

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-35

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-35

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 24 November 2020

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Mardi 24 novembre 2020

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : John Vanthof
Greffière : Julia Douglas

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House Publications and Language 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 linguistique et des publications parlementaires
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 24 November 2020

Intended appointments.....	A-307
Mr. Tom Porter	A-307
Mr. Richard Boyes	A-311
Committee business.....	A-315

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 24 November 2020

Mardi 24 novembre 2020

The committee met at 0900 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. We are meeting to conduct a review of intended appointments. We have the following members in the room, MPP Bouma and of course myself, and the following members participating remotely: MPP Martin, MPP Natyshak, MPP Miller, MPP Pang and MPP Tangri. Have I missed anyone? Okay, thank you. 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.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. TOM PORTER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Tom Porter, intended appointee as member, University of Windsor board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We will now move to our review of intended appointments. First, we have Tom Porter, nominated as member of the University of Windsor board of governors. Welcome.

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, Mr. Porter, and the floor is yours.

Mr. Tom Porter: Thank you. Good morning to the Chairperson and to committee members. My name is Tom Porter, and I thank you for this opportunity to meet with all of you. I have provided my résumé for your consideration.

I am a lawyer and a senior partner at Mousseau, DeLuca, McPherson, Prince law firm in Windsor, Ontario. I was actually raised in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and

moved to Windsor in 1971 to attend the University of Windsor. I obtained a bachelor of arts degree and I chose to stay in Windsor to attend law school. I obtained a law degree in 1978, and after successfully completing an articling period and a bar admissions course, I was called to the bar in the province of Ontario in 1980.

You will note in my résumé that I have been with the same law firm for over 40 years, I was an elected city councillor for 12 years and I've been actively involved with community service. I believe that I have a reputation for dedicated effort and common sense, and I work well as a team player. I have served as a director on many boards and in many instances have been elected by the board members to become the chairperson of the organization. I have a thorough understanding of board governance concepts and of the interactive role of management in implementing work policies.

The education and life experiences that were afforded to me at the University of Windsor have positively influenced the direction of my entire life. My spouse, Marcella Porter, and I have raised our family in Windsor and all four of our children have benefited from attending the University of Windsor over the years. As a measure of my gratitude and appreciation to the university, my law firm has sponsored numerous scholarships and donations, and I volunteered to be a board member and was ultimately elected as chairperson of the alumni association. That was between the years of 2002 and 2012. Our association worked closely with the university president and the board of governors in fundraising, marketing, student alumni service initiatives and generally in garnering more support for the University of Windsor through their alumni.

I've participated wholeheartedly in programs and events informing of and promoting the university. I have a good understanding of the corporate, financial and academic organization of the university and I am personally familiar with the campus and with recent capital building projects like Alumni Field, the school of medicine, the engineering building, St. Denis Hall and the proposed new law building. I would therefore enjoy and it would be a further privilege and a pleasure for me to serve on the board of governors. I believe that my experiences and legal training will assist me in contributing to informed decision-making on board matters for the betterment of the University of Windsor.

I thank you sincerely for your consideration of my application, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you.

First, quickly, we have a new attendee in the committee. Mr. Coe, could you please identify yourself and where you're currently situated?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, Mr. Chair. It's MPP Lorne Coe and I'm participating from Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Our first round of questioning will go to the opposition. Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Mr. Porter. Tom, it's great to see you this morning. Thanks for taking the time to appear before the committee. We definitely appreciate you answering some of our questions.

I don't know if you're familiar, Tom—actually, I do know that you're familiar with the construct of this committee and its mandate. We are to vet appointments and different candidates for various agencies, boards and committees throughout the province. It's a committee that has, obviously, a formal application, but in a majority government where the current government holds the majority of the seats on this committee, it tends to be sort of a rubber-stamp committee. And that's okay. Governments of the day fully have the ability to nominate who they want and to get them through the processes as expediently as they want to.

One of the things, though, that we've seen since the beginning of this committee is that this government has nominated folks that are connected to the government in one way or another. A large percentage of the candidates we've seen have had direct connections to either the PC government, in being donors to the party, or staff, or failed candidates in some respect. It's a disturbing pattern that we've seen, as members of the opposition. Therefore, we have to go through some pro forma questions that I hope you don't take personally. They are important for us to determine whether this is a continuation of that pattern that we see.

So, with that being said, Tom, have you ever been a member, or are you currently a member, of the Conservative Party of Ontario?

Mr. Tom Porter: The Conservative [*inaudible*]
—as you know, I'm sure. Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You are currently a member of the Conservative Party of Ontario?

