

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

A-6

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

A-6

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
43<sup>rd</sup> Parliament

Thursday 8 December 2022

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1<sup>re</sup> session  
43<sup>e</sup> législature

Jeudi 8 décembre 2022

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Chair: Will Bouma  
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Will Bouma  
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 8 December 2022

Jeudi 8 décembre 2022

*The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.*

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will now come to order. We are meeting to conduct a review of intended appointees. We are joined by staff from the legislative branch, Hansard, and broadcast and recording. Thank you all for your efforts.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** The first item of business will be the adoption of a subcommittee report, which was distributed in advance. We have a subcommittee report dated December 1, 2022. We have a motion. Member Coe.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair. Through you, I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, December 1, 2022, on the order-in-council certificate dated Friday, November 25, 2022.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** We have a motion moved by member Coe. Is there any discussion on the motion? No discussion? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? All those in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

## MR. REAGAN RUSLIM

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Reagan Ruslim, intended appointee as member, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** We will now move to our review of the intended appointees.

Our first appointee today is Reagan Ruslim, nominated as a member of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

You can come forward and have a seat. Thank you for joining us today. I personally really appreciate having all of these in person.

You may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will start with the government, followed by the official opposition, with 15 minutes allocated to each recognized party. Any time

you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

If you're ready, you have the floor, sir.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and honourable members of this committee. Good morning. It's an honour and a privilege to be here today, and I thank you for this opportunity. My name is Reagan Ruslim. I stand before you today as a nominee for the board of directors of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. I'm coming to you today from Etobicoke, where I was born and raised. I live in Etobicoke Centre. I'm a proud graduate of three Ontario-based universities.

Way back in 1999, I earned my first degree, in business administration, from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. I majored in finance and accounting. Upon graduating, I then had the honour and privilege of working for what was then known as Deloitte & Touche, now known as Deloitte, the international accounting firm. I spent three years as an auditor with Deloitte, working in what was then called the telecommunications, media and technology group. During that time, I earned two accounting designations, first as a chartered accountant here in Ontario and in Canada, and I also earned my certified public accounting designation in the state of New Hampshire for the United States. I was one of the few junior employees at Deloitte at the time to have earned both designations in the same year.

After three years of a riveting and exciting career as an auditor, I then wanted to expand my tool kit. I wanted to learn more. I'm a believer in constant and never-ending improvement. So I went further down the 401, further west, and moved to London, Ontario, where I attended the law school at the University of Western Ontario. I was there from 2003 to 2006, and then I articulated here in Toronto with the law firm known as Hicks Morley. It's a management-side labour and employment law firm. Thereafter, I really enjoyed labour and employment, and I continued to practise as a labour and employment lawyer. I continue to work as a labour and employment lawyer, but I spent a lot of time as a litigator. I've argued and appeared before all levels of court, including the Provincial Offences Court, representing clients with respect to occupational health and safety matters. I've also appeared at the Superior Court of Ontario, the Divisional Court, the Court of Appeal. And in 2016, I appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada in a matter, representing an employee against Atomic

Energy of Canada Ltd. The case is *Wilson v. Atomic Energy*. The citation is 2016 SCC 29.

While I was practising labour and employment—I'm a glutton for punishment—I enrolled to do my master's of law at Osgoode law school part-time. My focus was on labour and employment and human rights law. A version of my thesis was published by the *Western law journal* in 2015. It was about the "unjust dismissal" provisions in section 240 of the Canada Labour Code, and that paper was cited by the Supreme Court majority in their decision when I appeared before them arguing on behalf of Mr. Wilson at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Later, in 2016, I went back to law school at Osgoode, again part-time, to do my second master's of law. This time was in the byzantine but nevertheless intellectually stimulating area of taxation law.

In January 2020, I joined my current employer, which is Hydro One Networks, where I serve as the senior legal counsel. My practice in-house now is comprised of labour, employment, corporate ethics, and recently I've taken on the pensions and benefits portfolio.

I'm very keen on joining the board of directors of the WSIB. I believe in the mission of the WSIB. I believe in the no-fault workers' compensation scheme of the legislation that dates back to 1914, with the Meredith report. I'm at a point in my career where I have a very fulfilling and busy career as a lawyer, but I want to contribute more. I want to give back to the province, give back both to the employers and the workers of this great province. I believe that my professional education, my professional experience, both as a chartered accountant and a lawyer, should help me be able to help contribute to the WSIB and its mission.

Having said that, thank you for this opportunity to speak.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you very much, and thank you for being willing to serve the people of Ontario.

