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Thursday 2 March 2023

Jeudi 2 mars 2023

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 2 March 2023

Jeudi 2 mars 2023

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Good morning, everyone, and welcome again to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. We'll now come to order. We're meeting to conduct a review of attended appointees. Of course, we're joined here by the staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly—not like I'm doing right now. Please wait until I recognize you before you start to speak. As always, all comments by members and witnesses will go through the Chair.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): The first item of business will be the subcommittee report, which was distributed in advance. Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Chair, through you, I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, February 23, 2023, on the order-incouncil certificate dated Friday, February 17, 2023.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Mr. Coe has put forward a motion about the subcommittee report. Is there any discussion? Ms. Begum.

Ms. Doly Begum: I think we're going to adopt the report; there is no problem with that. I just want to put it on the record, though, Chair, that we're seeing a trend in this committee of appointments going through without a hearing whatsoever.

I'm really pleased to see this morning we have a member who will be coming in to present, and we will have a chance to question and understand—it's not about whether the opposition is just here to oppose. It's not that. It's just a matter of understanding. Here is somebody who wants to be part of a tribunal, for example, a very important place that makes decisions that impact the lives of Ontarians. We as legislators should be able to have the opportunity to question, to be able to understand why an individual wants to be part of that tribunal, for example, wants to contribute, wants to do that job and how, if so, they are qualified.

But one of the trends I'm noticing is that government over and over and over refuses to provide extension or call people or allow the opposition that opportunity. I just want to put that on the record, because I think it's really infringing upon the opportunity for us to do our jobs as representatives of our communities, to be able to make sure that we have people who are taking on these positions who are qualified and are able to do so in the right way. I think that's a very important part of our job as committee members of this government agencies committee. I just wanted to put that out there, and I hope that the government members will consider it for future appointments.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Any further discussion? Are we ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS MS. ALICIA MUNIAN

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Alicia Munian, intended appointee as member, Council of the College of Opticians of Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): We will now move to the review of the intended appointee. Our appointee today is Alicia Munian, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Opticians of Ontario.

Ms. Munian, please come forward. Thank you for being here. You may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from the 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.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): That concludes the time—

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Oh, sorry.

Mr. Mike Harris: You missed the part where—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Please state your name for Hansard.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. I appreciate the chance to introduce myself and I'm looking forward to addressing your questions after.

My name is Alicia Munian, and I arrived here from the Virgin Islands with my family in 1977. I was raised in Burlington, and currently, I live in Oakville with my husband, Ren, and my twin boys, Roman and Dante.

I have a double bachelor of arts degree in economics and geography from McMaster University in Hamilton. I also hold an MBA from William Howard Taft University in the United States. I've also completed a graduate certificate from Harvard University in strategic management. In my free time, I enjoy travelling, reading and spending time with my large extended family.

I hold a valid PMP certificate from the PMI institute and a Six Sigma Black Belt from the American Society for Quality. I have spent most of my career with Hewlett Packard Enterprise, holding positions in the Canadian, Americas and global space over a 26-year period. My current role is with Samuel, Son and Co. and has given me a chance to enhance my skill sets and refine my expertise. My career focus has been on organizational strategies, end-user experience, efficiency gains and constant improvement. I plan to utilize these skills to serve the people of Ontario with this volunteer position.

I have held a position as an adjunct professor at Sheridan College in Oakville, teaching the fundamentals of project management. I'm also an active leader, mentoring junior employees, Black Belt candidates, and I charter a lean-in circle to encourage others for personal development and career growth.

To serve on the board of the College of Opticians is an exciting opportunity for me, a chance to use my strengths and my knowledge to help drive valuable change, cost savings and an element of fairness across the board. I have no political affiliations and hope to bring an objective, nononsense approach to the task at hand.