Mr. Tom Porter: I believe that I am. I can tell you, quite honestly, that as I get older I've become less politically motivated in terms of supporting any particular political party, and I've been more interested in what's in the best interests of the community. Recent experiences and seeing what's happened in the United States have reinforced a little bit of a cynicism towards some particular parties, politicians and government.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Fair enough.

Mr. Tom Porter: Certainly, I've been a Conservative. Years ago, I was an active Conservative. I've been a candidate for the federal Conservative Party and the provincial Conservative Party. I served on city council as an independent person for 12 years, which was actually my best political experience. But yes, I certainly have been and am a supporter of the Conservative parties both nationally and provincially.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Thanks for that. Just to clarify, at this present time, on this very day, are you a card-carrying member? Do you hold a membership to the Conservative Party of Ontario or the federal Conservative Party?

Mr. Tom Porter: I believe that I do, yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So affirmative, yes, you do?

Mr. Tom Porter: But to be, again, absolutely honest with you, I was asked by the alumni association to apply for the position of—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sure. That's my next question: How, indeed, did you come about finding this position, or applying for this position? Because within the pattern that we've discovered, there has been outreach between certain members of the government to potential candidates to incentivize or entice them to apply for these vacancies within these positions. So my question to you is, is there anyone within the government—cabinet ministers, any staff of the current government—who has coached you to apply for this vacancy?

Mr. Tom Porter: No, there was not, and I actually don't have any personal connection to, or even knowledge of, I think, anybody provincially or nationally. I'm like yesterday's news as far as party politics goes, I think.

It was the University of Windsor president who asked me if I would apply for the position as the provincial appointee and I acceded to his request. My initial invitation came from the alumni association, thinking that as a past president of the alumni association I'd have something to offer on the board of governors. They asked me if I would accept one of their appointed positions to the board. But then the university president was in touch with me, and he said, "You know, if we could have you appointed as the provincial appointee, would you be prepared to make that application?"

0910

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you every sought out another agency or board in this same capacity through the provincial agencies process?

Mr. Tom Porter: I don't believe so. I'm currently a member of the Windsor Port Authority, which is a federal agency. I'm actually appointed as an appointee of what they call the users, all of the user groups in Windsor, the different companies that use the port in Windsor. They had put forward a name for nomination, so approximately four years ago, I was nominated and received that appointment, and I continue to be on the Windsor Port Authority.

But I don't think I've ever applied for anything else provincially.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Tom, in the same vein as the partisan connection, we've established that you don't have any current partisan connections or loose affiliations to the party provincially. Do you recall when the last time you made a financial contribution to the PC Party of Ontario or the federal Conservative Party was?

Mr. Tom Porter: I couldn't give you an exact date, but I've probably supported the federal Conservative Party more than the provincial Conservative Party. Jeff Watson was the member of Parliament; I supported his candidacy.

In the various elections, I think I supported—most of my federal contributions were probably a few years ago, again, but it would have been \$1,000 a year for a few of the years. Provincially, I would be surprised if I contributed any more than \$1,000 within the last five years.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Actually, we've got you down there. Your most recent—and tell me if this is accurate. A \$200 donation to the PCs in 2014: Does that ring a bell?

Mr. Tom Porter: That sounds like it could be reasonable. It becomes a question of who the candidates are, if it's in the middle of the campaign and those kinds of things. I'm not active in either the provincial or the federal parties in terms of going to conventions or having an active connection to anybody, either an elected official or somebody in office.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay. Thanks, Tom.

Tom, our university here in Windsor, like many universities across the province, is facing some real challenges during COVID and coming out of COVID. I'm wondering what discussions you have maybe had and what thoughts you have on what focus the University of Windsor will be bringing, especially given its close relationship with universities in the States and to cross-border and international students that the University of Windsor relies heavily on, in terms of making up its student body. What do you think the challenges are going forward, how do we address them, and what roles can the provincial government play in supporting the University of Windsor?

Mr. Tom Porter: Well, I suppose, as with every aspect of our lives, this coronavirus is creating a huge challenge for all of us personally in our abilities, and the University of Windsor, I'm sure, is going through those kinds of issues, dealing with not having the ability to have physical education and physical presence, dealing with things virtually. I know the university was actively cultivating their international student population; they were having some real success with that all around the world. I'm sure that this coronavirus has impacted that very negatively in terms of people wanting to stay and deal with the university virtually as opposed to physically being present on campus. That is going to be, I think, a very major challenge.