I'll turn to the government now. You have just under nine and a half minutes for your questions. Member Coe, go ahead.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair, and through you to our applicant today: What an impressive background you have—

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** —and its applicability to the position that you've applied for. We're really grateful that someone with your qualifications and how you've applied those qualifications could come to us to practise them as a representative of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, where I worked for eight years in a different capacity, in public affairs.

I want you to talk a little bit more broadly about an aspect that's part of your background, not necessarily academic, and that's occupational health and how you're going to apply your knowledgeability of occupational health in a variety of sectors as a board member for the Workplace Health and Safety Agency.

And thank you, Chair, through you, to our applicant.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the member's question.

I believe occupational health and safety goes hand in hand with the work of the WSIB. Occupational health and safety is preventive. It should ideally prevent and ideally eliminate all incidents of workplace injuries for employers and workers, and therefore reduce the burden on the WSIB system. Although the two are separate—they're in separate silos—there is a nexus; there is a connection. It's almost symbiotic. One can help the other.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for that answer. And through you, Chair, to MPP Pang, please.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you, sir. Member Pang, go ahead.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you for putting your name forward. In your presentation, you shared a bit that you want to serve the community after you have learned so much. Can you expand a bit on what motivates you to apply for this position?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I did not really practise any before the tribunal, but I've always been interested in the WSIB. I think it's just a unique niche for me because it can draw on both my accounting background and my legal background, and I think that's what the motivation was.

**0910**

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Okay. You mean because you have the background, so you want to move forward.

Why WSIB? Because there are a lot of opportunities out there that you may serve the community, right, with your professional background. So why WSIB?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Because it has that great nexus of employers—I mean, the employers are the ones who pay into the WSIB system, but it's of benefit for workers. I've always been involved as a lawyer particularly in the balance between employers and employees, and trying to find that synergistic balance between the needs of the two entities, the two parties.

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you. Mr. Chair, I want to share my next question with MPP Kusendova.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Kusendova, go ahead.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Good morning.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Good morning.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Yes, I completely agree, a very impressive resumé. I really like the fact that you are a lifelong learner. You have two master's degrees. I'm actually pursuing my master's degree right now, and I really believe that education is a lifelong journey and that the moment we stop learning is the moment we stop growing. That's my personal belief, so it's very, very impressive.

On the topic of occupational health and safety, yesterday I had an opportunity to meet with an occupational health and safety nurse. She spoke to the fact that when you have the joint committees of occupational health and safety, it's all about collaboration, so the health professionals together with the safety professionals work together.

Can you talk a little bit about collaboration? Because I think that's an important aspect of working at the WSIB.

In your experience, when did you collaborate with others and how do you see yourself as part of a team?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I think in industrial relations, labour relations and employee relations, collaboration is fundamental. Litigation should be the tool of last resort. I always tell my internal client now at Hydro One, the moment something goes, for example, to a grievance or the moment it has to go to court for a lawsuit, both parties have lost. They've lost not only in the cost of lawyers—not that I have a problem with that per se—but also the loss of trust, goodwill and open and transparent dialogue.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you very much. I'll pass it on to MPP Jones.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Good morning and thank you—

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** MPP Jones, go ahead.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you. I really appreciate hearing about your unique, diverse and broad educational and experiential background. Tell the committee how that combination of both academic training and applied experience can benefit WSIB.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I think it benefits the WSIB because I have perspective not only from a theoretical standpoint but also from a practical standpoint. I've been in the trenches. I've been in arbitrations. I've slept in hotel rooms and bargained late at night in collective bargaining, but I also have an eye for numbers, and I understand [*inaudible*] something like the WSIB, fiscal prudence, sound fiscal management is in the best interests of all the parties: the employers, the government and also the workers. What we don't want to have happen is the unfunded liability that existed, I think, from 2010 until about 2018.

I think I bring a multi-faceted skill set; I think I bring a multi-faceted background. And to the earlier question, I pride myself on empathy, on not only having intelligence or a high IQ but also a high EQ. That goes to the idea that I believe in collaboration, and I have a lot of experience in collaboration.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Thank you for that thoughtful answer. Through you, Chair, if MPP Gallagher Murphy could continue.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Yes. Member Gallagher Murphy, go ahead. Two minutes left.

**Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Ruslim, for coming out today. I do appreciate your background and your willingness to put your name forward to assist the province with this board.

That being said, as you are likely aware, the WSIB has been tasked with increasing worker loss-of-earnings payments from 85% to 90%, without increasing employer premiums; I guess that's the trick here. So my question to you is: Given how this will require significant detail into fiscal management of WSIB funds, how do you feel you will be able to contribute to this goal?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Well, I think that my accounting background would certainly help, as an auditor. I'm not afraid of numbers and I'm not afraid of words and interpreting statutes and regulations. But I do have to say, as I mentioned earlier, it's important that the—I believe in the goal of increasing the LOE ratio from 85% to 90%, but

we've got to do it in a fiscally sound and prudent manner so that it's sustainable in the long run. Nobody wins if it's just a one-year or two-year bump and the WSIB has to reduce LOE earnings again.

**Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Ruslim. To you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** You have 20 seconds left. Any further questions? Member Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Just a quick note: You know that we, as a government, have been having a trend to focus on the digitizing of the services because it allows better access, easier access, remote access to the constituents who need that service or the—

**The Chair (Mr. Sheref Sabawy):** I'm sorry. That concludes the time available. Thank you for your question, sir.

I will now turn it over to the opposition. You have 15 minutes. Who would like to go first? Member Pasma, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thank you, Mr. Ruslim, for being here this morning. I just want to dig a little more deeply into some of your qualifications.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Sure.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** You mentioned that you've done occupational health and safety cases. Now, I come from the union movement and so have seen the worker side of occupational health and safety cases, which is often pushing for recognition on the part of employers that they did not do enough to protect the workers' health and safety—and that's how an incident ended up occurring in the workplace—pushing for greater protections for workers in the workplace. Now, you did occupational health and safety on the management side.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I did, yes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit more about that and how you feel the work you did there qualifies you for a position on the WSIB.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I've always told my management clients, when it comes to occupational health and safety, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I believe in strong, robust occupational safety measures and controls. My background as an auditor lends itself to a risk-based approach, identifying where risks were and where my clients could improve their safety mechanisms and safety procedures.

Personally, although I was on the management side, I have to say I'm quite centrist. I believe in a fair workplace and that employers and workers are partners, especially when it comes to issues such as safety.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I'm very glad to hear that. The other area that you mentioned you felt particularly qualified you for this role was accounting?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Yes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Now, a lot of workers feel that the surplus in the WSIB account was eliminated by making it harder for workers to qualify for WSIB benefits. When workers hear "accounting," I think there might be some concern that an accountant is coming in with a cut mindset to balance the books, rather than a mindset of making sure every worker gets the benefits that they need.

Can you talk a bit more about your approach and how you feel that your accounting background is a qualification for this role?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** When you're dealing with the topic of money, I believe in sound fiscal management. I believe in fiscal prudence. As I alluded to earlier, I believe that you always have to have an eye toward the long-term viability and sustainability of any organization, especially something as important and as vital as the WSIB system. Like I said earlier, I don't believe in EPS and managing quarter by quarter. I believe in having a long-term horizon view. Like I said, what you really don't want—in my opinion, the WSIB doesn't want to have the unfunded liability that it had in 2010, and it took almost a decade to eliminate it.

0920

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Right. In this regard, can you tell me what you know about the process of deeming?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I know a little bit about deeming. It used to be called “determining.” I think around 2007, under the previous Liberal government, there were supposed to be some amendments. My understanding is that there were some amendments to the regulations to reduce deeming by the WSIB.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** So the process of deeming is when you can't do the job you used to do because of your injury, but they determine you can do another job despite your injury and, therefore, reduce your benefits according to the income you could be earning in that other job. But that process is done regardless of whether or not that other job exists where you live and whether or not you are actually able to do that job because that job is open and available to you. So in many parts of the province—if my colleague Guy Bourgoon was here today, he would tell you that frequently in the north this process happens and the job doesn't exist for like hundreds of kilometres. It is hours away, and yet workers' benefits are being reduced because they could do this theoretical job. Do you think that process is fair?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** The way you've described it, I can see why some people would think that it's unfair, but I don't know that much about the topic. I'd certainly have to look into it further, because certainly we want a system that's robust but also deals with the actual practical realities of each individual case.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Right. Okay.

