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(Hansard)**

A-14

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des débats
(Hansard)**

A-14

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 12 April 2022

2^e session
42^e législature

Mardi 12 avril 2022

Chair: Gilles Bisson
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 12 April 2022

Mardi 12 avril 2022

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 2.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning, everyone. We are here to conduct a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

As always, please wait to be recognized by me before speaking. All questions and comments will need to go through the Chair. The Clerk has distributed all committee documents via SharePoint. If you require a hard copy, please let her know.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Adoption of subcommittee reports: Do we have any subcommittee reports?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a subcommittee report.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, please go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, April 7, 2022, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 1, 2022—and that's no April fool.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any questions or comments regarding the subcommittee? MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Once again, we're seeing this government rush through a very large number of appointees to various agencies, committees and commissions. Given the way that this government has been so unwilling to extend the time allocated so that we can actually review these appointees, these folks are going through without any kind of public scrutiny at all. We all know that with a majority government, the members opposite have the absolute right and ability to just rubber-stamp all of these appointments. But it seems like the point of this committee is to provide for that opportunity for the public to meet the people, to be able to see members of the opposition and members of the government ask important questions of the appointees. This is the only place where there's any opportunity for public review.

So I just want to put on the record again—which I have been doing for four years in this place—my deep disappointment that we are, once again, seeing a large number of people approved, rubber-stamped in this process without an opportunity to actually, for their own good, be able to come here and explain their qualifications and respond to the questions of the opposition and the govern-

ment. I just want to put on the record again my deep disappointment that this government refuses, once again, to provide ample opportunity for these folks to appear before us.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comments? MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's the same old same old. It's like my wife would say, "Veik ir pika"—just over and over and over and over again, the same old story.

There is going to be an election on June 2. Maybe they'll have the majority; I sincerely doubt it, but they might have the opportunity to run the committee like they did between 1990 and 1995. This is the privilege of being in government.

Quite frankly, what really belies what the member for Davenport is saying is that we have one potential appointee before the committee today—and I will defy the opposition to find any holes in this appointment; we bring extremely qualified people to this committee. They want more meetings, but they didn't even call a single person. They didn't nominate a single appointee—out of the hundreds that take place—to come before this committee today. We have one appointee today because the opposition is too lazy to go through the procedures and actually call someone to this committee.

I know the member loves to hear her voice at this committee, over and over again, but she might as well just push the repeat button—

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Point of order, MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I firmly believe that we're on this committee—you've had this discussion with me at some of these committees as well. We're here to treat all members with respect and dignity. I think those types of comments aren't fair; they're not reasonable. Maybe the member would like to retract that comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll tell you—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, please wait until I let you know.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Before I give you the floor, I would like to make a comment. Let's keep it a very polite conversation. We are all here to respect each other.

MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank you for that admonishment, Chair, and I respect that. But I hope you can understand the frustration on this side when we hear the same thing over and over again from the same member—continuously impugning the motives of the government and challenging the integrity of the members on this side. She may not do it directly, but she's doing indirectly what she would never be allowed to do directly. The members on this side are all honourable people who were elected in their ridings to serve the people of Ontario. There's a sense of frustration that the only objection the member from Davenport seems to be able to come up with is a veiled accusation that there's a lack of integrity on this side. Quite frankly, Chair, that gets tiring.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any further comment? MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I would never stoop so low as to point out those members opposite individually; I am speaking simply of the government.

I believe there has been a clear trend—it isn't every appointee, but it is absolutely the majority of the appointees we've seen before us here who have given significant contributions to the Conservative Party over the years, who have been failed Conservative candidates. We've seen somebody who was supposed to be appointed as chair of TFO who was not even a francophone. Fortunately, we caught that one.

Certainly, I look at this list here and I know there are some good people who've been appointed. I think we've treated them with a great deal of respect at this committee.

But the member opposite—they talk about the privilege of government. The privilege of government is not to simply appoint randomly partisan appointees. This is about appointing people who can represent the people of this province in these important positions.

It is absolutely the role of this committee to be able to ask questions—and I think we've done it in a very dignified way over the years, but I understand it makes the members opposite uncomfortable sometimes, because we absolutely will continue to point out if there are partisan affiliations.

