couldn't unmute because—anyway, I think I found a workaround.

Thank you, Mr. Lyons, for joining us today. As I think you may have heard in our questioning of the previous appointee, we have struggled in this committee. We've had many, many appointees, but we haven't been fortunate enough to be able to get many of them before the committee. As you can appreciate, this is a really important part of the process. I recognize that somebody with your kind of experience and credentials, particularly your work experience and work life—you probably don't need this per se, but you are offering yourself up for some service here. But we do have these important questions to ask.

This is a position—I was looking at it; I think you're going to be a part-time appointee, with a per diem of \$472 a day, which for a lot of people would be a significant amount of money—maybe not for others, but for some. Do you have any sense of how many days you're going to be expected to be working on this as an appointee over the course of, say, a year?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Thank you for the question, Ms. Stiles.

I think the feedback that I got back was that two to three days a month was the workload. I don't know if that translates to a per diem; I'm not familiar with how the per diem is actually calculated.

Certainly, to your point, I wouldn't take away from the fact that \$472 isn't insubstantial to certain Ontarians—that's part of the problem—but I'm not, obviously, looking to do it for the remuneration. It's really, for me, more about helping and what I can provide.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I noticed in the questions my colleague was asking about some of your holdings—are you willing to go back and re-examine whether or not there are any issues there that you have to clear before you can formally be appointed?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: From my understanding, that has already been done. I did go through a background check and a conflict check. I don't really know if there's anything further to be done there, but as far as I understand, that process was completed. But if there's something further, I'm happy to do another go-round, if that's what's required.

Ms. Marit Stiles: As an appointee, I do think some of that is—and sometimes it's not absolutely clear. And so we all have to make sure—as MPPs, we go through a similar process as well. But I appreciate that.

You mentioned your relationship with the current finance minister—a personal relationship, and probably somewhat professional, too. I'm sure you guys have met and talked about issues. But have you met with the minister at all—not related to this appointment, but just

generally—since the minister was elected? I think he was first elected in 2018.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I haven't spoken to him in probably two or three years. I haven't spoken to him once, not even via text or anything. But I do have a long relationship with him. I've worked with him, I've been friends with him, so I certainly know him well. But I haven't spoken to him for a long time, no.

Ms. Marit Stiles: What about other members of the government?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Yes, there are some who I have relationships with to various degrees, for sure.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And what about staff in the Minister of Finance's office?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: Again, I've been around the party before. Certainly, in my youth, as a foolish student—probably like many people on this committee, I've been involved in youth politics and stuff like that, so I know some of them, potentially. I don't even know if any of them work in the minister's office. But just over the years, I've certainly met people and developed some friendships.

Ms. Marit Stiles: What do you think are the challenges that you'll be grappling with over the next few years as an appointee on this board?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: That's a great question.

First and foremost—it's top of mind for everybody—I think COVID-19 certainly creates a pile of new challenges. Just the other day, I saw a media article written on the impact of COVID-19, obviously, on insurance premiums, and how that impacts certain individuals and small businesses, which I think we can all agree are the cornerstone of Ontario's economy. The process by which insurance companies charge premiums and what they're going to do post-COVID-19 to small businesses in the name of insurance is extremely important. That certainly needs to be looked at, and there was commentary that the Financial Services Regulatory Authority may get involved in that conversation. That's keenly important.

The other one, obviously, because I take a keen interest in it, is technology. There's a huge impact of technology on the industry, some of which I've been involved with tangentially in terms of things like the explosion of data points. I worked in a connected-car business where cars get connected to the Internet and data gets taken off of cars, and the whole explosion of data and cyber security impacts—the speed at which data can travel, whether you can transmit enough data to get the detail you need and how that impacts the regulatory process—I think is extremely important and moving very, very quickly. It's important for us to get a handle on it.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Now we will switch to the government. Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mr. Lyons, for volunteering for public service.

One of the statutory objectives of FSRA is to contribute to public confidence in the regulated sectors. How does a regulator balance consumer protection with the need for a competitive and viable financial service sector, both of which are needed for public confidence?

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Mr. Stewart Lyons: Thank you. It's a great question.

That's not an easy task, and that's one that has been and will continue to be a challenge for all regulators at all the various levels of government and different areas of the country. But I think it's important in that case for the regulator to establish what are table stakes, which are sort of the non-negotiable elements of consumer protection and consumer confidence that are required to have a healthy financial system.

