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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

A-41

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des débats
(Hansard)**

A-41

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 9 March 2021

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 9 mars 2021

Chair: Gilles Bisson
Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Gilles Bisson
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Tuesday 9 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Mardi 9 mars 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): The meeting will come to order. I want to welcome everybody to the committee. We know what we're here for today: to review intended appointments.

I would like the Clerk to let us know who is here with us.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): Good morning. We have the following members in the room: Mr. Bouma; Mr. Bisson, Chair of the committee. We have the following members participating remotely: Mr. Coe; Mrs. Martin; Mr. Pang; Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka; Mr. Nicholls; Ms. Stiles; Mr. Natyshak; and Mr. Babikian.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): And we have legislative staff with us from Hansard, research and the rest, and our wonderful people at broadcast services. We want to thank you all for your attendance and the hard work you do in supporting these committees.

I'll remind everybody to speak slowly, especially those utilizing the technology. Should you get disconnected, just reconnect. If you have a problem, you have an email and you know who to contact. Please wait until I recognize you before you start speaking. All of your comments, obviously, should go through the Chair.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): The first thing we've got to deal with is the subcommittee report dated March 4. You've all got a copy of the report.

Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Chair, through you: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, March 4, 2021, on the order-in-council certificate dated February 26, 2021.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Okay, we have a motion. Does anybody have anything they want to say in regard to the report? Seeing nobody wanting to speak to the report, there is no debate—are all members in favour? Those opposed? Okay, we have a couple opposed.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): That may be because of the lag.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We're going to have to do this a little bit slower next time around, because

there's a bit of a lag in the audio, and some of the government members voted the other way. Duly noted: All of the government voted one way.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Let's do this again, just to be clear. All those in favour of the subcommittee report, please indicate by lifting your hand. All those opposed? It is passed—a very good point, Clerk. Thank you very much; much appreciated. Okay, the subcommittee report has been adopted.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. ALIZABETH CALDER

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Alizabeth Calder, intended appointee as member, Ontario Internal Audit Committee, information and information technology sector audit committee.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We'll wait for the first witness to come. As we know, we've got Alizabeth Calder, intended appointee as member of the Ontario Internal Audit Committee—information and information technology sector audit committee. That sounds like a lot of fun. We're just waiting for her to connect, and then we can get started.

We're going to recess for two minutes, until we get the technology working again.

The committee recessed from 0904 to 0906.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): The meeting is back to order. Our first presenter has joined us. First of all, just to introduce, we have—I'm going to ask the Clerk to please read the name and the title. I want to apologize to the presenter. I don't have my glasses, and it's just going to be a lot safer if I get the Clerk to do it.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): We have Ms. Alizabeth Calder, nominated as member of the Ontario Internal Audit Committee—information and information technology sector audit committee.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Welcome to committee. As you're aware, you have the opportunity to say a few words. If you do take time, it will come from the government's time. The government will get, in their turn, 15 minutes in order to ask their questions. We will start with the official opposition in this round.

With that, we will turn to you and ask you if you have a couple of words to start.

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to have this conversation with all of you and share why I believe I can add value for the internal audit governance for the province of Ontario.

First of all, I have close to 40 years leaning in to the evolution of technology, both in defining strategy and leading people. That gives me a lot of practical experience, really dominated by regulatory and governance risk in health care, banking and transportation.

In the 1980s, if you think about it, when I started my career, the big technology trend was the Johnny Cash machine, and cyber security was about how to protect a big data centre and make sure the technical folks didn't do something bad or stupid.

I've led in the industry through the advent of PCs and networks and the Internet and shared data, to now where huge investments cross exponentially changing data, technology and ecosystems. For the technology divisions of any of the ministries, they're trying to probably make up for some sins of the past as well as find the highest-value outcomes for the province of Ontario going forward.

Second, I have been audited in various ways more than 100 times, so I know what's real; I know what's not real. I know how to track for genuine improvement against issues that are raised, and I understand where the actual risks are as opposed to sometimes the noise around that.

I've also had a lot of involvement in overseeing the mitigation and the remediation to improve the control postures of both the business and the technology.

In terms of board qualifications, I'm a certified director through the ICD. I also have a cyber oversight certification through Carnegie Mellon University, which is a US NACD, the ICD-equivalent program, and I've served on not-for-profit boards since 1982.

I currently serve on the advisory council of what's called an evergreen investment fund, where investments support a global portfolio of companies specifically targeting measured improvements in ESG and SDG, which aligns with my personal focus as a value-based leader. I'm very committed to governance best practice and to my own continued learning in the space.

If I think about the 10 years at IBM, which were most formative for me in this sector, that led to me being an industry C-level executive since 2004. I've been responsible for anticipating as well as identifying and responding to both strategic and operational risk.

I'm a recognized leader in the cyber security area. I was the global practice leader for Peat Marwick in the 1980s for cyber security. I have extensive practical experience on crisis oversight. I was responsible for all of IBM Canada's global services response to both SARS and the power outage as the CEO in 2003.