I have many years of customer-experience focus and know I can serve the residents of Ontario using what I do best. I'm thrilled to be before you here today and embrace the prospect of volunteering in this role. I look forward to sharing my thoughts, expertise and dedication to the best of my abilities. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Now we'll turn to the government for questioning. Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair, and through you, to our applicant, welcome to Queen's Park. When you look at your resumé, it's so impressive in terms of the background that you're bringing to this particular position that you've applied for—very impressive. But I'd like you to speak and expand on what you just shared with the committee about the applicability of your business experience to this particular position and how you think you can apply that going forward, please. Thank you so much for being with us today.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Thank you. Over the years, I've learned that a lot of customers just need a voice, and so I'm here to give them an opportunity to be heard. I think what I'm bringing to the table is that element of fairness, that we need to do what's right based on the facts. Not everybody is going to be happy with an outcome, but at least we gave them a chance to be heard and they had a chance to represent their arguments. That's the piece I'm bringing.

I think, as a resident of Ontario, that no one comes entitled to anything more than anybody else. It doesn't matter where you're from, what education you have; your experience needs to be at least fair, and I think this board is an opportunity to be heard. I'd like to bring, at least as a

consumer, as a resident of Ontario, that element, which has no affiliation, no subjective sides to it, and do what's right.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for that response. Through you, Chair, to MPP Jones, please.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Through you, Chair, thank you very much for sharing a snapshot of your personal and professional journey that brought you here today. Could you highlight some of the roles and responsibilities you have currently at Samuel, Son and Co., and how you can apply those specific roles to this new role with the college?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Sure. The role I'm in right now is leading a major project that spans a number of divisions as well as a number of plant sites. My project teams are anyone from plant workers all the way to fellow executives, so I have a wide range of folks who are tech savvy, if you will; a wide range of folks who do a variety of functions within the company itself.

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Everybody has got their own agenda, their own view of the company and what they do and how that impacts the overall process, but my job itself is like herding cats, so it's taking all the different requirements, building it into a firm plan, addressing the needs of everybody individually, even though they may be very, very different needs. Part of what I do is ensuring that every function has their own piece of work that gets addressed and that, at least, there's a compromise on those items that may be very diverse.

I think on the board itself, we're going to get some folks, as I said, who may be happy with the outcome and those who may not be happy with the outcome, but we really need to establish standards and align to those.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Again, through you, Chair: Thanks for that objectivity, in that you're bringing structure to a company that's known for building structures.

Through you, Chair, if I can pass the mike to my colleague MPP Bailey.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Chair, to you and through you to the candidate: This morning I see that you've served over five years as a treasurer for your local school council. I'm just wondered if you could elaborate on that and how you feel it will serve you well in this new position, should you be successful.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Sure. The role of treasurer with our school was very unstructured when I first came on board. I had some concerns about cash and accountability for it, so we put some things in place that I believe will help the school and the board overall: simple things such as no one individual counting out cash alone, bank accounts where we needed two signatures—things that may seem basic, but I think it added some level of accountability, some fiscal responsibility, as well as some accountability to the school population. It put in place some standards that they've adopted at other schools, so it was a good experience.

It was a small school, but they were a rather affluent neighbourhood, so there was a lot of cash that flowed through the events that we did. When I first came on board, I didn't like what I saw—cheques where anybody could sign for it and things like that. It just didn't sit well with me.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I think we've all seen news reports of churches and schools and different places that got into problems. Thank you for bringing that oversight to that school.

Ms. Alicia Munian: We're better now.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes.

Chair, to you: I'd like to turn it over to MPP Billy Pang. The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Pang, please.

Mr. Billy Pang: How much time do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): You have six minutes and 40 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang: Oh, that's good.

You talked about objectivity earlier. Being a part of a board requires objectivity and the ability to collaborate with other board members and members of the college as well. How does your experience lend itself to this particular role?

Ms. Alicia Munian: I appreciate diversity. I appreciate working with different people. I understand not all styles can exist together, but I believe in collaboration, even if it's for a period of time to get the job done.