The University of Windsor has always tried to market itself internationally as a comprehensive university. I think we still have a situation where about 70% of our students come from the area and local region. The goal would be to continue to diversify in bringing new people from other places in the world.

Fortunately, with technology, the university has certainly done the best it could possibly do in improving their infrastructure. All these new buildings you see on campus—the engineering building is phenomenal and has got a phenomenal reputation. The medicine building has got a phenomenal reputation. The law school now is rebuilding its entire building. All of those things cause people from other places to perhaps want to come to the University of Windsor, even if it is virtually initially and getting back to physical attendance at some point in the future.

I see that as probably one of the most significant challenges: how you keep on growing that and how you deal with all that in the context of this coronavirus pandemic.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Tom, I don't have any further questions, but I really do appreciate you taking the time [*inaudible*].

Mr. Tom Porter: Thanks very much.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I don't know if I have any time on the clock, Chair. If I do, I would cede that time to my colleague MPP Stiles if she wants it; if she doesn't, then I thank Tom again for his appearance and wish him well.

Mr. Tom Porter: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Before we go to our next round of questions, we have two new MPPs on the line. First, MPP Nicholls, could you confirm that you are in Ontario and that you are indeed the one and only?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I am the one and only, Chair. Thank goodness for that. And I am here in my Toronto office at Queen's Park.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, I'm here in Toronto at Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much. So our next round of questioning goes to the government. MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to Mr. Porter, thank you so much for joining us today. It's truly a pleasure to have you in the room. I was thinking reading through your résumé and listening to your opening statement, if you want to get something done, just ask a busy person. It strikes me that—when on earth did you ever have time to practise law with everything else that you've been involved in over the past 40 years?

But I wanted to ask, if I could, through you, Mr. Chair, how do you think your experiences as a lawyer living and working in Windsor would translate into the role on the University of Windsor board of governors? If you could expand on that. I know you've already spoken to it, but if you could speak a little bit more. Thank you.

Mr. Tom Porter: Thank you for that question. I find on almost every association and every board that I've ever served on, even any community groups that I've worked with, legal questions seem to become front and centre for most of those organizations, whether it's a contractual issue or whether it's labour relations issues within a human resources environment. Throughout the years, I've very often found that my legal experience has been very, very important.

The other thing I'd like to think is that through legal training, there's that training to think things through and try to find common-sense solutions. I've always thought that the law was supposed to make sense. If the law doesn't make sense, then you should be trying to amend or change those laws.

In that context, many times I find with any organization, even if it's not precisely a legal issue, sometimes whatever the issue is just involves some analytical decision-making. So think about what are the issues, how

can we resolve them, what are the alternatives and how do we find the solution or the best road to follow. I think that could serve me well with the board of governors as well.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you for that. I'll cede my time to the other members.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mr. Porter—hopefully I'm being heard there—for volunteering to serve in this position with the University of Windsor. You certainly have really strong connections with the University of Windsor, including as past president and board member of the University of Windsor Alumni Association. Can you tell us more about this role and how it will help you be a board governor at the University of Windsor, please?

Mr. Tom Porter: Well, the alumni association at the University of Windsor has a particularly strong connection to the university president. When I was on the board of the alumni association—I think it continues today—the president of the university actually attended every monthly board meeting, every month, and really treated the alumni association as a priority.

The president of the day when I was on the board was Alan Wildeman. He was bound and determined to keep in touch with the alumni of the university and worked with the alumni association closely to try to nurture that alumni connection to the university and get those alumni to continue to be active in university affairs. As a result of that, he would provide reports every month to the alumni association and we would provide reports every month to the president.

We got involved in joint endeavours. Our alumni association, for example, contributed a half a million dollars to put artificial turf on the alumni field; we contributed money to the engineering building project; we contributed money to the medical school project—all of that meaning that I received and digested a lot of information about the university itself in a general sense. I think all of that could assist me in the decision-making for the governors.

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

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Good morning, Mr. Porter. It's nice to have you today. Go Lancers, right? I attended that school as well, sir.

0920

I see here that you've served on city council as an independent. I heard you say that earlier this morning. You know, it's interesting: I often say, "You may not know what a person is really, really like by his or her professional duties, but take a look at what they do in their spare time, and that will tell you a whole lot more about that individual and their character and whatnot."

So my question to you, again, is, knowing that you've had experience serving on city council and professional associations, outside of your professional life, can you tell us a little more about your time volunteering in your community? What makes your heart skip a beat?