So maybe a more general question for commitment on your part: Will you commit to supporting injured, ill and fallen workers first and foremost in their compensation claims, as the process was intended, rather than looking at financial considerations, such as employers lobbying for lower premiums or the unfunded liability? Will you put the workers first?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I think I'd put the WSIB first, and in doing so, you're putting both employers and the workers first. Like I said, I think all the decisions with respect to the WSIB have to be made with the horizon of the long-term viability of the organization. You don't want to be running structural deficits or unfunded liabilities.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. Can you tell me what your understanding is of the issues that typically face injured or ill workers, or the families of workers who have unfortunately died on the job, when they are applying to the WSIB or dealing with the WSIB throughout the process?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I do not have personal experience, either professionally or personally, with respect to those issues.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. Do you have any idea then of the barriers that workers might face when they're accessing compensation through the WSIB?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I am aware that there are often language barriers. There are often socio-economic barriers. There's also awareness. I think we all know that the WSIB is a big organization, and with every big organization there comes a lot of paper and bureaucracy. I think that can be intimidating for workers, especially when they are most vulnerable.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Speaking of paper, are you familiar with paper doctors and why the injured workers' movement doesn't agree with their involvement in workers' compensation claims?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I'm not aware of what paper doctors are.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** A paper doctor is a doctor who never sees the client; they see some paperwork. Quite frequently, they make a determination that a client is not eligible for compensation, despite never having actually examined the patient. Do you think that's a fair process?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** That's a very good question. I'd have to think more about it. I would hope that the paper doctors, at least, are reviewing the medical file.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I would hope so too. But I don't think that's the standard of practice within the world of medicine—that someone is able to determine what somebody needs based on simply reviewing a file. I think the standard of care is always to actually examine the patient. It doesn't seem fair that that's the standard of care in the medical world and yet we can deny somebody compensation and income supports based on a review of their medical file.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Point of order, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I apologize for the interruption. Point of order, member Jones.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** I apologize, Mr. Chair, but I think this line of questioning is straying far away. The applicant has clearly answered the questions sufficiently. I think that the MPP opposite is straying from the actual point of the line of questioning.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I'm sorry, that's not a valid point of order.

Please continue. You have the floor. You have about five minutes and 40 seconds left.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Did you want to comment on that?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** You've raised a very good question, and I will have to think about it more and read up on it more.



**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Can we count on you, in this role, to push for proper and increased adjudication of the WSIB's chronic mental stress policy, which, with its current application, only compensates 4% of applicants?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Again, that's a very good question. I'm certainly willing to look into that issue further, but I can't comment on that, as I'd just be speaking from a position of ignorance.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. I'm going to ask some quick uncomfortable but necessary questions, and then I'll turn it over to my colleague for some final questions.

Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party provincially?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Yes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** How long?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** The last 10 years.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** So you're currently a member of the Progressive Conservative Party?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Yes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** What about the Conservative Party federally?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** The Conservative Party of Canada? Yes, I am a member.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** And how long there?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Probably the last 10 years.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Have you donated to the Progressive Conservative Party?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Yes, small amounts—\$100.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Recently?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I can't recall.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Have you ever worked on a Conservative election campaign?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Did anyone ask you to submit an application for this position?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Just one last question before I turn it over to Doly—and I think MPP Bouma might also be incredibly interested in this one. Why do you speak Dutch?

*Laughter.*

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** My mother grew up in the Netherlands.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I didn't know that. That's a great question, actually.

Member Begum, go ahead. You have the floor for three minutes and 35 seconds.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Good morning. Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate the interest. It's a very important position, so we appreciate you listening and answering these sometimes tough questions.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I'm a litigator. I'm used to it. Thought-provoking questions are always good. They're food for thought and they expand my thinking.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I'm glad to hear that.

Just to carry on with what MPP Pasma was talking about, one of the things that we're having difficulty with is actually going back to the paper doctors—because one

of the foundations of medical practice is to be able to examine your patient. The way a lot of injured workers' compensation is determined is without having any knowledge of who this patient is, just looking at a few pieces of paperwork of their medical history, and sometimes based upon what the employer is submitting. Do you think it's fair to have a determination like that?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Again, the topic of paper doctors was enlightened by your friend. I can't comment as to whether it's fair or not, or whether it's consistent with some medical practice. I don't want to speak from a position of ignorance, but I certainly will undertake to learn more about this issue and read more and talk more about it.

**0930**

**Ms. Doly Begum:** That's great, thanks. One of the things that you've mentioned was bureaucracy and paperwork within the system as well. How would you improve access for injured workers to get justice and to be able to have a fair trial—not one way or the other, but fair compensation practice?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I'm a big believer in technology. I know that the WSIB is currently working on a digitization process to make itself accessible in this 24/7, 365 online world that we're increasingly living in. So while I can't speak to the particular ways to reduce paperwork, I think accessibility through technology is a great opportunity to enhance the access of the WSIB to everybody, especially injured workers in their time of need and vulnerability.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** And just one last question: We have a lot of practices within the WSIB. I know it's an organization you are signing up for, but it's been described in many ways as a beast that does not necessarily stand up for a lot of workers. And it should be impartial.

Do you believe it should be impartial and how would you ensure the impartiality of this organization?

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** I believe it's impartial, but also that impartiality is enhanced by the separate body, the complementary body to the WSIB, which is the WSIAT. There is that tribunal that's completely separate from the WSIB but has the power to make rulings and decisions, often contrary to what the WSIB's decision was.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I know I have a few seconds left, so—

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** One, zero.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Oh. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Thank you both.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Bedankt, mijnheer, for coming. It's very nice to have you here today, Mr. Ruslim. You are welcome to stay but you are free from having to be here, or you can leave. But thank you very much for coming.