My personality is rather easygoing. I tend to be more of a listener and to try to look for a compromise as opposed to sticking to my guns on something that I'm firm with. So for me, collaboration is about compromise. It's about looking for a road where hopefully everybody wins and as I said, I'm an easygoing personality. I'm highly enthusiastic about life, so for me, there's always a silver lining, even if it's a tough conversation.

Mr. Billy Pang: In a board, there are different people, different opinions. Sometimes you need to have some give and take, right? How will you balance the interests of the board members?

Ms. Alicia Munian: As I've said, I believe in talking things out. If there's a conflict or something where maybe it's a different train of thought on different sides, I believe in talking it out. Let's look at the facts. Let's remove emotions from it and look at getting some standards in place so that with the next event, hopefully we've got some things in place that will help drive us and guide us in the right direction.

Mr. Billy Pang: So you were in the public service for a while and you have a lot of experience to deal with different opinions.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Yes.

Mr. Billy Pang: How can you deal with some of the members' "no, no, no"?

Ms. Alicia Munian: As I said, let's talk about it, right? Let's put the facts down, let's remove the emotions, let's remove the agendas and, everybody, let's just do what's right. Whether it be for the customer, whether it be for a doctor, we need to do what's right for society as a whole and remove everything else.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I pass my next question to MPP Smith.

Mr. Mike Harris: Which one?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): We've got them both beside each other. Is this a trick question? Ms. Smith, please.

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): You could at least sit apart.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes, we should never sit together. I love you, but we should never sit together.

Through you, Mr. Chair: Thank you for your submissions. We can see through your application that you're fluent in French, correct? Have you ever spoken French in a professional capacity?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Yes. Originally, when I started my career at HP, I was phone support. We were hired exclusively to provide French support to our Canadian customers, and we leveraged the US for our English support. I started out my career there, and then, as I moved to more global roles, I started working with some of my colleagues overseas. We've had many conversations in French, as they were more comfortable in that.

Ms. Laura Smith: That's interesting. Can you elaborate on your ability to advance the cause of bilingualism in Ontario?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Sure. I believe, personally, that it starts with elementary schools. I believe all schools should be French and English as an immersion program. I've seen the benefits of it with my boys. I actually moved them from schools and from school boards so they could participate early in the program. I really believe, as well, that if we were a little bit more immersed in it through communications, television, media, that it would become more of a norm, as opposed to a one-off.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you so much for your honesty on that.

Through you, Mr. Chair: I would like to pass the mike to MPP Nina Tangri.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Tangri.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Chair, how much time do we have? The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): You have two minutes and 17 seconds.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Wonderful. Welcome, Alicia. It's very impressive to see your resumé and hear from you this morning. I just want to hone in onto your Six Sigma Black Belt certification. I want you to tell us how that specifically could help you in your capacity here and how you can bring that knowledge into the college.

Ms. Alicia Munian: Sure. One of the things that Six Sigma gives you is a standard, if you will, of how to manage all your processes. They may come in all like a spaghetti bowl, but the goal is to align all of those, establish some processes and hopefully use that as your guidelines moving forward so that it doesn't become one-off cases in every single case. Hopefully, we'll establish as well some processes for the next board moving forward, as well as give you some onboarding, some training, if you will, for new board members coming on board.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you. The little bit of time we have left I would like to pass on to MPP Harris.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I don't have a whole lot of time left. **Ms. Alicia Munian:** No, you don't.

Mr. Mike Harris: I'm just going to ask you quickly: Did you ever happen to work for HPE in Atlanta?

Ms. Alicia Munian: I visited the site a few times.

Mr. Mike Harris: Do you know a gentleman named Michael Siler who used to work there, who I used to work with as well?

Ms. Alicia Munian: No, I don't.

