

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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

A-9

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

A-9

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

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

Thursday 9 March 2023

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

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

Jeudi 9 mars 2023

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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 AGENCIES

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 9 March 2023

Jeudi 9 mars 2023

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**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 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—which always reminds me of that too. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

The first item of business will be the adoption of a subcommittee report, which was distributed in advance. We have a subcommittee report dated March 2, 2023. Could I please have the motion? Member Coe?

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you, Chair. Through you, I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments, dated Thursday, March 2, 2023, on the order-in-council certificate dated Friday, February 24, 2023.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Coe has moved the motion. Any discussion on the motion? I'll ask again: Any discussion? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

### INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

#### MS. MEG DAVIS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Meg Davis, intended appointee as member, Toronto Metropolitan University board of governors.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** We will now move on to our review of intended appointees. Our first appointee today is Meg Davis, nominated as member of the Toronto Metropolitan University board of governors.

Ms. Davis, please come forward.

Just for your information: 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.

Please go ahead. Thanks for joining us.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Thank you for having me. Good morning. My name is Meg Davis. I am the chief development officer at Waterfront Toronto. I am responsible for leading the strategic enhancement of lands that Waterfront Toronto stewards as part of its revitalization efforts. It includes overseeing the creation of public infrastructure and coordinating the planning, design and construction phases of these significant projects. In addition, I lead the selection process and ongoing relationships with strategic partners, both public and private, to ensure our projects contribute to meeting the corporate objectives of high design and complete, sustainable and inclusive communities. I work closely with our 13-member tri-government-appointed board, ensuring full engagement in strategic delivery decisions and transactions.

I have over 35 years of experience as a planner and expert for both the public and private sectors, including Bramalea Ltd., KPMG and Waterfront Toronto. I have an undergraduate degree in urban studies from Western University, and a master's in business administration and a certificate in executive leadership, both from the Rotman School of Management. I am a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the Urban Land Institute, and Lambda Alpha International.

My previous community service and board experience includes:

- co-chair of the Women's Leadership Initiative at the Urban Land Institute;

- director and president of Mothercraft Canada, a delivery agent for early childhood education through its early years centres, for 10 years;

- committee lead, community plan for the Cognashene Cottagers Association;

- board of directors, South Armour Heights Ratepayers Association; and

- participant in CivicAction's CivicMatch program.

I have also completed Bystander to Ally Indigenous cultural safety training.

As a seasoned project-delivery executive, I have a passion for community building and the role it plays in the growth of the city.

It is with great enthusiasm for the impact that TMU has as a city-builder that I would like to be considered for a role on the board of governors.

I believe firmly in the civic responsibility inherent in contributing to the improvement of the lives of the people we serve.

Not only is TMU an anchor for Toronto's downtown; it is a magnet that attracts people from all over the world to experience its academic excellence. The downtown campus has a significant role in revitalizing, over time, a somewhat challenged part of the city. This transformation is well on its way, as a result of the leadership and investment shown by TMU.

I believe my professional experience aligns strongly with TMU's search for new board members, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss this more with you today.

At Waterfront Toronto, as the chief development officer, I lead a team responsible for delivering over \$3 billion in public and private sector projects, including 12,000 residential units and over two million square feet of employment, commercial and institutional space on the waterfront. These projects are transforming the downtown east area of the city. We've successfully achieved over 60 acres of newly revitalized waterfront, including nearly 8,000 market residential units; 600 affordable rental housing units; close to one million square feet of commercial and retail space; an 82,000-square-foot YMCA facility; the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games Athletes' Village, the first student residence for George Brown College; George Brown College's waterfront campus focused on health sciences and digital media; daycares, community centres and other community services; and public art, parks and public realm.

My experience in residential institutional community services and commercial development would be an asset to TMU as it plans for its future growth and accommodation. TMU's current campus master plan is roughly four years old. It is likely that a regular refresh is appropriate, and I look forward to the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to that work.

I have the ability to operate with confidence and flexibility in complicated stakeholder environments. I'm able to successfully balance the needs of the community, the private sector, municipal approval authority and broader government stakeholders. My approach is to ensure significant consultation and stakeholder engagement. I am confident in my ability to navigate complex organizational structures, and I have a high tolerance for ambiguity and constantly shifting priorities. Working with all three levels of government at the same time at Waterfront Toronto has given me the skills to balance competing shareholder interests and understanding of the overall landscape as it impacts the city building.

Building relationships and negotiating complicated, often conflicting priorities is a key element to my approach for delivering outstanding projects. I would apply these skills on the TMU board of governors and hope to be a strong contributor to TMU's mission.

Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you very much.

We will turn it over to the government for questions. There are 10 minutes left on the clock. Member Coe.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Chair, through you: Good morning, Ms. Davis. Thank you very much for being with us this morning.

You spoke about the re-engagement that you anticipate on the strategic plan for the university.

Could you share with us what steps you believe are necessary to better prepare our young people for meaningful careers, especially students going through university?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** TMU's mission or mandate is to bring together academics and applied work so that students can get the educational background they need to actually move into careers. I think it's really important to combine those two and bring to the students opportunities through co-operative programs, through on-campus recruiting, and bring the employers onto the actual campus to meet the students and give them opportunities that way. I think that helps them prepare for the broader workforce, opportunities for employment and then career advancement, and I think the university has a huge role to play in that by coaching and mentoring and then providing, obviously, the educational foundations for their interests.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for that response.

Chair, through you to MPP Sabawy, please.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Mr. Chair, through you to the candidate: I'm sure you are aware that the board of governors take a lot of responsibilities in some of their actions in regard to the budget and selecting the president, which is considered a very key role in directions of the university or college, and also approving the plans for future initiatives to advance the career after college.

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

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I think TMU already has an amazing international and local reputation, and I think it's really important to make sure that the board guides and protects that reputation and enhances and grows it.

As a board member, I would obviously be new to the board. I would have a learning curve and need to understand better the university itself and how it manages its affairs, but I would hope to, over time, become a strong contributing member, working really hard with the variety of different committees that would be available to participate in and just offering my assistance and guidance.

I think my strong suit is in the planning area and helping the university grow physically. But having been a student myself, I would love to participate in other areas. I don't have a finance background; however, I do deal with financial issues in my own job on a regular basis—fairly large budgets etc.—so I'm comfortable with that. But I suspect I would be more contributing on the planning side, generally.

**0910**

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much for your answer.

I would pass the questions to member Trevor Jones.

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

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Through you, Chair: Thank you for sharing some of your experiences, especially the ones in building sustainable communities and working with layers of government at Waterfront Toronto.

I'm also a graduate of the Rotman ELP, so I understand how that network can build some really relevant contacts to help you solve wicked problems, as they say at Rotman.

Share with us how some of your experience, especially at Waterfront Toronto, can apply directly to serve the board of governors at TMU.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Starting off at the board level, I work for a tri-government-appointed board. We have four members from each level of government who are appointed. We also have a tri-government-appointed chair. So we work with all three levels of government on a regular basis. I believe that the universities function at every level of government—municipal, provincial, federal—for a variety of different aspects of their operation. I think from that perspective, I can bring a tri-government point of view to the board.

With respect to community building and city building, at Waterfront Toronto, we build complete communities, which includes housing, both market and affordable. It includes community services like daycares and community centres and parks and public realm, but it also includes opportunities for people to work and to learn. We have been working with George Brown College for quite a long time now on their waterfront campus and helping them build that vision. I think bringing that experience to TMU would be helpful.

You mentioned the word “sustainable.” I think we can all probably feel comfortable that we need to be addressing sustainable issues. I would bring a lot of experience on how to measure and bring sustainability efforts to new planned elements of the university.

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

**Mr. Amarjot Sandhu:** Thank you so much for your presentation.

I came to this country as an international student. I went to George Brown College—and I'm very fortunate to sit down with my professor who also teaches at George Brown College. International students are the main pillar in our education system, as Ontario is an international leader in post-secondary education.

Someone like you, who understands the importance of international students and how fortunate we are to have students coming from around the world to study in Canada—what continued supports for international students will you work to continue to implement to make international students feel at home at Toronto Metropolitan University?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I agree wholeheartedly. I think international students bring a wealth of knowledge and a different perspective from all around the world that I think

is really, really important for other students from more local areas to learn from and participate in.

I think it's not easy to assimilate, coming to a new city as big as Toronto. As international as we are, I think students need supports, in particular in finding housing. Toronto is a very expensive market. I know student housing is in very short supply. We did work on the George Brown residence in the West Don Lands—one of my first projects. I think more is needed. So I think housing is one of the areas in which the university could be helpful in bringing students into Toronto and getting them acclimatized and settled.

I think there's a huge opportunity for campus life, campus culture to help students find friends, find their classes, simple things like that, and just really giving them a lot of support throughout the entirety of their stay at the university.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Any further questions from the government side? Member Jones.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Chair, through you, if I may: As I'm sure everyone is aware, there's a growing concern and a need to train individuals in human health resources in Ontario. From nursing education to medical education, there's a huge need for post-secondary institutions to focus on training our next generation of health care workers and leaders.