I think, once again, we've seen here that this government is feeling very vulnerable on this issue, and it is unfortunate that we have to continue raising it. I am not ashamed at all of raising it. It is my job, as a member of the official opposition, to shine a light—and so I'm quite proud of the role we've played here, actually.

I will just maintain my position that this is what this committee should be doing. We've called hundreds of members before this committee over the last four years, and we've only seen, probably, a tiny fraction of those appear, because the time runs out and the members of the government will not allow for an opportunity to expand the time that we have, which is unfortunate. That was my only point that I raised this morning. I'm sorry; I touched something off, apparently.

0910

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would point out that we have one potential appointee coming before committee today, and the opposition, I suppose—far be it from me to impugn their motives, but it's kind of passing strange that they would not call another potential appointee. Appointees are made—whether they come to this committee or not, because their certificates expire and they have to either be appointed or we move on. And yet, today, when there's ample opportunity to call another appointee, the opposition chose not to bother. Were they simply looking for extra time to hear themselves? I'm not sure. At the same time, we're all here, prepared to interview another potential appointee, but they didn't even bother to request that one come before the committee. So you can draw your own conclusions, and anybody listening to this can draw their own conclusions. They chose not to call another potential appointee to committee, which is their privilege and responsibility.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm not going to address some of his comments, but I will address the one that, quite frankly, I think, isn't fair, isn't reasonable.

I think it's fair to say that when you say that I'm too lazy—I've done this job for nine years. I've given every ounce of energy to this job, every single day, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. I love my job. I disagree with some of the policies of the Conservative Party—I think that's fair and reasonable—just like you disagree with the policies of the NDP. But to say that somebody's lazy—I don't think you're lazy, John. I don't think Lorne is lazy. I don't think any MPP is lazy. I think we all try to do the best we can for our members. From my own point of view, I'm not a lazy man. I give every ounce of energy to this job, and I will continue to, right up to June 2, and hopefully beyond—but if not, I'll have my head held high on the job that I did for nine years.

I just want to say to John that I'm not a lazy guy. That was my comment.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, because that's addressed to me, I will take the same position that MPP Stiles took when I made that comment—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Please address your comments through the Chair.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am addressing him through you, Chair.

I'm taking the same position as MPP Stiles, when she said she's not directing those comments about a lack of integrity to the members of the committee but to the structure itself.

I am quite certain that the individual members on this committee are not lazy, but they're also not the ones who personally decide who's coming before this committee—the party structure is. They failed to bring forward names to this committee. If Mr. Gates is sensitive and takes that personally, I apologize. It's not directed at him. It's directed at the structure, just as MPP Stiles said her comments about integrity are directed at our party structure.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): I see no further comments, so I will put the question again regarding the subcommittee report for Thursday, April 7, 2022, on the certificate dated Friday, April 1, 2022. All in favour, please raise your hand. All in opposition? The subcommittee report is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. ALLAN CHESKES

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Allan Cheskes, intended appointee as member, Ontario Internal Audit Committee—Resources Sector Audit Committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we will move to our intended appointments review. We have one witness today, Mr. Allan Cheskes, member, Ontario Internal Audit Committee—Resources Sector Audit Committee. I would like to call upon Mr. Cheskes to come to the witness chair.

Good morning, Mr. Cheskes.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Good morning.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Welcome. Please identify yourself for the record.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Allan Cheskes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. Mr. Cheskes, you can make your opening remarks, and any length of comments that you present today will be taken from the government side.

Now you are welcome to make your opening remarks.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Thank you for the opportunity. I did prepare an opening statement—I don't know if that's available to everybody; I presume it is—and some background information. I prefer not to read from it, if you don't mind. That way I don't have to put on my glasses—and besides which I'm sure there will be questions and answers to follow.

First, you've got to understand that I have been semi-retired for the past four years. I was a partner at Deloitte, and there's mandatory retirement for partners at age 62, so you can do the math and figure out how old I am. To be quite honest with you, I'm in a very good place; it's a wonderful place to be—semi-retirement. The balance and focus have changed, and I'm doing interesting things. I choose to be here because I suspect this will be a very interesting opportunity as well. While I have no regrets about my professional career—I did 40 years as a professional accountant. It was a great career. I developed, I met people—all kinds of challenges, very diverse background. It puts me in a place where I can be pretty content right now. Having said that, I do miss some of the aspects of the old life, and I thought this was an opportunity to get a little closer to that.