I've had a lot of direct board support work responding to cyber issues, more than a dozen times, and in every instance—knock on wood, because the future is still out there—nothing has been escalated to either publicity or customer problems.

Finally, I'm an active industry researcher, which means I spend a lot of time building my own knowledge. I

particularly focus on some of the hidden and non-financial risks. The risk management disciplines don't seem to be keeping up well with the proliferation of digital and analytics transition, and so understanding the balance through those transformation periods between being outcome-based and focusing on the inherent risks driven by new digital capabilities is important.

For example, social media: We're now faced with a huge increase in focus on the critical privacy concerns around civil discourse, which is important for the government. Data and the issues of public confidence are being talked about more in the context of science and the facts, and analytic and predictive modelling and AI all serve as force multipliers, but at the same time, data-driven decision-making raises new risks in terms of oversight.

I look forward to bringing my knowledge and passion to this critical process for the province, and I welcome whatever questions you might have.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We will start with the official opposition. Mr. Natyshak, you have the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning. Thank you so much for appearing before us, and your willingness and accessibility to the committee, albeit virtual. It is really important that we get a chance to connect with you and understand what your motivation is within the process of the Ontario Internal Audit Committee.

It sounds like you have a vast amount of experience. To be honest, I really didn't understand some of the stuff that you just mentioned in terms of how it relates to anything; I'm definitely not up on my cyber security lingo. But it sounds like you have a wealth and depth of knowledge, and I guess at the core of that is protecting information, protecting resources and providing value for your customer. That is, in some function, the way that this committee works—our responsibility, as members, is to protect taxpayers and protect citizens of Ontario against potential candidates for appointment who don't fit the criteria that we're looking for or who may have some conflicts of interest.

That being said, as members of the opposition, we've had to embark on a series of somewhat uncomfortable questions to appointees that try to identify any conflicts. So if you don't mind, I'm going to ask you a couple of pro forma questions. Please do not take offence to them; they in no way indicate anything other than us just trying to make sure that we're on the right path.

Ms. Calder, have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I have not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever donated to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I have not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever worked on a campaign for the PC Party of Ontario?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I have not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Did anyone internally at any ministry—any ministerial staff, any ministers themselves, any elected officials—reach out to you to apply for this position?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: No. I found it on the ICD directors' website posting last June.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And is this the only appointment that you've ever applied for?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever sat previously on government agencies or boards?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I have not. I've never made it to this level of conversation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: But you have previously applied for various other agencies, boards or committees through the appointments process?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I'd have to go back and think whether things were city of Toronto—I can't answer that question based on jurisdiction. I have been applying actively for boards for the last year or two.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What do you see your major role as being through this position? What role will you be playing, an advisory role or—tell me what you think you're going to be able to do for the province.

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: In a traditional governance context, I think the role of the oversight organization is to ask questions and to just keep asking questions until things seem clear or things make sense.

I do think that I'm going to have some homework to do over the next little bit before the first committee meeting, because in my experience one of the most fundamental places to focus on in terms of finding inherent risk and addressing inherent risk is looking at findings over the last three years, give or take, and seeing the trends; seeing how audits have evolved, how findings have evolved; seeing what's being done to address or mitigate.

For me, I think between now and our first meeting I would spend a fair amount of time looking at past meeting minutes. Then I think, in the meetings, it's really whatever is being brought forward in terms of an audit plan, an audit schedule; issues to be discussed. My job would be to help the committee and help the people presenting go on a bit of a journey of discovery to find where there may be gaps or find where there may be opportunities to improve.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And through doing that, you'll be using some of your institutional knowledge around auditing principles itself, it sounds like.

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: Absolutely.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What would you lean on? What type of methodologies would you be leaning on to perform those actions?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: It depends entirely on what the scope of the audit is. Traditional cyber security frameworks—there are a few different cyber security frameworks in the industry. If that's the point of the discussion, as an example, I would be asking what framework we are using, because that sets the stage for how we're planning an audit and how we're executing an audit. I would then rely on my knowledge of where the different frameworks have—some frameworks are stronger in some areas; some frameworks are stronger in others. I suspect every ministry is probably using a different framework. As an example on cyber security, I would look to the industry cyber

security frameworks to engage in a conversation about the work being done.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I will showcase my lack of knowledge in the cyber security realm right now.

Recently, it was uncovered that an employee at the Ministry of Education had somehow accessed millions of dollars of funds that were distributed electronically to family members. This person was promptly fired and, I believe, so were his family members who were associated with this scheme. Is it the case that a cyber security system is broken if it is allowed to happen, or is it a case that if it is eventually found, then those systems are in place and the fact that we found out that something happened—even though it may be after the fact—is indicative of a system that works as planned?

Which would be your preference: to have a cyber security system and platforms that avoided and eliminated that from ever happening—or is it just the inevitable reality that people who are nefarious and have nefarious purposes are going to find a way around it and try to cheat the system?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: Recognizing that I am neither briefed nor oriented specifically on the instances to your question about the role of cyber security—in any enterprise risk, there are various levels of control that you place reliance on. You have to be able to rely on certain things. A reliance on a bank environment that's going to ensure that people are real and people are not doing money laundering—all the anti-money laundering regulations are very clear, so that would have been one of the control points in this risk framework.