Mr. Mike Harris: We don't really have too much time to get into the meat and potatoes of it, but I, in a former life, used to do a lot of work with HPE out of Atlanta and with the US federal government, so I figured I'd take a shot in the dark and see if maybe she knew him.

Anyway, I think that probably just about wraps it up. Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Thank you very much, MPP Harris.

Now we go to the official opposition. MPP Begum.

Ms. Doly Begum: Good morning, Ms. Munian. Did I pronounce that right?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Yes, you got it.

Ms. Doly Begum: Perfect. Thank you so much for being here this morning. As I'm sure you heard me say this morning, it's one of the things I do appreciate, being able to listen and understand what motivated you to do this. You have a very impressive background—from MBA to project management, strategic management. It's quite an impressive resumé that you bring in.

This council, or the board itself, really oversees something very important. I don't know if you know, just few months ago there was a big rally just outside Queen's Park fighting for eye care. One of the problems we saw over the last 30 years, the underfunding of eye care, resulted in a lot of people—especially elders, seniors—not being able to receive the care that they needed. Optometrists and opticians came, and a lot of people and a lot of students came and fought for eye care. So this is a very important issue for us, and I'm sure for government members as well, because we have to make sure that Ontarians across the board have access. It's something that's part of your body; it should be part of OHIP, and it should part of the care that you receive. Unfortunately, it's not. There's a huge cost to it. We have to make sure that it's affordable, if not accessible.

The question I have—and I'm going to pass it off to my colleague as well—first, thank you, and if you could, give us an idea of what motivated you to be applying for something that's a little bit different from what your background is in. Can you tell us about your motivation and if someone asked you to apply to this, or what was the connection?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Sure. I'm at the point in my career life cycle where I feel I need to give back. So I've started mentoring more, I've started looking for additional teaching assignments. At this point, a friend suggested, "Hey, why don't you look to sit on a board?" I've looked at sitting on company boards, private boards, and thought

that this is a way to reach more and would be better than a profit-driven board.

I totally agree; I think eye care is often overlooked because of the cost to an actual consumer. As such, when you do go to an optician, it's usually out of need as opposed to preventive, which I think is a shame.

At this point, I want to leverage my skill sets that I've had over these last few decades and start looking to build some change that's going to lay the groundwork for additional change moving forward.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much. And is this the first time that you're applying to be a part of a board?

Ms. Alicia Munian: For a provincial board, yes.

Ms. Doly Begum: And before, was it a school board that you were part of?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Yes, that was the one in my local riding.

Ms. Doly Begum: Perfect, okay. Thank you very much. Actually, I'm going to pass it off to MPP Guy Bourgouin.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Bourgouin. M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci.

J'étais content de voir que vous parliez français, surtout que, vous le savez, le mois de mars est le Mois de la Francophonie. C'est pour ça que je vais prendre l'opportunité de vous poser une question en français.

Écoutez, c'est sans doute : au regard de votre curriculum, c'est très impressionnant. Vous êtes une progressiste. Vous avez mentionné que vous êtes—comment est-ce que je dirais ça en français—pas une voix douce, mais une personne qui parle—de la manière que vous avez dit ça, pas super agressive. Vous avez une approche différente. Mais des fois sur un « board », il faut être, veux, veux pas, agressif, mais aussi avoir une voix assez—pour faire certain que vos points sont entendus. Surtout si vous défendezvous avez mentionné que vous voulez amener la voix des petites personnes. J'aimerais vous entendre là-dessus parce que vous avez été sur certaines choses, mais là on parle du provincial, ce qui fait que je veux faire sûr—puis je ne doute pas de vos compétences; au contraire. Comment allez-vous faire passer votre point pour faire sûr que votre voix est entendue par l'exécutif?

M^{me} Alicia Munian: OK, je vais utiliser des mots anglais. Je suis une « velvet steamroller ». Ensuite, c'est un style gentil, mais je suis ferme comme l'acier. C'est difficile avec des personnalités dans la salle, mais je vais faire ce que je vais faire.