I worked in an insurance or audit environment. I assume that each ministry audit is going to be very similar to the practice that I had—each ministry will have a mandate. They will have a vision, a plan, I assume, and a budget that follows that, with policies, and they'll have to execute on

that plan, efficiently and effectively. My role would be to—as I was accustomed to, as a public accountant—ascertain whether those goals and objectives are met and expenditures are made efficiently and effectively, in accordance with policy and budget. So that's what I'm comfortable with.

When I was involved in engagement, there was a planning session. You had to make sure you understood your client's background and internal and external risks. With my engagement teams, we would assess each client, each engagement for external risk, internal risks; we would do our planning and respond accordingly to where the risks were. We followed the risk management approach—it was a risk model approach, if you like.

So there are a lot of parallels. Maybe in this case the audits are a bit more comprehensive, more value-added—but essentially very similar in the process.

I've acquired a whole set of skills over the years—the 40 years, to be precise—and I'd like to use them again and interact with people and work in teams and learn something. There are a lot of interesting ministries here. I'd love to be informed and hopefully make a little difference in my role.

I cut through a lot of stuff that's already in my prepared opening remarks, so at this point I prefer to just leave it open to questions and answers and help fill the gaps that way.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Cheskes. We will start the questioning with the government side. The government side has 10 minutes and 33 seconds.

0920

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Cheskes. That's the proper pronunciation—Cheskes?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Yes. Just think of the game of chess and the romantic gesture that follows the game.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay. Thank you very much. Sometimes, as you can see in this room, it's a bit of a game of chess.

I did want to ask you a few questions. One—I'm going to try to be helpful here—you've had a tremendous career. I've had the chance to read your bio, and it's nothing short of extremely impressive. We're very grateful that you're willing to put your time and talents to this appointment. Of course, we're always looking for good people for these resource audit committees. They're very important. You've had a long career, and you probably want to somehow keep engaged in the process as well. We appreciate that.

Are you a member of the Ontario PC Party?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I'm not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you ever made donations to the PC Party?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I have, in the past—pretty nominal contributions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When you say “past”—how long in the past?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Five, 10 years ago.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So it could be quite some time.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And you're not a member of the party?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I'm not a member of the party.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Were you approached by the party to seek this job?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I was initially contacted by Rocco Rossi, who I was affiliated—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's the chair of the chamber of commerce.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: That's right. I was his CFO when he ran for mayor. We've had some contact over the years, and he thought I would be good for this position. I don't know how—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's not involved in the party. So the party executive never contacted you—or anybody from the Premier's office.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Correct.

That's what initiated this process—his contact with me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Working with Rossi when he was running for mayor—

Mr. Allan Cheskes: And then I had to go through the regular process of screening and interviews and filling out forms etc.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course.

As I said, your credentials are nothing short of impeccable, and your long career. I do want to speak to that a little bit.

Drawing on your experiences at Deloitte as a partner, how would you provide a risk management approach to the strategic advice given to the government?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: As I said, I would assume there are parallels in the two types of audits. At every assurance engagement at Deloitte, we require to follow a risk model approach. That was the key. We would meet before an engagement would start and we would discuss all the things that could possibly go wrong in the engagement: reporting errors, looking at the client's general environment and the tone at the top. What could possibly go wrong? External risks, internal risks—there's all the things going on. It's a moving target. We're dealing with clients. Each one is different—different management, different stakeholders, different regulations. We look at the whole big picture, make sure we understand it, get our arms around it, and plan accordingly—so where are the risks that things can go wrong? We do that—we plan an engagement accordingly, we meet with the client, we do fine-tuning along the way, and then we execute.

At the end of the day, we've got to communicate our results to the management, audit committees, other stakeholders, with recommendations for improvements that are incidental, and the process continues. It's a circle.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for that. I also did want to thank you for your involvement with disadvantaged youth. That is something—

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I should mention one more thing: That was my daily involvement. I had a client base, clients, but I was also—I don't like to toot my own horn—chosen to be involved with quality control. That would involve

pretty tricky files across the nation, and I was involved in quality control reviews, which is basically risk management: "Where can things go wrong with this file? Have we implemented the standards that are required to meet those risks? Is the emphasis of the file in that direction?" It involves a lot of analytic work and risk assessments and making sure the file is meeting standards. So I did a lot of that.