Obviously, you would always like to have a cyber security program that's going to catch things that are not appropriate, but as technology evolves, that's a growing and growing and growing issue. So I would consider it to have been a highly effective program that they caught the situation. Would I have liked to have seen them catch it sooner? Maybe there are some trigger mechanisms that could be improved, but the triggers are there. They caught the situation. At the end of the day, in many cases, that's as good as it gets.

0920

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That ends my line of questions. I really appreciate your time. Thanks for your candid answers.

I'll pass the remainder of the time to my colleague MPP Stiles.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Stiles, you have roughly six minutes and a half.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Ms. Calder, for appearing here before us. I was listening to the questions that my colleague was running by you, and it is really interesting, particularly in the context of this situation that has emerged in the Ministry of Education—which is very unfortunate, and I appreciated your comments on that.

I wonder if you could dig a little deeper into some of the things that you think government could be doing better to prevent such occurrences or abuses. Like you said, it seems to have been caught relatively quickly, but how do

we prevent these going forward? And how do you see your role on the audit committee in ensuring that this doesn't happen again?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: That's kind of like trying to eat an elephant whole. I suspect that the "how" is different in every ministry. I expect that the risk profile is different in every ministry. I'm certain that the tools and processes are different. So it's difficult for me to have a precise or a specific answer to that. I think there are disciplines in terms of mapping and analyzing access and levels of authority and levels of override, and I think that's a discipline that, hopefully, is somewhat consistently happening across the ministries that can be looked at.

Similarly, a discipline in terms of mapping where data lives, is stored and how it's used—it's a common source of folly in the public sector where people have shared email inboxes, like "info@" or whatever, and they're sending credit card information into that email. Then that stuff is just sitting out there and 47 people are in and out.

There are lots of common, known areas of folly in this space. There are also lots of common disciplines. But I think it would be irresponsible for me to comment more specifically than that without getting into it more.

Ms. Marit Stiles: In your line of work and experience, what are the flags that—as you said, I guess it varies a great deal. But what are the flags that you look for that something is amiss?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: For example, in the financial services sector, a frequent flag that we would turn on is—anyone who is in an approving position or a high-authority position would have a financial background check done annually, so financial behaviour that is outside the ordinary. In the health sector, it's not uncommon for anyone in a high-access position to have a criminal background check, where freedom of information and protection of privacy comes into play and people's health information is exposed.

You just can't run at all of it; it's so big. So what you have to do is pause to understand in the instance, "Where is the risk? What's the exposure?" In this instance, the risk is a large amount of money being sent out in a relatively quick fashion—probably closer looks at the controls and countermeasures on that sooner. I think those checks and balances were there, and so they caught it, but you have to look at what is the risk profile to know what to look at to catch it.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate your comments. It's really interesting to have somebody with your breadth of experience, and it's a privilege for us to have a chance to ask you some questions. Thank you very much for taking on this role.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Natyshak, do you have any follow-up questions? Seeing none, we will now go to the government side.

How much time do we have left for the government side?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): Ten and a half minutes.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): There are 10 and a half minutes. Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Chair. Through you to Ms. Calder: Thank you so much for joining our committee this morning. It's truly a pleasure to have you here. Looking through your résumé, it seems that your whole life experience has been preparing you to help us out here.

One thing I've noticed at this committee is the number of people in Ontario who are willing to share their life experience with the people in Ontario in order to make this province better.

In the little bit that I know about the sector audit committee system, I have been so struck by the number and depth and breadth of checks and balances that are placed into the system.

Just going through your résumé—you've been a chief information officer at many large Canadian and global organizations, including, as you mentioned, IBM, HomeEquity Bank, Loyalty Group, which is a division of Alliance Data, and CML HealthCare. How would you say, if you could dive into that a little bit more, these experiences have helped you, to provide you with experience and prepare you for a role with the I&IT sector audit committee?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: That's an interesting question.

I'll just make a side comment: I really respect that they moved to the sector audit committees. I think creating that centre of excellence and focus was a strong decision, so I look forward to being part of it.

My corporate experience basically means that I've kind of seen it all. I spent a lot of time in my early CIO days learning to say, "We do what? We don't do what?" in my inside voice instead of my outside voice, because I was frustrating people a lot. But you reach a point where you start to have seen so many fundamental gaps. Everybody is all worried about the great big shiny objects, but sometimes it's the fundamental gaps.

I've seen skeletal mice in mousetraps at the back of a computer room, because nobody goes in there and there are wires everywhere and it's covered with dust, and that's just a recipe for that whole thing to go flat on its knees. I've seen plans to move computers, to forklift computers, that haven't been turned off in 20 years, and nobody stopped to test whether that thing is even going to come back up, given that it has never been turned off in 20 years.

I've seen turf wars pushing all of the infrastructure and foundational investment out of major program budgets, and then they don't understand why everything is up and down like a toilet seat when they actually launch a new program. I've seen enough of those things to kind of be snow-proof and to be skeptical.