Going back to technology: There are things that can make this balancing act easier. Take, for example, auto insurance; I'll use that as an example. I don't know about any of you, but I have an app on my phone that my insurance carrier has given to me to assess my driving, and if I'm a good driver, I get an insurance discount. What are the impacts of that? Are there privacy impacts? Are there impacts on the cost of business for insurers that maybe they would be passing off to consumers? How invasive is that technology? Are there cyber security issues? That kind of stuff is a good example of where there's a balancing act between consumer protection and a competitive environment. Because obviously, insurance carriers want to create things that make their environment more competitive and cheaper to administer, but consumers want and obviously need to be protected and have confidence in the system as well.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'll pass it to my colleagues.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Further questions from the government? Mrs. Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Mr. Lyons, for joining us today.

Increasingly, the lines between what we consider a technology company and a financial services company are becoming quite blurred, particularly with respect to start-up fintechs.

Given your career background in the technology sector and with start-up companies, how do you think regulators should respond to emerging innovative business models?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: That's a great question, Ms. Tangri.

I think the growth of these small financial start-ups at least has one positive benefit, in that they certainly push regulators to move more quickly, which I think is a great thing. Obviously, regulators must not make the mistake of creating rules in a system [inaudible] larger providers, because that certainly doesn't create a competitive environment. It doesn't foster innovation and the like.

Again, it's another one of these balancing acts, because consumer benefit comes when the established players are challenged by new arrivals. If regulations prevent new arrivals from having a realistic chance of competing, then it's really hard to encourage the existing players to make the changes that are in consumers' best interests, which can lead to increased fees and transaction costs.

But of course, all that has to be balanced with confidence and safety, because you don't want to make the rules so lax that anyone could show up and create an insurance

company. They certainly don't have the wherewithal, necessarily, to do that.

Again, it's another balancing act, but I think it's important that the authority remain responsive and fast-moving to adapt to technology, because overall, that tends to benefit industries.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I believe, Mr. Nicholls, you had your hand up?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Mr. Lyons, for being with us this morning. Go Mustangs, right? Being from Chatham, I'm somewhat partial.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I appreciate that.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, no, it's quite fun.

I love Sirius XM as well; specifically, Watercolors. I'm a smooth jazz kind of guy—but also the 1970s; I like the 1970s. And Fox News—a great, great radio station. But I digress.

Let me just ask you a quick question. It's a simple question, but I think it's a very important question. I'm all about motivation. I'm all about getting people up to speed with regard to looking at their own skill sets and abilities. Why do you want to serve on a provincial board? It's a simple question, but I think it's worth knowing and understanding your motivation behind it as well.

Mr. Stewart Lyons: I appreciate that, Mr. Nicholls. That's obviously a good question, as well.

Why am I here? In short, it's because I think can help. I have other things—I've got a young family. I've got things going on in my life, obviously, but I really feel it's important to raise your hand and help when you can, to make your community a better place, to make the province a better place. I have some experience in areas that I think can help the authority with some of these challenges that they have moving forward, especially in technology, which I said before.

I've done charitable work and other work to help improve my community, whether it's coaching Little League teams or hockey teams or whatever, and I think this is an extension of that. I think raising your hand to help, as I said, your government function more effectively because you're using some knowledge or some experience that you have is a benefit, and hopefully it's taken as such.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's nice to know and understand the motivation behind one's reasoning for wanting to serve. I do appreciate that very much. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Further questions from the government? Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Mr. Lyons, for joining us today. I'm continually impressed with the calibre of candidates who come before committee.

As you know, FSRA regulates the pension insurance, mortgage brokers and credit union sectors. Where do you see the future of these sectors heading? How should a regulator respond, for example, to the increasing pace of change in the financial services in Canada?

Mr. Stewart Lyons: That's a really topical question. I might have answered this differently a year ago, but I think with COVID-19 that's probably what's near and dear to

everybody's hearts in those industries, certainly right at this very minute.

Aside from the technology and all the other stuff I've mentioned, I think COVID-19 really has—especially, as I said before, insurance. There's really no industry that has probably been impacted more than insurance, positively and negatively. We've all read the articles about pandemic insurance. Some insurance carriers are potentially avoiding obligations and some are not. They're doing their jobs and paying out, and then they have their own financial obligations and problems—that they might have overpaid. Their risk tables, I'm sure, are all out the window at this point.

Then pensions and the impact of certain investments and things that pensions—they hold pension holders' future income, and their investments might be at risk because of certain things they've done that have been severely affected by the pandemic. It goes on and on and on.

I think that clearly is the biggest piece right now—COVID-19 and the reaction to COVID-19. I think that's going to impact those sectors for many years to come, at least for the next five years or so, as we come out of this process.

All sectors should remain vibrant in order to serve the maximum number of Ontarians with the best possible choices. Also, we should have confidence in all areas of the financial system, and that's pretty paramount to having an accessible economy. The regulator should be able to inspire that confidence through constantly improving regulations, is kind of my overall thought there.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you very much for that response. I really appreciate your insights.