Mr. Tom Porter: Actually, of all the community service I've ever been involved in, the alumni association

service is the service that made my heart beat. It really felt like you were giving back to the university that had provided so much to you and your family over the years. It was really a labour of love. Everyone kept saying, "Where are you finding the time to do all this and ultimately become president of the association?" It never felt like work to me. It always felt like a joy. Going back on campus, as you probably appreciate, is just reminding you and bringing back memories of times when you were there on campus. Seeing how it's growing in leaps and bounds—those are extraordinarily good feelings.

I get the same kind of feeling when I work with the Windsor Endowment for the Arts. I'm a legal adviser to them. I'm just an unpaid volunteer legal adviser on various matters that they encounter over their mandate. But they're generating monies to fund artists in the community, artists in the broadest sense: musicians, actual artists who are either graphic artists or painters or those sorts of things. Again, to see those kinds of monies being first of all generated by a group of volunteers, the Windsor Endowment for the Arts, and creating these endowment funds, and then to see the faces on these people who are recipients in the community of whatever scholarship or endowment funds are available—they're usually young artists who are just trying to make a go of it and struggling economically. So again, those kinds of things certainly give me great pleasure.

Windsor has been good to me. I've been here since I left Sault Ste. Marie in 1971, and I really enjoy seeing the community thrive and giving back to the community.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, you know, speaking with young people keeps you young, wouldn't you agree?

Mr. Tom Porter: That's true.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Good answer. Good answer.

Mr. Tom Porter: My grandchildren will do that now, too.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: If you knew that being a granddad was going to be so much fun, you would have been nicer to their parents, right?

Mr. Tom Porter: Exactly.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll turn it over to MPP Martin.

Mr. Tom Porter: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): MPP Martin?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Mr. Porter, for being here and for putting your name forward. Obviously, you have a great background.

One of the board's mandates is to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented post-secondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment. Can you tell us what experience you might have with designing programs that might help students to meet employers' needs?

Mr. Tom Porter: Well, in my law practice, we get involved with the local boards of education, with co-op programs. We bring in co-op students every semester, so I've had a lot of experience with that over the years. Throughout those processes, when teachers come in, we have input back and forth with the teachers to see how their students are doing, and ultimately those kinds of

things guide you in terms of what kinds of experience you see if you can provide to them.

I also own the Windsor Squash and Fitness Club, which is a local fitness facility, where we bring in co-op students. Again, it's the same purpose: How can we give them some life skills that might help them to ultimately put it on a résumé and help them find a position, or causes them, at the very least, to understand what they might want to do or not want to do?

In a general sense, I've got a lot of familiarity with co-op programs and the importance of thinking about academic skills and life skills and practical skills, as opposed to just the academic skills.

I haven't had that kind of co-op education experience with the University of Windsor—I don't know much about their program—but I know they certainly reach out to the community and they deal with things like English-as-a-second-language types of courses; they have a lot of persons who aren't very familiar with the English language. I think they have reached out in recent years to try to become more broad-minded in terms of thinking about the kinds of courses that they offer, and I'm fully supportive of all of those things.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Tom Porter: You're welcome.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you, Mr. Porter, for joining us today. I have a couple of questions. Since 2007, you've served in various roles for the city of Windsor. Can you tell us more about your time as board trustee with the Cleary International Centre and how that experience will serve in the role on the University of Windsor board of governors?

Mr. Tom Porter: As an elected city councillor in Windsor, all of us had various committee responsibilities and the Cleary International Centre was one of those committee responsibilities for me. It was actually a good time to be serving with the Cleary, because the Cleary at that moment in time was planning to either not renovate itself or rebuild itself and create a new convention centre somewhere else in the community, or somehow rebuild the Cleary. While I was on the board we went through all of that infrastructure, first of all the whole idea of the concept of it. Going ahead, we decided that staying on-site with the Cleary and rebuilding with a larger facility was the balanced approach to take, over a large new centre somewhere else in town, away from the downtown area—all of those kinds of considerations.

Then we got into what at that time was about a \$30-million building project. Our board got involved with that with the general contractors and with all the consultants, and we made all of the decisions as we went along, actually creating that. It ended up a brand new space, and the building, I'm happy to say, is still there on Riverside Drive in downtown Windsor. In usual times it generates a lot of traffic and it's a real community asset.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you. I'll pass it on to MPP Pang.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. MPP Pang, you have just over a minute.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Mr. Porter. It's exciting to listen to your story in the Windsor community. You have been a volunteer with the Windsor Cancer Research Advisory Committee and the Windsor Endowment for the Arts. Can you tell us a bit about your contributions to the Windsor cancer research group and the Windsor Endowment for the Arts?