And I'm kind of known for being really tenacious, so if things have the potential to go badly, I don't stop poking at it. The comment earlier about uncomfortable questions—IT people are really good at asking and being on the receiving end of uncomfortable questions. That's our life.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'll pass my time to MPP Coe.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Coe, you have the floor, and you have roughly—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and welcome, Ms. Calder. I noted in going through your background

information that you have a cyber-risk oversight certificate from Carnegie Mellon University. Could you please describe the value that this particular certificate will add to the I&IT sector audit committee?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: Absolutely. I've been involved in the cyber sector, as I said, since I led the global practice for Peat Marwick in the 1980s. That was a very different world; there were very different issues, and it has evolved a lot in the 30-odd years.

I believe that in a quickly changing industry like cyber, I need to take every opportunity I can, basically, to hear from the big-brain experts repeatedly and often to stay ahead of what are the next important questions, so I can have confidence in what I know. What I know is what I know, but I don't know what I don't know. So taking that program was an opportunity for me to step back and think about more of the governance-related questions. I also got to participate in some crisis scenario role-play kind of sessions with some of the smartest people in the world on those kinds of issues, and I learned a lot from that, over and above the experience I had when I led those things at IBM. It gave me the opportunity—and it's something that I would continue to lean into—to just make sure that I'm thinking looking out, not just what I know now.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for your response.

Through you, Chair, to Mr. Miller.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Miller, you have roughly five minutes.

0930

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Ms. Calder, for coming before the committee. You seem to have a vast amount of experience.

As you're aware, a large part of audit includes risk management. In your remarks, you spoke a little bit about your career and how you were responsible for anticipating, identifying and responding to both strategic and operational risk. Can you please expand on this experience you've had?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I think at the crux of my experience in this area is really having learned that size and IT maturity doesn't equate to the amount that's being spent. So a huge amount of money can be spent without really thinking in a mature way about the planning and investing in terms of both operational risk and financial risk.

I have delivered, directly, more than a billion dollars in transformational investments. In some cases, it was about cutting costs; in some cases, it was chasing a shiny object; in some cases, it was meeting a regulatory requirement.

What that has allowed me to do is not only keep the investment very focused on the outcome—what are we trying to make different with spending this money, and what are the risks and exposures to that, because I do consider it to be part of the enterprise risk if you spend a whole bunch of money and you don't get what you thought you were going to get. It has also given me the experience of paying attention to the adjacencies, because you can't just look at this project and that this amount of money is

being spent on this, because, invariably, other stakeholders are going to be affected. Maybe other ministries are going to be affected, maybe the public is going to be affected and nobody has got a plan for that. Risk can come into play on some of those things. Case in point: the earlier question on the person in the education ministry who siphoned off funds.

As an example, one of the things that I'm spending a lot of time right now advising CEOs and boards on is where they did a whole bunch of things to respond to COVID-19 and so they think, "Oh, yay, we've done all these things. We're good, we're ahead. We've made progress," and in reality, what they did was a bit of chicken wire and duct tape. So now they have to go back and really check and make sure that the things that they did don't just—it becomes a bit of a Whac-A-Mole game, that they've maybe created other exposures.

What it has done for me, I guess, is to reinforce the fact that I'm a little bit old-fashioned, from a digital leadership perspective. I really push hard in my mind to make sure that things like the high-level process are being considered—a map of where the data is stored, so you know health information or personal information is being stored somewhere relatively open. I look at past audit findings to make sure things are really closed and that the risk is really addressed. Risk scores on infrastructure, for example: We no longer have to talk about, "Well, it's a problem because that server is 12 years old." Risk scores and vendors who are backing away from supporting things are really material ways to know that you have an exposure.

So it has given me the opportunity to develop all those skills.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'll pass it on to MPP Nicholls.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Nicholls, we have about two minutes left.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Welcome to our committee, Ms. Calder. You mentioned that you're old-fashioned; I'm just old. But that's all right.

For lack of time, let me just cut to the chase. Can you please expand on how knowing how the auditing process works will help you ensure that you're asking the right questions, and sometimes even the difficult questions?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: The biggest thing about knowing how an audit team works is always keeping things in context. It's always looking at past audits. It's always looking at past findings. No conversation, from a digital perspective and an enterprise risk perspective, is just about what you're doing now, because there are other things that contribute. So my biggest challenge will be maintaining that bigger map in my head about what the context is.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: So maintaining that bigger map, but then being able to communicate to the rest of the people what that bigger map is, so they can break it down into smaller pieces. Thank you very much.

I will turn it over to Mr. Pang for further questions, if he has any time.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You have 30 seconds, Mr. Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: I'll do my best.

I can see that you have a host of different positions within cyber and tech and not-for-profit associations, such as CIO, and at ITAC. Would you kindly speak on those roles?

Ms. Alizabeth Calder: I have been involved in not-for-profit boards since the early 1980s. What I try to do is find a place where I can always make an impact. In my industry, what I want to be doing is giving back to the people coming up in the industry so they learn to not think about just the technology; there's so much more to it than that.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Well, that worked out—perfect timing.