**Mr. Reagan Ruslim:** Thank you all. Thank you very much.

MR. STEVEN MASTORAS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Steven Mastoras, intended appointee as member, Ontario Land Tribunal.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Our second appointee today is Steven Mastoras, nominated as member of the Ontario Land Tribunal. Please come forward. You may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will again start with the government, followed by the official opposition, with 15 minutes allocated to each recognized party. Any time you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

Thank you, again, very much for coming forward. You have the floor, sir. You can make your statement.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of committee. I'm honoured to be present this morning to share with the members my personal history, and specifically my interest in the Ontario Land Tribunal. As a current full-time member of the Landlord and Tenant Board, I've expressed my interest in the Ontario Land Tribunal because it's a tribunal that represents an area of personal and professional interest that I have had for many years, throughout my public and private sector history.

During my previous experience as a two-term city councillor in the borough of East York, pre-amalgamation days in Toronto, I had the privilege of chairing the economic development and planning committee, which exposed me to the complex and fascinating process of official plans, site-specific planning applications, zoning bylaw amendments and many other land use planning applications in our great city.

Many of the site-specific applications related to intensification, different types of housing projects and special-needs projects in our community. There were a number of office-commercial applications and a wide variety of consents to sever that were part of the committee of adjustment process but that council and planning staff, overall, were broadly engaged in. Any application that required council approval was something that I was directly involved in. Informal and formal public meetings were always part of the process, and the relevant legislation, official plans and zoning requirements of the municipality were always the guiding documents in the consideration of any of these applications.

I also chaired the legislation, building and bylaw enforcement committee, which supplemented my experience with zoning bylaw knowledge and other relevant legislation relating to property and land use planning.

Both of these important roles were foundational opportunities allowing me to develop my ability to fairly and effectively chair numerous public meetings and formal public hearings under the Planning Act, some of which were quite contentious and required a fair and impartial due process—and, ultimately, a decision from committee and council following the process and all of the evidence and submissions that were provided to committee and council.

A number of matters were also pursued at the Ontario Municipal Board at the time, and council, in its wisdom, would commonly deal with the question of whether to act as a party or a participant in the process related to the

matter, and this approach was normally pursued on a case-by-case basis at the board—the OMB, at the time. Often council would appear in support of a decision with staff or, if required, seek independent counsel and planning expertise where necessary to make its case at the board—now known, of course, as the tribunal.

My current role with the LTB as a member-adjudicator, I believe, has given me the ability to experience a number of different circumstances and has served me very well in ensuring the process of natural justice and procedural fairness in an administrative law environment. My time at the LTB has been invaluable in terms of managing a significant workload in a virtual dynamic, with diverse applications from landlords and tenants, all of which require very thoughtful and careful analysis pursuant, of course, to the statute, guidelines and rules. The need for effective and expeditious decision-making at the LTB has been a guiding principle at the board, and I genuinely commend the members and leadership team and the staff for their very hard work during these challenging times. It's been an honour to be associated with them.

My private sector experience dates back to my family's numerous hospitality businesses and real estate interests over the course of the past 35-plus years. As a first-generation Canadian of Greek heritage, I'm very proud of our family's numerous small business achievements and believe that this lengthy and challenging small business experience also positions me very well for the tribunal.

I'm a genuine believer in meaningful public service and I feel that my diverse personal history—through holding elected office, hard work and dedication in a family business and my commitment to community service, through various organizations—has provided me with a sound basis of knowledge for my most recent role as an adjudicator at the LTB and, hopefully, my future role at the tribunal.

Perhaps my greatest accomplishment, however, has been as a husband and father of four children who are now all adults. I'm very proud that all of my family members continue to demonstrate a commitment to hard work in their careers and dedication to our workplaces and respective communities. They're always prepared to give back in the spirit of volunteerism.

We're all very proud of this great province and country, and any public service contribution that I can personally offer with the tribunal is truly a great honour. I'm happy to answer any questions committee members may have.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you very much, Mr. Mastoras. I'm going to turn to the government side first, with eight minutes and 40 seconds on the clock. Member Coe, go ahead.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair. Through you to the applicant: Welcome, sir, to the committee.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Thank you.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for the number of years that you've devoted in your varied resumé of experience and applicability to this position in a number of sectors.