Mr. Tom Porter: The Windsor cancer research program, I was actually invited to get involved with as a community liaison, just as an advisory member. As it happened, my second cousin, Lisa Porter, is a well-respected university professor at the University of Windsor and a cancer researcher. She actually got me involved. My role there was much like other committees, where they were just looking at, "How do we organize as a committee? How do we get involved in fundraising activities? How do we reach out to the community?" That really is what I did with that group.

It's a similar kind of function that I continue to serve with the Windsor Endowment for the Arts. They call me when they need information about contracts, for example, before they sign any legal documents. Sometimes it's more general: "How do you think we can broaden our reach in the community in terms of fundraising endeavours?" Again, it's more of an adviser as opposed to being an actual board member.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. That concludes the time allotted for questioning. Thank you for coming to give us your experience, Mr. Porter. You're welcome to stay on the line.

Mr. Tom Porter: Thank you.

MR. RICHARD BOYES

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Richard Boyes, intended appointee as member, Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Next, we have Richard Boyes, nominated as member, Ontario Honours Advisory Council. Welcome, Mr. Boyes.

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. Richard Boyes: Good morning, committee members, and thank you very much for having me to meet with you today. I'm honoured to be considered for the position on the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

I have been involved with the fire service for over 47 years and am pleased to be a second-generation firefighter and fire chief. I began my fire service career as a volunteer firefighter with the town of Alliston fire department, moving up through the ranks and ultimately holding the position of fire chief. After a period as the fire chief, when

the opportunity arose, I accepted a position with the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario as a fire service adviser, where some of my responsibilities included providing advice and assistance to Essex, Lambton and Kent county municipalities regarding the delivery of fire protection services.

One of the highlights of this position was to be able to assist the fire marshal at the long service medal investitures to recognize length of time in the fire service. It was always a pleasure to watch firefighters receive 25, 35 or 40 and I have seen a 50-year medal award; that was quite an interesting and honourable thing to be involved with.

0930

I moved to the city of Sarnia in 1997, where I was responsible for the operations of a 118-career-staff fire department and was also fire coordinator for Lambton county. In 2005, I moved to the town of Oakville, and it was a career staff of 214, operating out of seven fire stations and serving 180,000 residents.

After Oakville, I moved on to the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs in 2012 as the chief operating officer, and was subsequently promoted to executive director in January 2013. My responsibilities were member services, government relations and professional development for Ontario's fire chiefs. During my tenure at the OAFIC, I was responsible for creating Ontario Fire Administration Inc., whose primary function was to provide third-party candidate testing for municipalities who employ full-time career firefighters. I retired from the OAFIC in 2019.

I am a certified municipal manager III and fire services executive, as well as a community emergency management coordinator, or CEMC, as it's commonly referred to. I have been chair of the transportation emergency rescue committee for the International Association of Fire Chiefs and was first vice-president of the World Rescue Organisation for vehicle rescue. In layman's terms, that's auto extrication, and it was a worldwide committee.

I served on the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs board of directors from 2000, and was president from 2007 to 2010. During my term as president, I played a key role in having the government of Ontario include 19,000 volunteer firefighters in the presumptive illness legislation in 2009. I was also involved with the addition of residential sprinklers in multi-unit buildings above three storeys to the building code, as well as responsible for a number of changes in regulations with the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario.

During my tenure as president, I had the honour of attending numerous bravery award ceremonies to witness firefighters and police officers being recognized for their unselfish acts of bravery during the service of their duties. These ceremonies underlined the model of service before self and the commitment of the recipients to the protection of the citizens of Ontario.

In addition, as the executive director of the OAFIC, I worked with the Ministry of the Solicitor General, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Long-Term Care, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour to address

public safety initiatives and concerns. One example is the recently passed Bill 57, which amended the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to allow full-time firefighters to be volunteer firefighters in their own communities.

I was the OAFIC team leader for the Elliot Lake inquiry to ensure that the fire services issues were addressed at the inquiry, and provided input to the Honourable Paul R. Bélanger, commissioner of the Elliot Lake inquiry. I'm currently president of Emergency Services Strategy and Solutions Inc., a consulting firm providing innovative strategy that challenges the status quo of traditional fire service delivery.

As the fire chief, I have nominated firefighters in the past for bravery awards, and as president and executive director of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, I have actively promoted the importance of recognizing the exceptional acts of bravery in the Ontario fire service and police service by encouraging especially the fire chiefs to nominate the deserving individuals for formal recognition.