I want to thank you, Ms. Calder. That concludes your time with us. We will vote on this a little bit later on in the meeting. You can leave now.

MS. KRystal DARLING

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Krystal Darling, intended appointee as member, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning—board of governors

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Next, we have Krystal Darling, who is wanting to be on the board of governors of Conestoga College. We're going to start, this time, with the government side for a total of 15 minutes. The Clerk will do that timing. You can use some of that time to say a few words and introduce yourself.

With that, it is your time.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Thank you very much. Good morning. It's an honour to be here this morning to discuss my credentials and capabilities for the government-elected position.

My name is Krystal Darling. I have been a lifelong resident of Kitchener-Waterloo. I am a wife and a mother of two children, ages three and two. My father is a second-generation Canadian and my mother is third-generation, whose careers are both in skilled trades, each owning their own businesses as I grew up.

I graduated from the University of Waterloo with honours in 2007, majoring in science and minoring in economics. After spending five years working in sales and marketing, I pursued my MBA at Wilfrid Laurier University part-time, graduating with honours in 2015. Currently, I'm enrolled at the Ivey Business School in the QuantumShift program. I also have been accepted in the ICD program, which is the Institute of Corporate Directors—a program designed to develop excellence in directorship, thought-leadership and handling the revolving challenges of the boardroom.

I am a personal believer in continuous education, as you can probably gather. I don't believe that there is a time that we should stop thinking. I have a similar philosophy in business, in that if you aren't growing and moving forward, you're going backward.

In my career, I joined my current organization, Tri-Mach Group, 12 years ago, starting from the ground up in sales. Fast-forwarding to 2017, I was appointed CEO, and in four short years, we have tripled the organization's sales

growth through acquisition and a focus on innovation and technology.

We have also expanded our skilled trade focus to include millwrighting, fabrication, machining and electrical. This is something I am particularly proud of as I represent a generally different demographic in the multi-trade environment: a female under the age of 40.

I have a few notable accomplishments outside of business. In 2017, I was the recipient of the top 40 under 40 award within our community. And in 2009, I was recognized as the volunteer of the year by the Volunteer Action Centre.

I carry strong beliefs that giving back to our community is something every citizen has a responsibility in. I sit on a number of local boards, from non-profit to profit. I am a board member of the Waterloo EDC, sitting on their subcommittee for human resources. I am a board member for the St. Mary's General Hospital Foundation, sitting on the subcommittee for joint advisory, looking at fundraising initiatives involving both hospitals. Lastly, I'm a member of the Canadian Meat Council, working with government and meat-manufacturing businesses to tackle the challenges of import and export, particularly during this time of the pandemic.

I am also part of a program advisory committee for millwrights at Conestoga College made up of many business owners or executives in the space to assist the college in closing the gap between academic programming and challenges within the skilled trades.

Lastly, I'd like to close with stating that in general, I only like to get involved in things that I can make better than how I have found them. I have a strong business acumen coupled with a strong focus on continuous education and giving back to our community, which is why I believe these are the reasons I would be qualified for the position.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We'll start with Mr. Bouma and we have roughly about—13 minutes, I would think?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Julia Douglas): Twelve and a half.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Twelve and a half. Mr. Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Ms. Darling, thank you so much for joining us today. It's truly a pleasure to have you here.

I have a very close place in my heart for Conestoga because they have a campus in Brantford, in my riding. I'm sure you have—but I know whenever I have the opportunity to get together with John Tibbits from Conestoga, it's always very, very good for me, because he has such an incredible ability to pass along his zeal and his vision for what the college programs could be.

0940

As I'm sure you're well aware, there is a growing concern regarding both the skills gap and the need for more workers within the skilled trades. While there is a surplus of good, well-paying jobs available, many businesses struggle to find people willing to take on these jobs. Seeing as one of the fundamental components of our

college system is to train young people to fill our local labour markets, what do you believe we need to do better in order to close this gap?

Ms. Krystal Darling: I think this is a very great question and obviously one that is close to my home here. I think there are a number of things. Truthfully, when we talk about the shortage of supply, one of the things I am personally seeing in business is actually that we're not facilitating the academic side to push tradespeople through the various programs, year 1, year 2, year 3. There seems to be a bottleneck in getting our tradespeople registered for school. I think a lot of that has to do with just the processes that are in place right now to call individuals to school. One of the things that I recommended on the PAC advisory is to have more work or collaboration between the actual businesses, the skilled trade employee and academics. If we could bring these three parties together, I think we could facilitate a much more fluid system.

In addition, I think we need to raise and highlight that there are amazing careers and amazing opportunities for people in the skilled trades, particularly in minority groups—and I'll speak to females, as well, in the skilled trades. We need to actively go and approach and educate those groups on skilled trading and get them integrated. I personally can speak to the fact that I hadn't even heard about a skilled trade—what a millwright was—coming into my business, and I think that's a huge miss. I think a lot of these issues are really related to education, and I think that's one of the reasons I'm very excited about this position—I believe I bring the academic side but also the real-life business experience to be able to kind of close the gap here in what we need to do.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you. You're speaking my language.