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I'd like you to provide to the committee some insights—I think it would be also helpful to those people viewing

today—and some additional information about the type of decision-making process that goes on at a city or town council, but particularly the economic and planning development committee, and the number of public servants that are involved at a city/town level in providing advice in council with respect to decisions that would be taking place at the committee level, but then subsequently at the town council, and then the level of engagement that takes place with the public to ultimately arrive at a final decision. I think that's important for people to hear, because it is directly applicable to what you're applying for today.

Thank you for appearing, again, before this committee and bringing, quite frankly, a legacy of public service before us today.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Thank you very much, member. That's a complex question. Municipal planning is a fascinating dynamic. It begins with a property, the site-specific dynamic that has a wide variety of elements to it, whether it's a commercial piece of property or a residential piece of property or something that can be intensified and create the kind of physical structure and density that's compatible with the objectives of the official plan in a municipality, the zoning bylaw dynamics and the site-specific circumstances. Each and every case is different.

There's clearly a process that has been in place for decades under the Planning Act. I was certainly part of that process in a previous life, whereby community consultations took place and formal public hearings under the Planning Act were part of the requirement, and chaired those hearings on many occasions. I did my best to ensure impartiality, integrity in the process, procedural fairness, allowing input from interested parties during those formal public hearings, and took all of the information—both public input and private sector expertise from legal counsel, planning experts, engineers and so on.

Those are all elements that form part of the case-by-case analysis and take time and proper consideration before ultimately making a decision.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for that response. And Chair, through you, to my colleague, MPP Kusendova.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Kusendova-Bashta, go ahead.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Good morning.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Good morning.

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta:** Thank you for sharing your impressive resumé with us this morning.

For me, I'm always interested in what a person likes to do in their spare time. We can learn a lot about a person from their resumé, but it is what they do as a volunteer, what they do in their spare time for their community, which really helps us to illustrate the character of a person.

Can you speak a little bit to your volunteerism, your involvement in the community? What are some issues that you are passionate about?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Thank you very much, member. I have a lot of interests: first and foremost, family. I have a young family. I'm now a recent grandfather, two times over and a couple more on the way, so I'm thrilled about that, first and foremost.

But I have given back to my community through various organizations. Rotary has been one of them, our Toronto East Rotary Club, of which I've been a member and past president and an associate district governor in our District 7070. Rotary has been something that's been near and dear to my heart for over 20 years.

I've also given back to my local hospital foundation, the formerly Toronto East General Hospital, now the Michael Garron Hospital, a leading health care facility in our community. I've volunteered a lot of my time over the years with the foundation at the hospital and helped raise a substantial amount of money from the local community. I'm very community-driven. I might also add that I recently served as a member of the board of directors of the Homes First Foundation, which helped to raise a lot of money for many people who needed housing over the years. It was a real privilege to be involved with that. I met some fantastic people—all volunteer roles that have taught me a lot in life and I think I've been able to pass on to my family members.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Further questions? Mr. Sabawy, go ahead. You have two minutes, 15 seconds.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** You mentioned that you are currently a member of the Landlord and Tenant Board?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** That's correct. Yes, I am.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I would assume, with all the backlog of cases, you are busy in—

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** It's a significant workload. I've never shied away from hard work in my life. I'm used to seven days a week—and certainly, coming from the hospitality sector, I'm sure you'll appreciate where that comes from.

The LTB is really moving very, very well—and I'll defer to the leadership of the LTB to comment at the appropriate time with regard to what the priorities are. It has been a fantastic experience. I've met some wonderful adjudicators. As I mentioned in my preamble, the leadership team has done an absolutely wonderful job of keeping up with that workload and the demands that we're confronted with.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for all the efforts you've put in there. Do you think there's a cross-reference? Can you use some of the expertise gained—

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** From the LTB? Absolutely. I believe the virtual dynamic has been highly successful. There have been dozens and dozens of matters before us on a day-to-day basis that the board deals with. And that dynamic, I think, has served me well, in terms of moving to an area of administrative law that I'm very passionate about.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I will share—

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Ten seconds.

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** I'm okay. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** We'll let that conclude the time available for the government side.

We'll move to the opposition. Member Begum.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Good morning, Mr. Mastoras. We're actually neighbours. I'm in Scarborough Southwest, and you're in Beaches—East York. The work that you've done, and also at Michael Garron, the contributions that you've made—I just want to say thank you very much. We know the need; I'm sure you know it very well. As much as we're part of Toronto now, we still have a bit more of a need, and sometimes we're treated a little bit differently than the rest of the city. I think the work that you do really fills those gaps. So I appreciate that, and I wanted to just put it out there because I felt that that was necessary.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Thank you very much for mentioning that.