I'm pleased to be a recipient of the long service medal and service bars, along with the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal and the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals. I have been married for 46 years to Bonnie and we have three sons who are serving the residents of Ontario as the fire chief of Brampton, an acting captain for the city of Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service and a sergeant in the St. Thomas Police Service.

That concludes my opening remarks, committee members. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much for your opening statement. Our first question will go to MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Chief. It's such a pleasure to have you here today. I'm a volunteer in the county of Brant, and remained that even with my work here in the Legislature. You may have heard of my former chief, who now is in Oakville, Paul Boissonneault—a very, very good man and a very good chief to work for.

It struck me again today the calibre of the applicants that we get for so many of these agencies, and you follow in those footsteps too. Having played that role as fire chief in Alliston and Sarnia and Oakville, I was wondering if you expand a little bit—and I know you already have—on how you feel that this experience, having been through all of those things, would make you well suited to meet the expectations of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council in the bravery division.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Interestingly enough, I know Chief Boissonneault quite well, and we actually come from the same hometown. I knew the chief and his family long before we crossed paths in the fire service, so I'm hoping he will do quite well in Oakville. It's a great town.

My experience—I think my background as a volunteer and career firefighter, along with the OAFIC, has allowed me to interact and understand what goes into giving. In some cases, it's really no different than firefighters once the alarm bell goes off. Sometimes it's a misnomer, the difference between volunteers and career firefighters. But

I understand the commitment, as you do, sir. When the tolls go off and the pager sounds and you have to go to a call, you drop everything and go. The career firefighters drop everything and go, and are prepared to do whatever it takes to make the situation better. I understand what goes into it, the two different cultures that are there, but at the end of the day, it still comes down to that they're doing an essential service for the citizens, and doing that. So I understand what it takes to be a firefighter and what they do.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to thank you for that. I'm going to pass it on to my colleagues, but before I do, if I could just say thank you for your decades of service to the people of Ontario, and if you have the opportunity, please pass along my thanks to your children also, for their service to all of Ontario.

Mr. Richard Boyes: I'll do that. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good morning, Mr. Boyes. I have to say that reading about you and your career's work is very, very impressive and very fascinating as well. But I'd like you to speak and tell us how you became a fire chief of three separate municipalities and eventually the executive director of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. If you could please elaborate a little more on that.

Mr. Richard Boyes: I'd be pleased to, and thank you. As I said, I'm a second-generation firefighter. I started with the Alliston fire department as a volunteer. It was kind of the family business to get into, if I may say. There were opportunities that came along, and an opportunity came along to move up through the ranks and I became fire chief. It was always a balancing act between being a volunteer firefighter and a career business owner.

I ran my own business. There were always competing interests, and the love of firefighting won out one day. The Office of the Fire Marshal was looking for an adviser. I applied. Just like every other job, I thought, "I don't have a chance of getting this," and the next thing you know, I'm travelling the province and meeting exceptional fire chiefs and firefighters everywhere in the service of the duties for the province. Ultimately, I was transferred to the southwest. As you might know, I now live down in this area, so it was great.

At the OFM, it was a great opportunity. But the call of the fire service was always there so when the opportunity arose, I applied for the city of Sarnia, and then it was just a move along after that. So that's how I got there, in the OAF. It's been a long journey that I never thought I'd go on.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you. I just wanted to pass on my thank you for your many years of service as well.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Boyes, good morning, and good to see you here. It's a treat to listen to your story in serving the community. My question is, can you please elaborate on your time with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and how this experience would bring value to the advisory council?

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you, member. With the OAF, of course, the province and all the fire chiefs in the province were my constituents that I worked for and helped along. I could say I've probably talked to three quarters to seven eighths of the chiefs in this province. I have travelled the province during the course of my duties at the OAF, and most recently, when we were discussing the recently passed [*inaudible*] regulations.

Again, when you travel to the communities and see them and understand them—when you're in southwestern Ontario, it's one part of the province to look at, but when you go up to Thunder Bay and meet the people in Thunder Bay who are doing it, it's a whole different part of service that they do. That experience allows me to know what the northeast, the northwest, the southwest, southeast, central and the GTA do. One day, I could be interacting with the city of Toronto's fire chief, the next day, a small volunteer fire chief from a fire protection team in the north. You have the skill set to be able to deal with everybody, and you have to understand that they all have unique needs and that this is a very big province with a lot of dedicated people serving it.