M. Guy Bourgouin: OK. J'apprécie beaucoup « velvet steamroller ». C'est un terme, peut-être, que je pourrais utiliser. J'essayais de le traduire en français, mais c'est très bien dit.

M^{me} Alicia Munian: C'est difficile à faire. Oui, c'est très difficile en français.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Mais c'est sûr qu'il y a un acronyme qu'on a en français pour utiliser—non, mais c'est très bien dit.

Écoutez, je vais la repasser à mes autres collègues, mais c'est intéressant de voir que vous êtes là pour faire avancer les voix progressistes, puis aussi les personnes qui ne se 2 MARS 2023

font souvent pas entendre. Le fait que vous êtes prête à faire ça, je pense, est un positif.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much, Ms. Munian, for being here. I've already learned something new today: "Velvet steamroller" is something I'm going to adopt and make part of my general vocabulary. Have you considered trademarking that?

Ms. Alicia Munian: Yes, I should.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm also a fellow twin mom, so I know I don't need to ask you about your time management; you've got that down pat. I'm wondering, though, what do you see as the biggest challenges facing the college of opticians right now?

Ms. Alicia Munian: As I've said, I believe we've been grossly underfunded in this space. I believe, just like other boards as well, that there are some opticians who may not be giving the adequate level of service. I believe that the expectation of the patrons of Ontario may not be as high as the other areas, so I would love to see that moved up. As I said, I think it has been grossly underserviced, these last few years. As such, our foundation is way below other areas of the body that we should be supporting just as well. So I'd like to see some standards established on what opticians can do. I'd like to see some growth in that space so that it does become more of an essential service as opposed to a reactionary one. I'm just here to drive some change; really, I am. That's my goal: to see some growth in this space and give the residents of Ontario something they already deserve.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thanks. I'm curious; can you expand a little on your statement that you think expectations are lower in Ontario? Do you feel we've been trained to expect less in Ontario compared to other provinces?

Ms. Alicia Munian: I don't think it's a provincial thing. I think things like taking away funding for eye exams were a step back. I think a lot of folks don't get those eye exams because of the cost, which, to me, instead of being preventive, is now reactionary. We only get it when we have a problem. For me, that doesn't make sense.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Yes, absolutely. My riding has one of the oldest populations in Ontario, let alone Canada. Eyesight is so important to people's independence and ability to function: driving, working—

Ms. Alicia Munian: Everything.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Yes, everything—so it's incredibly important that people get the eye care that they need.

Ms. Alicia Munian: It really is, and then the prevalence now of technology, screens everywhere, is not helping the eyes.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: No. After a few years of virtual schooling, I'm pretty worried about my children's eyesight—our future seniors, yes.

Well, thanks very much for those answers. I just have a couple of uncomfortable but necessary questions to end. I think it's just important to get on the record. Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party provincially? What about the federal Conservative Party?

Ms. Alicia Munian: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Have you ever donated to the Conservatives provincially or federally?

Ms. Alicia Munian: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: And have you ever worked on a Conservative campaign or volunteered for the Conservatives?

Ms. Alicia Munian: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, thank you.

Le Vice-Président (M. Fraser): Merci. Le mot est « rouleau compresseur ».

Ms. Alicia Munian: Oh, there we go. Compresseur.

Le Vice-Président (M. Fraser): Ça n'a pas le même impact que « steamroller ».

M. Guy Bourgouin: Rouleau compresseur de velours. *Interjections*.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Thank you so much for your presentation.

We'll move to the concurrence part of the meeting. We will now consider the intended appointment of Alicia Munian, nominated as member, Council of the College of Opticians of Ontario. Mr. Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Chair, through you, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Alicia Munian, nominated as member, Council of the College of Opticians of Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Any discussion? Good. Are members ready to vote? All those in favour?

That concludes our business for the day. I thank all the members—and we all learned a new word today.

The committee adjourned at 0931.

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