The foundation does great work in our community. The hospital has played a leadership role in the current crisis that we've been confronted with, as you know, day in, day out. I served for a number of years on the board of governors during my time on council, and I also served on the foundation—as well as the most recent initiative, the campaign cabinet of the foundation, which are all volunteer roles that effectively serve the needs of our very diverse community.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** It is. People from different backgrounds sometimes have difficulty accessing services, whether it's health care—and you've been part of the LTB, as well. So I'll start a little bit first with some of the experience. You have the borough experience from the past decades, I would say.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Yes.

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**Ms. Doly Begum:** And then more recently, as well. In seeing some of the difficulties, especially with the Landlord and Tenant Board tribunal and the tenant board and the delays that we've had—because I think they have had a massive amount of files to deal with. Taking on this new role, what do you feel you'll be bringing from your previous experience, and how would you make both of these positions as efficient as possible?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I think that's an excellent question. With respect to the operations and the ongoing dynamics at the LTB, I would suggest that I should defer that element of things to the leadership at the LTB.

I'm an adjudicator that has learned a lot in the past little while about virtual hearings, and I think that experience in particular will serve me well in transition to the Ontario Land Tribunal because, from what I understand, there are some virtual hearings that are ongoing. There may be some in-person hearings down the road; I'm not sure what the circumstances are. Personally, I'm prepared for anything. I can handle virtual dynamics. I can handle in-person hearings. I can travel where necessary and fulfill my responsibilities in the public service. But the challenges of the OLT are going to be quite fascinating, going forward, and I look forward to being a part of that process.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** My next question is a little bit different from that. When it comes to our community, especially the east end, there's a lot of green spaces, including the Scarborough Bluffs. With a number of new developments proposed, we know the need for having affordable housing, being able to have that dream, but also

to make sure that we have good protections. In your work, how will you work with the OLT to ensure that environmental concerns, especially things like sinkholes, dangerous erosion, flooding etc.—a lot of these issues that we're actually seeing happen, even right now—are taken into account?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Again, an excellent question. The environmental impact of any new development, particularly in the urban centre, is very, very important. On the one hand, one has to balance the objectives of densification and tie it in with public transit, but on the other hand, we also have to be very cognizant of the kind of public space that's available in any particular application and the environmental impact of any decisions that the tribunal might make. We'll certainly have to take many of those considerations into account and make the appropriate decision at the time, on a case-by-case basis. There are guiding statutes that, obviously, members of the tribunal have to pay attention to, and that's an obligation that an adjudicator or a member of the tribunal has, to ensure that they adhere to what those guiding statutes and rules are. That's certainly where I intend to be very constructive and active and a part of the decision-making process.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Thank you, Mr. Mastoras. I have two more questions, and then I'll pass it off to my colleague here. It's a similar thought in terms of environmental protection. You'll have a little bit more of a difficult job, I would say, because with new regulations or new laws being implemented by our current government, we no longer have conservation authorities with the same power as they used to. They won't be able to do the environmental assessment they used to, and they have spoken out against the bills that were proposed which took away that authority they had. Because you'll have a little bit more responsibility without those assessments, how would you ensure the environmental protection and the sanctity of our green spaces, making sure that we balance those two? How would you do that?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Well, as you can appreciate, Ms. Begum, I'm not a parliamentarian. I'm not a lawmaker. My role would be purely as an adjudicator at the tribunal, and I would adhere to whatever statutes I'm obligated to adhere to. I know that the more recent activities that you're referencing are certainly in the public forum and are being considered.

I'm not sure exactly where things are in terms of final approvals. I know that there are probably some amendments in the works based on public consultations. But those are the type of things that, once they're statutes, once they're in law, my obligation is to adhere to the laws of the province.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** But would you think that, as the adjudicator, to be able to be fair to both sides and making sure that if you have one party talking about the environmental protection or the community needs such as schools, transit etc., versus a developer who is hoping to build and to be able to make that profit—how would you make sure that you ensure that?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** That's been something that I've dealt with in the past in my career on council locally. It's