Specifically, how can TMU and the new medical school in Brampton apply this mindset—bricks and mortar and the people inside it—and how can you help, with your urban planning skills, your leadership in business development? How can you move that vision forward to fruition?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I agree; we need more health care support.

My mom was actually just in hospital with COVID, and we nearly lost her. If it weren't for the nurses, we wouldn't have survived that experience. They were amazing. I think they've been under such tremendous pressure over the last number of years due to COVID and just sort of structural issues.

I think the universities and the colleges have a huge role to play in attracting people to that profession, because it's not easy, and we've seen how tough it is on front line. To convince somebody to go into PSW work or nursing care and to be in a hospital setting requires universities and colleges to explain and help people understand how vital that role is to all Ontarians, as far as I'm concerned. I think the university has a huge role.

I don't know much about the campus in Brampton—surprisingly, because I am from Brampton, but I haven't lived there for a very long time. I'm not too sure how far along the plans are, but I would love to be helpful in the planning exercise, the approvals component, helping the municipality navigate a large piece of infrastructure coming into the community. Anything I can do to help with thinking about the planning and construction elements of that project—I would offer my help.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** And through you, Chair—

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Perfect timing—10 seconds.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Oh, is it?

Thank you. Outstanding work. We appreciate your candour.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I will turn it over to the opposition side. Member Stevens.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you, Chair.

Good morning, Ms. Davis. Do you mind if I call you Meg?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Sure.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Did you want to take some water and relax a bit? Great. Nothing worse than sitting in an interview like this and everybody staring at you. Feel comfortable.

I'm going to ask you a few questions, then I'll pass it on to my colleague.

You've mentioned your experience as chief development officer for Waterfront Toronto. How will these experiences that you've gathered make you a good fit for the board of Toronto Metropolitan University?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Well, as I mentioned before, I do report to a tri-government board, so I work very closely with the board and get to see them in action and see how they facilitate the success of our organization—their fiduciary responsibility to the organization, as opposed to their appointers—and I think that experience has given me the understanding that, as a member of the board at TMU, I would be there for TMU, for no other purpose, and that my responsibility would be to the university.

I think my planning experience and working with large projects, both from a building perspective and an infrastructure perspective—public realm, public space. I know that in the master plan, TMU has a significant emphasis on creating beautiful public spaces, not only for the students, but also for people who travel through that downtown campus, making that a pleasant experience. I've had a lot of opportunity to work on 42 kilometres of public walkways and many acres of public parks, so I think I can bring some of those experiences. I also mentioned the sustainability piece and being able to bring that lens, as well, to the future growth of the university.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** MPP Jones touched on this next question with one of his. What specific qualifications and subject matter expertise will you bring to the overall policy formation, oversight and decision-making of Toronto Metropolitan University, TMU?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** As I mentioned, starting off with the planning experience and the city building experience—that would be, I think, the main thing that I would offer, but also just general business acumen and business knowledge: understanding financial statements, understanding government policy and how different legislation and policies affect institutions like TMU, like they would Waterfront Toronto. We have to deal with changes to the Planning Act, changes to legislation. Similarly, I think with TMU, I'd be able to help contribute in reviewing any policy changes, legislation etc. to help the university navigate an ever-changing environment.

0920

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** That leads to my next question, to do with the Planning Act and that.

In 2019, you were called in front of the House of Commons ethics committee due to a deal between Waterfront Toronto and Sidewalk Labs. Can you brief all of us on the nature of the committee's hearing?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** This is the one in Ottawa; correct? Because I also was before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** This would be in Ottawa.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Okay. The focus really was on an area that I was very unfamiliar with, which was data privacy; I'm a land use planner. The opportunity to work with Sidewalk Labs was really with their urbanist component and how they wanted to help us build a complete community in Quayside—and I'll get to Quayside in a minute—so, affordable housing, sustainability, opportunities for new modular construction to help industries in and around Canada, the tall mass timber opportunities. That was sort of my area of expertise.

Where we got sort of sidetracked, I guess, was on the data privacy piece, which was very unfamiliar to me. I'm a bit of a techno peasant. We had to testify at the committee to see whether or not there was some link between Google and apps and data and the project itself, and in fact there was not. They had thought of some potential applications that could maybe be developed, really to help people with things like managing their thermostat, managing their garbage and recycling three-bin solution. They were really practical solutions for urban issues. But the data privacy piece came up. I think there was a period of time there when a lot was going on in that sort of tech space—techlash. I think this project got caught up into that, and we lost that sense of the urban development component. That's what the committee meeting was about.