I was also entrusted with the role of partner peer reviews. I went across the country—which could be delicate at times; some partners weren't up to snuff. These were important reviews to make sure they were meeting their standards. They're basically the commanders-in-chief of their files, so we had to review their work as well.

In addition to that, I was doing a lot of professional development training in the summer.

I was also given a lot of complex files. I was one of the few partners in my practice that was CPA for US GAAP accredited, so that gave me some of the more interesting files as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm sure you earned them.

Quality control—that's what we do here too, making sure that we're appointing quality people to our committees.

We thank you for putting your name forward.

With the indulgence of the Chair, I'd like to pass this on to MPP Smith.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Mr. Cheskes, I'm almost embarrassed to ask you about this, because when you look at your CV, with 40 years of experience in accounting, obviously you have a great deal of knowledge, you have a great deal of experience. You have been a teacher, teaching our upcoming generation of accountants. But to do my due diligence—and I do truly apologize for this, because your CV is absolutely impeccable—how would your experience in the accounting firm translate to this position, so we can be assured that you're strengthening government accountability?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: As I said, I think there's a lot of parallels with the external audit and internal audits. It requires working with a team, being able to communicate. It requires analytic skills. It requires the ability to assess risks and where things can go wrong. It requires the ability to understand processes, to see if they're efficient, effective—are they the best things? There's probably a continuum of information. I assume there's a Provincial Auditor involved. There are probably letters of recommendations and internal control practices that can be improved. It's a matter of absorbing all of that and ensuring that we're moving forward the best way we can. I think the approaches are very similar—some subtle differences, because I think a public sector audit is more comprehensive, more focused. Being involved in an internal audit—the materiality is a lot smaller than it would be in an external audit. So I'm aware of all of that.

I'm aware that one of my roles is to see how we can make things better—and moving forward to achieve whatever the mandates, goals and objectives are.

I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Dave Smith: It very much does. I greatly appreciate it.

As I said, your CV is absolutely impeccable. I can't imagine that we would find somebody who has more experience, more knowledge, better suited for this. Thank you so much for putting your name forward for it.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague MPP Coe.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Coe, you have two minutes.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and through you to the delegate today: Welcome, sir, to the committee. Thank you very much for taking the time to apply to be a member of the Resources Sector Audit Committee.

One of the areas that I'd like you to share with the committee members, because I believe it's applicable to this particular committee, is your community experience—your community experience in synagogue and with other activities that you've been involved with throughout the community; also, your teaching experience at Seneca College. Try to relate it to the committee that you're here to discuss today.

Thank you again for taking the time to apply to this committee. There's no doubt that you're well-qualified for it, but I want the committee to hear about your community involvement, because I think it's a good, complementary balance to your professional experience.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: All my life I've wanted to achieve a certain balance in my life; it wasn't all focused on work. That has suited me well, because with retirement, I have things to do, and I'm always active. My firms, or firms I worked with, encouraged me to be involved in the community. I always believed that if you do good things, good things will follow. So I've always participated in the community in various endeavours.

0930

You mentioned my synagogue. I've been involved with that over 20 years. I sat on the board there, as a senior officer for 10 years and as president for two years, and I'm still involved in various committees, including the finance and budget committee, where I'm dealing with the public auditor of the synagogue. So I'm on the audit committee as well. And I just love it—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): My apologies, Mr. Cheskes. The time is up.

We will move to the opposition to start the questioning. You have 15 minutes. MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Cheskes. It has been very interesting listening to you, and I appreciate you being here today.

As you probably heard—I could see you over there, chuckling and smiling away. You appreciated some of the back-and-forth before we began, so I know you understand this process and what it's about. I don't think I've ever heard the members opposite actually ask a question about partisan affiliation or anything, so I thought that was interesting and a healthy new development.

I did want to delve slightly further into that, because we certainly have seen a trend, over the last four years, of partisan appointees. Some of them were failed Conservative candidates. We've seen people who are significant donors to the party.

So, just because I want to make sure we are on record here again—you did mention that you were approached by Rocco Rossi, who is with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce but has a lot of political connections. You mentioned that you were CFO on his mayoral campaign.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Correct. Years ago. Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, it was a while back.

You've also been CFO, I notice in your CV, for Mayor John Tory.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't know if you've signed on for this round.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Yes. If he was going to throw his hat in, I figured I should too. It's my civic duty.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So you'll be the CFO for his mayoral campaign this time.