0940

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Further questions from the government? MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Mr. Boyes, thank you for being with us. What a distinguished career you have. We're pleased that you're appearing before committee today.

In your opening statement, sir, you spoke about your experience in nominating individuals for the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery. Can you please elaborate on this experience and how that will help you with this particular appointment? Thank you, sir.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you. Yes, I've had the privilege to do some nominations in the past and have been successful in some cases and unsuccessful. But the point of doing it is trying to take our emergency responders—whether it's police officers, firefighters or even the EMTs—the fact that they give so freely and consider it a part of their normal duties. That's maybe one of the problems that the committee was struggling with: the fact that we need to get the nominations, and that's why they've always promoted it—to the point that everybody would say, "It's just my job. It's just my job." You have to look at the fact that every day, exceptional acts occur, and some days above and beyond exceptional acts occur. It's kind of being able to recognize that and submit it and deal with your firefighters and/or police officers, who really, sometimes, aren't that willing to put their name forward, because it's just, "I'm a part of the team. I've done it in my own duties. It was just my job." That's what you get all the time. So those are the challenges that you face in doing that.

But I think I'm well suited, and like you say, I've nominated people in the past. People have won the awards, and it's a real honour to be able to attend at the time and watch them be recognized for their acts of bravery or exceptional service. Sometimes, it's difficult to tell the recipients after the fact that they weren't accepted. Again,

it doesn't belittle what they did do, but in most of the cases, when I've been at the awards, there are such exceptional acts that—and I know previous committee members I've chatted with, they've talked about the anguish they go through, saying, “Well, we wish we could just recognize everybody.” So it is an issue, and having nominated people in the past, I think that gives me a good background to understand what it takes to sit on this committee and give out such distinguished awards.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. You have 26 seconds, so I think that concludes the questioning.

On behalf of the Legislature, Mr. Boyes, I'd like to thank you very much for your years of service and for your—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Oh, and I made a mistake. Thank you again.

The next round of questioning goes to the opposition. We're not going to let you off that easy.

Mr. Richard Boyes: I wondered where the other 15 minutes went to—anyway.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That's the second time I've done that.

MPP Stiles, are you first?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: First of all, I want to say thank you, as our Chair just did, for all your years of service—to you and to your family as well for stepping up like this. We very much appreciate your being here today.

We in the opposition have had—well, myself and my colleague Mr. Natyshak have been sitting on this committee for two years. We've seen a very large number of appointments of people by the government. I know previous governments have certainly done that as well, but we've seen a really extraordinarily large number of people who have been previous donors or politically partisan connections appointed, and so I hope you will understand one of the purposes of this committee is to make sure there is full transparency and accountability to the public in the public appointments process. I know you understand that.

I also want to say, I know you've probably been here at Queen's Park lobbying in the past around issues that were important to firefighters in our province, and I thank you for that work as well.

But I do have a few substantive questions that we normally go through, so I'm going to just take you through them. Did anybody approach you to apply for this position, and if so, who?

Mr. Richard Boyes: I was approached. The current executive director of the OAFCA told me that, I think, the Sol Gen's office had reached out and said, “We're looking for people. If you know of anybody, let them know.” She gave me a call and an email and said, “If you're interested, here's the process to do,” and here I sit today.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Great. Thank you. Can you confirm that you have donated to the provincial Conservatives in the past?

Mr. Richard Boyes: I've attended, I think it was in 2018, a dinner the Conservative Party had there. I went in the course of business. I've also been to the heritage dinners under the Liberal Party, as well, in my role as executive director and president. I can't say I haven't donated, but that was my only donation.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I understand that. I know others who have been in that position before. So that would account for the \$1,000 donation to the Conservatives, then in, I think it was 2019.

Mr. Richard Boyes: That's correct.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's an expensive dinner.

Mr. Richard Boyes: It was.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I hope it was good.

Mr. Richard Boyes: It was.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Oh, that's good.

Mr. Richard Boyes: The company was exceptional.

Ms. Marit Stiles: There you go. Have you donated at the federal level as well, are you aware?

Mr. Richard Boyes: No, I haven't.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And are you currently or have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario?

Mr. Richard Boyes: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you very much.

Since we have a little bit of time left, I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind: We heard a lot about the kind of contribution you'll make to this body. I really appreciate that. I wondered if there was any insight you could give me, though, on some of the issues that firefighters across the province are facing, things that they are looking for from government—I know you're not speaking from the association's perspective anymore, but just from your years of experience in terms of what we, as a province, need to be doing better.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you for that. There's always a number of issues that the firefighters are looking for. One of the things that was very helpful was the presumptive illness legislation that came in and addressed the cancers that firefighters currently face, and it was a big step when we got the volunteers included. So that was the big issue.