It was also about our procurement process, which—I can firmly state again that we ran a two-step process and that the six weeks was only the first phase and the 16 weeks was the second phase. There was a lot of time for the developers. There was no preferential treatment to Sidewalk Labs. We interviewed over 52 companies. In fact, there were companies we interviewed in advance more than we interviewed with Sidewalk. No one complained about the timeline. No one asked for an extension. We actually just had a new process for Quayside, because Sidewalk left. We were asked for an extension. We gave that extension.

And just to pivot: We just announced and closed a deal with two local developers, Dream Unlimited and Great Gulf, to do the Quayside project. It's going to have all of those urban elements that we wanted in the first place. It's going to be a great project—800 affordable housing units, too.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** So you've done your due diligence on the planning aspect of that.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Yes—very focused on the urban development component.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** So the due diligence was done, at the end of the day, for the new people who are coming in.



**Ms. Meg Davis:** Yes. Absolutely.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Great.

Do we have a few minutes, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Eight minutes.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Okay. I'm going to pass it on to my colleague MPP Glover.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you very much, Meg, for being here.

I want to ask you about international students. I was at a talk at the University of Toronto a couple of weeks ago, and I was talking to an international student. When she started her program two years ago, she came to Canada, to U of T. She was paying \$40,000 a year in tuition; last year, it went up to \$50,000, and next year, it's going up to \$60,000. Because the public funding for our post-secondary system has been frozen for more than a decade and because tuition fees are frozen—which is a good thing—it's putting more and more pressure on universities and colleges to really gouge international students for these tuition fees.

As a board member on TMU, how would you support international students and make sure that they get a fair deal?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I'm not on the board. I don't have enough, probably, information about how the rate structures and the tuition structures work, so I don't think I should comment on that.

I think I did say that international students need a lot of community supports, helping them with residential support. Student housing, I think, is a key element to that.

So I don't want to comment on the rate structure.

What I would say is, we have one of the best education systems in the world, as far as I'm concerned, at the secondary, post-secondary, college, university levels, and those are not inexpensive services to deliver. I think that we have to anticipate a variety of income sources for universities and colleges, not just tuition. I know that they rely heavily, obviously, on government support, and I'm certain that most universities partner with the private sector to help bring on other resources as well. I would hope to help the university in thinking about some of those other streams or sources of opportunity for funding, financing and partnering.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** My next question is, when is the last time that you met with Premier Ford?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I have only met Premier Ford twice in my life. Once was here in this building, when there was a celebration of my dad's passing and his life and his commitment to the government of Ontario and the people of Ontario. I was able to meet with the Premier—and my family—afterwards. He particularly wanted to meet with my mom. And then I met him one other time at my father's celebration of life. There was—I guess you call it a green room before the service, and he came and just offered his hand to my mom. Those are the two times that I've met him.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you.

How much time do we have on the clock?

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Five minutes.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'm going to pass it to my colleague.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Is it okay if I also call you Meg?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Yes.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Thank you so much, Meg. I really appreciate you coming and sharing, and you've got a wide range of experience that you've already talked to us about. I think two of my colleagues actually asked most of the questions that we wanted to ask in terms of understanding how you would fit into this new role. You've got 15 or 16 years of experience just at—

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Sixteen at Waterfront—

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Just at Waterfront, I was going to say.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** If I lift my bangs, you can see my age lines.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Perfect, because I know that TMU has gone through some struggles as well. So I think you'd be great for taking on that role, as well. We're very excited to have you show this interest in joining.

I'm going to ask some uncomfortable questions because I have to. This is something that we do within the opposition. So I'm going to be the bad guy and ask those uncomfortable questions, so bear with me.

My first question is, are you currently a part of any of the political parties?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** No, I am not.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** And have you ever donated to any political party?

**Ms. Meg Davis:** I was a member of a youth organization, probably in 1986-87. I was the membership secretary before they had computers and probably contributed at that point. I have not since then, and I have actually voted for all three major parties at one time or another, so I'm not particularly affiliated with any one.

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

**Ms. Meg Davis:** No. I was asked if I would consider it, and then it moved into this process, where I did have to fill out some forms. So, no, I didn't make an application, I don't think.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I just have a comment, if that's possible.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I think Chris has one more.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** No, I'm okay.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you very much for putting your name forward and for being here.

On a family note: I very much appreciated your father, although I'm on a different side of things—

**Ms. Meg Davis:** My dad would be on all sides, as you would probably know.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I know that, yes.