I'll pass it off to MPP Martin.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Go ahead, MPP Martin.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much, Ms. Darling. You've just been speaking about this, but I'm really interested in the idea of bridging the gap between career skills—that's something we often talk about in our post-secondary sector. You've been an employer and someone who, yourself, has been through our post-secondary education system.

I was just wondering if you could elaborate on what you feel are the steps that we really need to take to better prepare our young people for meaningful careers of all kinds.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Well, I think the first thing is just simply exposure to the opportunity. I don't believe that we're doing that right now, particularly in the high school system. Yes, there are co-op programs, but I really do believe that once you see what we do in skilled trades, it really broadens your awareness and excitement for what we do.

The other aspect, I will tell you, to be honest with you, has a lot to do with parent education. I think there are some stigmas that are still around relating to whether your son or daughter should go into a college program for skilled

trades or go into the universities. I think we have to break that down. We have to share with parents that there is a meaningful career in skilled trades. It's not something to be frowned upon or looked down on. Truthfully, I do feel that that is happening out there.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I absolutely agree with that. Certainly, some of those careers are very lucrative, as well.

I'm going to pass it to MPP Babikian.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Babikian, it is your turn.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning, Ms. Darling, and thank you for coming and sharing with us your expertise.

As I am sure you are aware, a college's board of governance is responsible for making large decisions on behalf of the institution, including selecting the president, passing budgets and approving plans for future initiatives.

As a potential board member, what would you do to ensure the continued and future success of Conestoga College and post-secondary education, as a whole?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Great question.

First and foremost, it's about educating myself in terms of this position and the breadth of the requirements of the role. I think that getting out into the community—which, I feel, is one of my stronger suits, in terms of the number of boards that I sit on currently, and the diversity of those boards allows me to bring in a different perspective.

I think being well-rounded—as the CEO of my group of companies, every day, I'm making multiple decisions. On the boards that I'm on right now, our responsibility is exactly the same in nominating the leaders of those organizations. The way that I carried and conducted myself within those board organizations is to really get a deep dive into the organization—what makes them successful, what challenges they're faced with—and then try to utilize my business acumen to help move the organization forward. Those would be some of the options or ideas that I could bring to the table.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to pass the torch to MPP Pang.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Please go ahead. You have about five minutes.

Mr. Billy Pang: Ms. Darling, this is a good opportunity for us to hear from you.

One interesting area that we are starting to hear a great deal about is the concept of lifelong learning and the upskilling of our workforce, especially in the digital age. We are constantly creating new and innovative ways to improve the way we work and deliver a better product.

What sort of role do you see things like micro-credentials playing in the future of education?

Ms. Krystal Darling: This question hits very close to home for me. I can speak specifically to our business and the challenges that we're faced with. Not only in skilled trades do we have an issue with getting younger talent involved in skilled trades, we also have an issue when individuals no longer can—their bodies physically can't handle the nature of the work. So how do we progress their careers? They've spent a lot of time, and that's all they know—to utilize their hands. Right now, in our organization, we're taking foremen who have been in that role and

we're moving them into office positions. One of the gaps that they have is technology and utilizing technology, to the point where some individuals do not know how to send an email from a computer.

The growing demands of our customers are moving into the digital environment. They're trying to scale their business; technology is one of the ways. They're asking us for health and safety documentation and project plans in digital form. Our workforce is not educated on those things, so it now becomes part of the employer's responsibility to level up or develop those technology skills. That's something that we take on. Some organizations do not have that expertise or the time to train, so I think the micro-credentialing is a very good idea and it fills the gap that I'm highlighting right now. When we have an aging workforce and we need to transform their roles, we are able to send them somewhere to upskill or level up to take on a different challenge within the same business that they've been very loyal to. I'm a big supporter. I'm pretty passionate about that. It's literally where our business is sitting at this point in time. I can tell you, I personally could use the help and support from an academic institution.

The other part of this is, for those individuals who want to get to the next stage in their career, it's a little daunting for them even to ask for help. So if there's some place that we could send them to go and get this education, I think it's great for the employee and for the employer, and also the academic institutions—a new revenue stream.

If I talked too long there, I apologize.

0950

Mr. Billy Pang: No, it's a great answer. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You have about a minute left, if somebody else on the government side—

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to pass it to MPP Nicholls.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Nicholls, less than a minute.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Ms. Darling, thank you for being here. You pretty much answered in your detailed response the question I have, so I'm going to turn it over to MPP Norm Miller for his question.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): I think we're almost out of time. How much?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Thirty seconds, Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'll just ask, then, what do you hope your legacy will be for [*inaudible*] successful in getting this position?

Ms. Krystal Darling: I think, ultimately, the goal would be to ensure that our country is competitive on a global stage, if I could summarize it.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Thank you very much. I want to thank you for appearing before our committee.

Before you leave—my Clerk thought I was going to forget—I would like to pass over the questioning to the official opposition.