You mentioned that you've given small contributions, over the years, to the Ontario PC Party.

I wondered if you could confirm—it seems, from my research, there were some contributions to the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: That's correct. I probably contributed towards the federal more so than the provincial—I can't give you a breakdown; if you want amounts, it's probably \$100, for the credit that I earn—but I haven't for the last several years.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I appreciate that.

You mentioned this already: This is the one appointment you've applied for. Have you applied for other ones as well in the last few years?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: No, this came up—to be honest with you, since I've retired, opportunities come to me; I don't necessarily go looking for them. I'm in a position of, you might say, power, and I can choose what I want to do. This seemed like an interesting opportunity to dig up some of my old skills and apply them.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm interested in this particular role that you'll be playing. I certainly believe that having some sort of independent audit capability is actually a very important development. One of the things that I've been grappling with is whether or not the advice—because I know that is part of the role: advice, investigation etc.—that you are involved in, or will be involved in, is transparent. Maybe it's subject to freedom-of-information—but it would seem to me that that information should be fully transparent. Do you have any opinions about—you've been in this world for a long time—the importance of full transparency and public reporting about the nature of the kind of advice and such that you might be providing to the government?

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Of course. First of all, with my background as a CPA for 40 years, I had to be objective; I had to be independent. Even in my role as CFO, I'm not in a position to work on developing and implementing

policies. As CFO, my role was simply to make sure we're complying with expenditures, with revenue receipts, keeping our noses clean, and to make sure the tone at the top was appropriate so that we don't run into any difficulties after the campaign is over, because we know we're going to be scrutinized afterwards if there's a victory.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate that. I know your professional—

Mr. Allan Cheskes: That's ingrained in me.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, exactly. Obviously, you have to meet these expectations and requirements.

I guess I was just reflecting on it because one of the issues that has come up in this place over the last few years is the government not wanting to share certain things; for example, the mandate letters of ministers.

When I look at this kind of role, I think it is extremely important, but I also wonder about the extent to which the government will share the advice, the critique and the assessments that are provided to them.

Anyway, I appreciate that from your perspective and your professional expertise, you would want to see that kind of transparency.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Of course. I can only control what I can control within my realm. I can't control what the government does. But I have a role, and I take it very seriously.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm going to pass on the rest of the questions to my colleague.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Gates.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would just like to make a statement for my staff.

This is a relatively new committee; it started in 2018. In 2018, there were no expenditures. In 2019-20, it went up to \$75,000. In 2021-22, it went to \$190,000. That's an estimate. Obviously, they're either doing more work or it's growing.

When I saw the amount of money that you're getting paid to do this—you're not doing it for the money.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Obviously.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I took a look at that, and I saw \$400, at four meetings a year. That's not a very big tax writeoff that I can see. So I think it's good that you're doing it.

There are some interesting parts to this that you're going to take a look at, and I think they're very important.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry: I think it's very, very important.

The environment: I think we're all concerned about the environment, in particular—at least in my case. I've got five grandkids and young daughters, and the environment is something that I'm really, really concerned about on a go-forward basis. It's certainly going to be an important part of your job—conservation and parks, which really falls into that same thing around wetlands and all the other stuff that's out there. So I really appreciate that you put a lot of effort into our environment, sir. I'm sure you have young family or grandkids or friends who are worried about that.

Agriculture, food and rural affairs: I'm from Niagara. I'm really, really concerned about our agriculture down there, and not because our farmers and grape growers can't do their job. I'm really concerned that, as we watch our planet get hotter, if we don't do something around the environment, it's going to threaten our agriculture and our food supply. So there are some things that I think, again, are very important, and it's why I'm glad you put your name forward.

Labour, training and skills development: You can't run a province without labour and skills. We're fortunate here in Ontario that we probably have the highest-skilled workforce in the industrialized world. I don't think there's any doubt about that. We have some of the best-trained skilled trades as well. Again, it's very important.

And then there's economic development, job creation and trade.

So you've got your work cut out for you on five very, very important ministries. I am hoping that you're up to the task.

I'm going to ask you a question. It's a little off base, and I'm hoping my colleagues don't jump all over me on it. You said you had mandatory retirement. That was very interesting to me—when I saw the age.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: It's 62.