always been part of the consideration, where you've got to hear what the issues are related to a site-specific application and ultimately make the best possible decision in a fashion that is unbiased, that follows natural justice, that provides for procedural fairness and that ultimately is a good decision.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Thank you very much. I'll pass it off to MPP Pasma.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Six and a half minutes. Member Pasma, go ahead.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** I want to dig a little more closely into your qualifications, Mr. Mastoras. What adjudicative or legal experience did you have before being appointed to the Landlord and Tenant Board last year?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Other than my previous council experience and my decision-making history there, no legal background and no adjudicative background.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** So you've got one year of experience now, and you feel you're ready to take on another full-time position with only one year under your belt?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I've got a year and a half under my belt. Believe me, six months makes a big difference in terms of caseload. I think that I have the fundamentals that I need to move to the Ontario Land Tribunal: the virtual dynamic, the caseload, the public engagement element, the commitment to natural justice and procedural fairness and ensuring that your decision is not something that comes from an adverse point of view. Those are all, I think, fundamental qualifications that I've had that, in the past year and a half, I've been able to apply certainly in my role at the LTB. But they're also fundamentals that I live by as an individual, as a community leader, as a volunteer and as a former city councillor.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thanks. What experience do you have or what knowledge will you be bringing to this role about environmental assessments, protecting ecosystems like wetlands or protecting natural features of the landscape?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I think those are all important issues and elements that are part of existing legislation that will have to be taken into consideration on a site-by-site basis as a member of the tribunal.

I certainly don't pretend to be an environmental expert, but I understand the importance of our environment and the impact that any development may have on a particular site or project. I think whatever the statute identifies as a priority is something that, as an adjudicator and a tribunal member, I have to adhere to.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Thank you. What experience do you have or what knowledge do you bring to the role about clean water and protecting water sources?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** In an urban context, that's a very important question. The dynamics that I've been confronted with on site-specific applications relate to services and the provision of services to projects, whether it's water supplies or storm and sanitary dynamics or anything else of that nature.

**1000**

In a rural context, I'm sure that the factors are different, that wetlands are part of the process that one must give consideration to, as well as freshwater sources and dynamics around endangered species and things like that. Those are all, I think, important factors in one's assessment, but, again, on a site-specific basis.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** And what experience do you have or what knowledge will you bring to the role about protecting heritage properties?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I think I have a basic understanding of the heritage process. I know that from an urban perspective, the dynamics are a little bit different. We see all sorts of projects where heritage is preserved. From a rural perspective, that's very important as well. Again, it's the sort of guiding document, the guiding statute that, ultimately, when it's in place or if it's currently in place, determines how I would assess a site-specific application. But heritage is certainly very important.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** So I have some uncomfortable but necessary questions now.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Sure.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Are you or have you been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party provincially?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Not currently. No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Are you a member or have you been a member of the Conservative Party federally?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Yes.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Have you donated to the Conservative Party?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Which one?

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Either.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Yes, I have.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** How much did you donate?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Federally, a couple of campaigns ago, a couple of elections ago, it would have been \$100 or \$200, I think. Provincially, I think the last time I made a contribution was 2019.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. Well, according to Elections Canada, it's just under \$3,000 federally.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Federally? When? What year?

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Well, you can look it up afterward.

Have you ever hosted a fundraiser for the Conservative Party or a Conservative candidate?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Then why did Senator Leo Housakos thank you for hosting a fundraiser for the Conservative candidate in Beaches–East York?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** It was actually a family event that we attended at my brother's house.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** That was also a fundraiser for the candidate?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I'm just trying to recall what year you're referring to.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Let me look—well, we'll leave the year out of it for now.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I might add, just in my response, that I've made contributions to other political parties as well—

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay, but that's not what I'm asking right now.

Have you ever worked on a Conservative—

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** In 2006, I donated to the Liberal Party—

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Sorry, I only have 20 seconds left.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** But I have a right to answer.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Have you ever worked on a Conservative campaign?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Except canvassing for Lisa Raitt. And did anyone ask you to apply for the position?

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** No.

**Ms. Chandra Pasma:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** I might also add that I contributed to an NDP leadership candidate a few years back—  
*Interjection.*

**Mr. Steven Mastoras:** Yes. I contribute to my community and I believe in the democratic process.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** That concludes the time available. Thank you very much for your presentation and for coming before us. Thank you for the questions from both sides. Mr. Mastoras, thank you again for appearing. You're welcome to stay or you're free to go.

We will now consider the intended appointments of Reagan Ruslim, nominated as member of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Do we have a motion? Member Coe.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair, and through you: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Reagan

Ruslim, nominated as member of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by member Coe. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? I will call the vote. All those in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Steven Mastoras, nominated as member of the Ontario Land Tribunal. We have a motion. Member Coe.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair, and through you: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Steven Mastoras, nominated as member of the Ontario Land Tribunal.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by member Coe. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Any opposed? Seeing none, that motion is carried.

Moving onto extensions: Committee members, the deadline to review the intended appointments of Gina Saccoccio Brannan and Walter Viner, selected from the November 18, 2022, certificate is December 18, 2022. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointments of Gina Saccoccio Brannan and Walter Viner to January 17, 2023? I heard a no.

That concludes our business for today. This committee now stands adjourned. I'd like to say merry Christmas to all.

*The committee adjourned at 1006.*



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