Ms. Stiles, you have 15 minutes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank you, first of all, Ms. Darling, for appearing before us here. Each week, we see a couple of people. It has been interesting. I appreciate your comments about the trades and your experience, and your business experience. I was listening pretty intently to it.

One of the things we've noticed, however, in this experience over the last couple of years in this committee, which I've been sitting on for three years, I guess, is, we've seen a trend in appointments that are very closely tied to the political party that is in power right now. That's unfortunate. Of course, we also see great candidates who come forward. It's not to say, of course, that those candidates are any less, necessarily, because of that. But it is a really important part of the process we have here—to shed some light on how these decisions are being made and what influences the government's decisions about appointments. Frankly, this is the only public process where we get a chance, as representatives of the people, to shine some light and to ask some important questions.

So I want to start, if I may, by asking if you were approached to apply to this position or any of the appointments that you applied for.

Ms. Krystal Darling: No, I was not approached.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And was this the only position that you—I know the process, so I know that sometimes people pick a bunch of different options. Was this the only one, or did you pick other options, too?

Ms. Krystal Darling: No. I selected “education,” and then “labour” and “remuneration.” I felt that those were very close to—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Your interests?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes, sorry. I thought you disappeared there, but there you are.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Can I ask you if you can confirm that you donated \$1,200 to the Conestoga PC association in 2017?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes. I believe it was that amount. I can't recall exactly the dollar figure. All I know is it was the maximum that you were allowed to donate. I did donate that to Michael Harris.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Have you made any other donations to a political party or a candidate, before or after?

Ms. Krystal Darling: No. I specifically made that—I had worked with Michael Harris on his board to help him in his fundraising initiatives, just based on my background in fundraising. He had asked me to join, and for that year, I did provide him with the maximum allotment.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Just to be clear: When you say “board,” do you mean his campaign, or was it something else that you worked on with him?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes, the campaign, I believe. It was when the election time was happening.

I apologize if my political verbiage isn't correct.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, I understand.

Have you been a member of the PC Party of Ontario or the federal Conservative Party ever?

Ms. Krystal Darling: I believe that in order to vote, I had to get a membership, but I don't have one currently. I did that for voting purposes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay, mostly to support Mr. Harris. Is that because—

Ms. Krystal Darling: Just for clarification: Everyone gets confused here because there's a Mike Harris and a Michael Harris. So this is the Michael Harris, not the current one in place.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ah, okay.

Ms. Krystal Darling: I needed to clarify that, because even the local people here get very confused.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, I can imagine. That's an important clarification. Thank you.

We have to go through this process all the time, so funny things pop up. Mr. Stan Cho, the MPP, had mentioned you as a validator around some stuff in the government's budget, and I was just curious: Did you appear before a committee? How did you come to speak to Mr. Cho about the upcoming budget? This was back in, I guess, November 2020.

Ms. Krystal Darling: I never weighed in on any budget. Mr. Cho, Mike Harris and—I apologize, there was another dignitary—came to my organization to do the trade announcement on funding for trades. So it was an appropriate venue, but I did not weigh in on any budget conversations. You're surprising me. I don't know anything about that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I always think it's funny, because the same thing happens—I'll have constituents I mention, something that they said to me or whatever, and the next thing you know they appear in these transcripts.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Oh, okay. Yes. No, I had no weigh-in on budget.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's interesting. Maybe I'll share the clip with you so you can see what they said—but it wasn't bad.

Ms. Krystal Darling: That's good. I'm thinking to myself, maybe I should Google myself more often [*inaudible*] here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's not a bad thing; I wouldn't worry about it. He basically said that you were very grateful about the budget addressing hydro rates and things like that. Maybe that came up in the conversation you had.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Truthfully, I need to speak to him, because I do recall that conversation about hydro rates going down with some of the programming that they were putting out, but that actually hasn't come to fruition, based on my review of my costs.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So your hydro rates—you haven't seen any [*inaudible*]?

Ms. Krystal Darling: No, they've gone up, actually.

Ms. Marit Stiles: By how much? Do you know?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Seven cents.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's interesting. Well, thank you for sharing that.

When they came to make that announcement, did they call you because they knew the kind of work that your organization provides?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes. Literally, I got the call at 2 o'clock on Sunday and they were in my building at 11. That's always great on a Monday, trying to organize

yourself and your whole organization in the middle of a pandemic with all the protocols and—

Ms. Marit Stiles: I was just going to ask you that. That must have been tricky.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Oh, yes. I'm grateful to have our company on the front line of that announcement and in the press, but, yes, it does come with some chaos.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to pass the remainder of my time over to MPP Taras Natyshak.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Natyshak, seven and a half minutes—perfectly shared.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Good morning, Ms. Darling. Thanks so much for appearing before us this morning. It has been really great to learn a little bit more about you.

I am married to a CEO, and she is an inspiration, as a woman, as a leader, in her industry. I know she's working hard to bring other women into an industry that is—her family has owned a car dealership for 90 years in Windsor, in Essex county.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Oh, wow.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, so it's the fourth generation, and she's now at the helm of the organization. Identifying that more women need to be integral in the industry for it to be—for all the metrics: fair, service, equitable.