Mr. Wayne Gates: You don't know this, but I know my colleagues do—

Mr. Allan Cheskes: At Ernst, it's 60.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's kind of interesting, because I don't understand why it would be so low, being honest.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: I had eight years to think about it when I joined Deloitte, so I was quite prepared by the time I reached the retirement age. But if you ask me, I think we could have continued serving in a sort of eat-what-you-kill type of role and trained staff and brought our experience to the table, just to allow room for younger people to go up the ladder and make room for them. I respect that, too.

0940

They still have their hands in my pocket. I can't do anything without their approval—if I want to keep my pension, that is.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I understand that pensions are important, sir. But the point I was going to make was that I came out of the labour movement, and in our plants there's no such thing as mandatory retirement anymore. It used to be that there was an age, and once you reached that age you had to retire. In the unions now, it's discriminatory to—

Mr. Allan Cheskes: But not for partners, not for owners.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, not owners.

But I wanted to say that in our case—I was president of my local union—if you were part of the union elected representatives, you had to retire at 65. So you could give up your position as a union rep or a president and go back into the plant and work until whatever time you decided to.

I've always thought that the retirement age is kind of different when you're seeing more and more people

working later in life, for a number of reasons—maybe not in your particular case; I doubt if it is. But for some, it's out of necessity that they have to keep working. They don't have pensions like they used to, and some of those things. So I thought it was interesting that it was three years before the executive of the union would have to retire.

I can see why, after a few years, you're saying, "I think I have more to offer to the province of Ontario." I would think that you're relatively talented, only because you're the CFO for Mayor Tory. He's not picking anybody who doesn't have a lot of talent, to make sure that he's doing everything correctly and by the book, so I congratulate you on that. I actually think Mayor Tory has done a pretty good job in Toronto, under very tough circumstances over the last two years.

I don't know how much time I've got left.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Three minutes and 51 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay.

I don't really have a lot of questions for you. We've covered the stuff that we always ask. You're not special—when you come here, and our colleagues on this side of the House, and now our colleagues over there, are asking, "Did you donate? What went on?"

I want to address something that was addressed; you were here and you listened to it.

I called my staff to ask why there wasn't another person coming here today—because it's my staff that has done this for the last two years. They felt really bad. The response that I got from my staff was that we should extend the consent so more people can come. Every time we ask to extend the consent, it's denied. We actually put six names forward last week. I just want to say to my staff, because they're watching—like your staff probably watches this every week, to make sure they can do a better job—for the two years that they've been taking care of me at this committee, I just want to thank them for their hard work. In this particular case, where we didn't have an extra one—there are ways that we could have done that. I just want to say to my staff that they've done a good job. I think they feel kind of bad, with what was said earlier. Like your staff—I think all of our staffs do incredible work, every single day, on behalf of all of us. I know you guys all think your staff is the best in Ontario; I think my staff is the best in Ontario as well. They take a lot of pride in the job they do. I just want to say that that's what transpired today. There is a suggestion that maybe we could extend some of the ones that aren't unanimous—to extend their time so they can come before the committee. I just wanted to say

thanks to my staff. They've done a good job over the last—I think we've only got one meeting left. I just want to say thanks to them.

Sir, good luck with your new role. It was a pleasure meeting you. Stay safe.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Is it a point of order? No. Okay.

The opposition's time is over. If we don't have any questions for the witness, we can free the witness from the chair. After that, we can come back to our discussion.

Mr. Cheskes, thank you very much for coming. You're free to leave. The Clerk will contact you to inform you about the rest of the process. Have a nice day.

Mr. Allan Cheskes: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, you had a point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: MPP Gates wondered whether we'd have any comments on his questions to the applicant about the mandatory retirement; to the contrary, I would be concerned that if we instituted one, I might have to leave too. So I'm quite satisfied that we don't have mandatory retirement, because some of us would have already been gone. I thank the member for that.

On the matter of a vote, I'd like a recorded vote.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): That wasn't a point of order.

I'm going to put the question.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Mr. Yakabuski, you have to move the concurrence.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Allan Cheskes, nominated as member of the Ontario Internal Audit Committee—Resources Sector Audit Committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any comments? Seeing none, I'm going to put the question.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like a recorded vote.

Ayes

Coe, Gates, Norman Miller, Pang, Dave Smith, Stiles, Yakabuski.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The concurrence carries.

I see we don't have any other items on the agenda of the meeting today, so I will adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 0947.

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