Also, to Mr. Ellis, thank you for coming before our committee today.

With that, Mr. Chair, in the interests of time, the government will wrap up questions.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you, Mr. Lyons. You're welcome to stay on the line.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Douglas Ellis, nominated as a member of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology board of governors. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Norman Miller: Mr. Chair, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Douglas Ellis, nominated as a member of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology board of governors.

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

We will now consider the intended appointment of Stewart Lyons, nominated as a member of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. Mr. Miller?

Mr. Norman Miller: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Stewart Lyons, nominated as a member of the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mr. Miller. Any discussion? Seeing none, I would like to call a vote. All those in favour, please raise your hands. Opposed? It's carried. Thank you.

Our next order of business is extensions.

Number 1: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Heidi Reinhart, selected from the September 25, 2020, certificate is October 25, 2020. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Heidi Reinhart to November 24, 2020?

Okay, I see people nodding no, so I think we'll—
Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Yes, okay.

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Number 2: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Denise Dietrich, selected from the September 25, 2020, certificate, is October 25, 2020. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Denise Dietrich to November 24, 2020? Ms. Stiles.

Yes, Ms. Stiles? We can't hear.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum):

We ask them to unmute and then she has to unmute.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, I know. You asked me to unmute. Sorry. I'm having a technical issue, and so what happens is when you do that, I have to backtrack through and move all the things. It's a real pain. We have to—anyway, it's okay, but I am actually trying to unmute in that moment, just so you know.

We have a subcommittee meeting coming up in a few minutes where some of these issues are going to be discussed—around potential solutions and conversations we're having about how we can ensure that we have more time to see these appointees.

I wonder if we could delay these decisions until we have that subcommittee meeting so we could actually allow an opportunity for Ontarians to have the benefit of a vetting of appointees. This government is appointing many, many people to really important boards, and we are not even getting a chance to ask those people if they want to appear here or if they can appear here. It's absurd.

We may have some solutions—I hope we do; we're working on it. And I really appreciate the opportunity—that government members have been open to some of those conversations.

Can we not postpone this vote, for example, so that we can have an opportunity to hear from some of these people?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): To answer your question: The one issue we do have is that we don't have a committee meeting before the 25th. So we have to do these. Otherwise, they will fall off the table anyway.

Ms. Marit Stiles: But what if we had unanimous consent, Mr. Chair, from all of the members? I'm just going to urge the members to—maybe this is one of those few moments where you actually allow for this to be extended, so that we can—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay, Ms. Stiles. Unanimous consent to do what specifically?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm just going to put it out there that I'm hoping that the government members—that this might be one of those opportunities where you do provide unanimous consent so that we can have that potential extension to continue to have this conversation about ways to get more appointees to appear.

I see Mr. Natyshak. I'm sorry, Taras.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Yes, but that is the question that we are asking. Basically, you're reinforcing the official opposition's point of view on that issue. Okay.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Now I've lost—

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Number 2.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Number 2. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Denise Dietrich to November 24, 2020? I heard a no, so we don't.

Number 3: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Helen-Claire Tingling, selected from the September 25, 2020, certificate, is October 25, 2020. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Helen-Claire Tingling to November 24, 2020? I heard a no, so we don't.

That concludes today's business. The meeting is—

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think, Mr. Chair, Taras has a—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Oh, we have a—I haven't gavelled yet, so I'll go with Mr. Natyshak, who was waving, and then to Ms. Stiles if we have time.

Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks, Chair. Just to backtrack to Marit's issue with the unmuting: Can we agree to being able to unmute ourselves—rather than the Chair or whatever is happening? I promise I will not jump into your conversation unless I'm recognized by the Chair. I won't unmute myself to yell at everybody. We can all control our unmuting, I think. It's really cumbersome if our various systems have to force us to back up. Can we find a better way to do this?

I will now mute myself.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tonia Grannum): I'll look into it with our technical services department.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): It's 10:15. Now the meeting is officially over.

The committee adjourned at 1015.

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Mr. Will Bouma (Brantford–Brant PC)

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Mrs. Robin Martin (Eglinton–Lawrence PC)

Mr. Norman Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka PC)

Mr. Taras Natyshak (Essex ND)

Mr. Rick Nicholls (Chatham–Kent–Leamington PC)

Mr. Billy Pang (Markham–Unionville PC)

M^{lle} Amanda Simard (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell L)

Ms. Marit Stiles (Davenport ND)

Mrs. Nina Tangri (Mississauga–Streetsville PC)

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