As you know, a balanced approach makes for a better—if our communities are reflected in our businesses, you're going to get better metrics out of it: productivity, all the things. So kudos to you for taking on that initiative. It's wonderful to see.

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Previous to being elected, I worked for the Labourers' International Union of North America, Local 625, in Windsor. One of my jobs was to get our training delivery agent status out of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. We did that, and then we started the program for apprentices, the pre-apprenticeship program.

Have you ever taken advantage of any pre-apprenticeship programs—or do you access that to bring in a new cohort of trainees to your organization?

Ms. Krystal Darling: I am not actually familiar with that program, so the answer would be no. But I would be interested to learn more about it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If you are a unionized employer, then that union is bound to provide you with labour—that's the contractual obligation they have—but they're training the labourers or the workforce up to the standards, recommendations and requirements of the industry. There's a connection there, and I think it's a really valuable program that the government of Ontario, over successive governments, has invested in, and one that I think we should continue to.

My colleague Peggy Sattler, who is a wonderful colleague and an incredible academic, put forward a bill in 2014 to get the province to focus on work-integrated learning. It's a big title for a pretty simple concept: You get to go to work, and get paid to go to work, while you're performing a co-op. Despite governments of the past saying that unpaid internships are now illegal, it still is the

practice, by and large, in the province. Any thoughts on fixing that link and incentivizing and supporting students with paid internships or paid work-learning programs to fill that gap?

Ms. Krystal Darling: Absolutely. You're speaking to somebody who owns a trade-based business. Truthfully, academics are going to highlight the theory, but the real learning is when you're out in the field working with the tools.

I think one thing we need to be cognizant about is that there is a major gap between senior skilled trade talent out there and the young talent we're trying to bring in. The young talent requires supervision. So you're taking your top talent, and you need to have supervision over these individuals. That comes at a cost to business in terms of productivity, efficiency—and you also have the demands of the customer deadline. I do believe in it.

I think what would be ideal is if there was a program that could also support taking your top talent and helping them mentor and train the younger generation coming in, and making that feasible for business—because what you're going to have is, you're going to have a longer time on jobs. These are fixed-bid projects; a business can only be around if they turn a profit.

I 100% agree with what you're saying. I think we have to work the program in a way that also brings in the employer and the challenges the employer will face.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I really like that idea. It seems so simple. I think there's a role for the provincial government and, frankly, the federal government to play there.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes. The other aspect of this is—you heard me speak about the individuals who no longer can work on the tools, right?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes.

Ms. Krystal Darling: We need to repurpose them within the organization, because they have value. What better way than to put them in a position where they're mentoring, coaching and training the youth? Why don't we incentivize that or subsidize that so we can get more skilled trades in, have less risk on the business and really close this gap? That's where I think there's a misalignment, or just a gap in academia, in institutions, government and business.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, for sure.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): About a minute and a half, Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks, Chair.

In the trade that dominates your industry—you said pipefitters and millwrights? Am I correct?

Ms. Krystal Darling: We're made up of millwrights, fabricators, welder/fitters and electricians.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What is the ratio of apprentice to journey person?

Ms. Krystal Darling: The electrical skilled trade is compulsory; millwrights are non-compulsory, so there is

no ratio related to millwrights. For electrical, there's 1 to 1.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I've argued against the 1-to-1 ratio for safety reasons. Of course, industry and business would say it costs too much to have a 2-to-1 ratio and all those, but your idea really bridges that gap. If we were to take that 1 to 1 and the one person who was to be that mentor, to be that sherpa, was actually focused solely on supporting that apprentice, rather than actually having to continue on production, having them in production—because you want their eyes on the person, just guiding them.

Ms. Krystal Darling: Yes, you have to.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, and that doesn't happen in a real work environment. But the way that you present it actually makes a whole lot of safety sense and economic sense. I might steal that idea from you and—

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): I'm afraid we've run out of time, Mr. Natyshak and Mrs. Darling.

That concludes the time that we have with you. Thank you very much for appearing.

We are now going to move to the concurrences. First up, we are going to move the concurrence for Alizabeth Calder. I believe Mr. Bouma has a motion.

Mr. Will Bouma: Through you, Mr. Chair, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Alizabeth Calder, nominated as member of the Ontario Internal Audit Committee—information and information technology sector audit committee.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Is there any discussion in regard to the appointment of Mrs. Calder? Seeing no discussion, are we ready for the vote?

All those in favour of the appointment, signify by raising your hand. All those opposed, please signify by raising your hand. Carried.

We will now move to the second appointment, and that is the appointment of Krystal Darling. I believe Mr. Bouma has a concurrence motion for us.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Chair. Through you: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Krystal Darling, nominated as member of the Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Do we have anybody who has any comments to make about the appointment of Ms. Darling? Seeing no discussion, I will now go to the vote.

All those in favour of the appointment of Ms. Darling, please signify by raising your hand. And those opposed, please signify by raising your hand. Carried.

That brings us to the end of our meeting. We have no other business, Clerk, as far as I know.

We will all see you in a week and a half, after constituency week.

The committee adjourned at 1009.

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