If there was one issue right now that I would say that we certainly need to spend a lot of time and effort on, it's the mental wellness of all of our first responders, so anything the province could do to provide support to that point. At the OAFCA, we introduced the Road to Mental Readiness and delivered it. We partnered with the feds to get this out and became a delivery agent to get this to the firefighters and deliver it to them in other circumstances. I'm pleased to say that it was an initiative that I started, and it continues.

Mental readiness, mental health, mental wellness is always a very, very big issue. That's probably one of the more pressing issues right now.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that as well.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And with that, I think I'm going to wrap up. Thank you very much again for being here, and again, thank you to you and your family for all your years of service.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That concludes the time allotted. Thank you for your service. My apologies to the opposition for forgetting them, but I did it once to the government in the past, too.

You're welcome to stay on the line, as well, Mr. Boyes.

Mr. Richard Boyes: Thank you. I'd just like to thank the committee members. I've enjoyed my time with you, and hope to be selected for the committee and be able to serve the residents of Ontario. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We will now consider the intended appointment of Tom Porter, nominated as member of the University of Windsor board of governors. Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Tom Porter, nominated as member of the University of Windsor board of governors.

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

We will now consider the intended appointment of Richard Boyes, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council. Mr. Bouma.

0950

Mr. Will Bouma: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Richard Boyes, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mr. Bouma. Any discussion? Seeing none, I'd like to call for a vote. All those in favour, please raise your hands. Those opposed? That is carried.

Congratulations to both appointees.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Our next issue is extensions. Number one—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Oh, MPP Stiles?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Bouma was supposed to be getting back to the other members of the subcommittee, I believe, with potential dates for a follow-up subcommittee meeting. We haven't heard in a few weeks, so I wanted to check in to see if we could please schedule another subcommittee meeting.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Yes, the Clerk will reach out and see if we can find a date.

Now, extensions: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Eric Brown, selected from the October 27, 2020, certificate, is November 26, 2020. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Eric Brown to December 26, 2020? I heard a no.

Number two, the deadline to review the intended appointment—oh, pardon me. MPP Stiles?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I don't understand how when we're all muted—does that mean it's just Mr. Bouma who says “nay”? How do you hear what's going on with the rest of us if we're all muted?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I believe in a past meeting we have also accepted a no or a wave.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Can we get some direction on that? Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Sure. First, MPP Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm wondering if the Clerk can inform us as to whether any of these candidates have actually been contacted to schedule an appearance before the committee prior to our voting on an extension of their certificate.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): No, they have not yet been contacted.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In that light, Chair, I must raise the point again that this committee is not extending the ability for appointees to appear before this committee before we've even contacted them to ask if they can appear on a certain date, whether it is convenient or not to them. It calls into question the legitimacy of this committee, its functionality and its mandate. They're bypassing even the simple process of connecting. The government members are making a mockery of this committee. I just want to put that on the record, that here we are again.

At least before, there was some precedent in that we would make an attempt to connect with appointees to determine whether they could make a certain date and get an answer from them. We're not even doing that anymore. It is ridiculous and it's a shame. Let it be on the record that members who sit on the standing committee from the government side have set a really dangerous precedent. This is going to come back to bite them. They won't care about it, because they'll all be out of their jobs, but there's no question that it certainly makes a mockery of the committee, disrespects precedent and calls into question their actual impartiality and the work that they're doing on this committee and whether it is actually in the service of the public at all.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you, Mr. Natyshak. Any further discussion and response?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay. One correction: Mr. Brown was contacted but not scheduled.

Interruption.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): A vote? But the bells are 24 minutes so we could finish. I think it's up to the committee whether we stop for the vote or—

Interjections.

Mr. Will Bouma: Are we dealing with the extensions or not? I think we have time if it's a half-hour bell.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I think that's up to the committee, whether we want to deal with these. Is it the will of the committee to finish dealing with the extensions? Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to move that we take a 15-minute recess.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That would adjourn it, because by a quarter after 10, the time for the committee is over.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): It's 9:56 right now, so that would leave us a couple of minutes.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I think the committee is effectively adjourned. That's it for today.

The committee adjourned at 0956.

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Mr. John Vanthof (Timiskaming–Cochrane ND)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

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Mr. Lorne Coe (Whitby PC)

Mrs. Robin Martin (Eglinton–Lawrence PC)

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