I just wanted to follow on my colleague's comment with regard to the dependence on foreign students. There is the issue of the fees that the foreign students are paying, but the increasing reliance of universities and colleges on more and more foreign students is leading to something called "grade inflation," so it's making it harder for students entering from the Ontario system into post-

secondary. This isn't really a question—it's just that I expect that you're going to support on this committee, and I think that's something that boards of governors have to take on and look at, because there's currently no clear direction on foreign students from the government. It's really critical, and it's something that has been raised with me from constituents more than half a dozen times. So I think there's some concern out there that there's an appropriate balance and fairness for those foreign students and making sure we don't get grade inflation—where students won't have the opportunity because the standards that we are setting are maybe not reasonable.

0930

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's it from me. Did you have one more?

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Through you, Chair: I'd just like to thank you again, Meg, for your presentation. Thank you for your thorough answers. It was really appreciated.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Thank you for having me today.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd also like to thank you. The waterfront is my riding, and so I'm really excited. I've been watching the tall timber building going up at George Brown. The waterfront in downtown Toronto is absolutely spectacular, and it is because it is mixed-use and because of the diversity of the development. So congratulations on that.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** It's a very rewarding place to work. So thank you for that.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Yes. It's a great place to live, too—probably the best in the province.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Whoa, no—  
*Interjections.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Chair, point of order?

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Point of order?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I just haven't had an opportunity to thank anyone yet. So thank you all for being here today.

*Laughter.*

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** We will stop it there.

I just wanted to say thank you on behalf of all of us here.

I never had the opportunity to meet your father—our heartfelt condolences with that loss. He was a giant in the province.

Thank you for being here.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Thank you. I miss him every day.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** If you would like to stay, feel free—or if you're like, "Woohoo, I'm out of here," there's no obligation for you to stay.

**Ms. Meg Davis:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** It was very nice to meet you.

MR. SAM VANDERVEER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Sam VanderVeer, intended appointee as member, Species at Risk Conservation Trust.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Our second appointee today is Mr. Sam VanderVeer, nominated as member of the Species at Risk Conservation Trust.

I'm sure you're aware, but 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 that you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

You have the floor. Thank you for joining us today.

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, everybody, for your time. I'm honoured to be here as a candidate for public appointment to the board of the Species Conservation Action Agency. If approved by the members of this committee, I very much look forward to working with the existing directors, Ms. Krigstin, Mr. DeJong and Mr. Norris. All are very clearly impressive individuals, and it would be an honour to work with them and learn from them.

With a background in financial services, I bring somewhat of a different skill set to the table. In particular, I hope to support the agency in its efforts to maximize the impacts of funds deployed in service of its protection-and-recovery mandate.

I look forward to taking your questions, but before doing so, I have been asked to share a bit about my background and qualifications.

My path to a career in finance was somewhat non-traditional. As a young person, I was always keen on public policy. My undergraduate degree is in international studies, and I thought I might end up in the public service. Of course, things never work out exactly as you imagine them.

My first job after university was an internship with the Canadian Red Cross in Ottawa, and I stayed on as a volunteer in the capacity of chair of the Canadian Red Cross's National Youth Engagement Advisory Committee.

Following my time at the Red Cross, I had the privilege of working in Stephen Harper's Prime Minister's office starting in 2010, after which I served as a policy adviser to the late Minister Jim Flaherty, as part of the team working to bring Canada back to a balanced budget.

Having had a taste of what a career in finance could be, I followed my wife here to Toronto and started in financial services. Not having had an education in finance to start, I had to work my way into it. I started with night classes in accounting at what was then Ryerson University. I was then accepted into the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University, which is consistently ranked as one of the top 15 business schools in the world. I worked through my MBA on a part-time basis and graduated from that in 2019.

I've had a few different roles over my now near decade-long career at Scotiabank. I started in the office of the bank's president and CEO in somewhat of a project management role. This was a front-row seat in which I received an education in the fundamentals of banking:

how financial institutions are funded, how they adjudicate and price risk, how they provide liquidity in the economy and act as a shock absorber in times of economic stress. In addition to working with our strategy operations and business-aligned teams, I had the opportunity to travel across the bank's footprint in Canada and globally. The bank has significant operations in Mexico, Peru, Chile and Colombia, so I was fortunate to visit these specific alliance countries often, in addition to the bank's offices in Europe and Asia.

When I completed my MBA, I moved into investment banking, where I was an associate director with the financial institutions group. Our clients were mostly insurers and asset managers, and we worked primarily on mergers and acquisitions alongside our capital markets and debt capital markets teams.

I'm currently a commercial lending relationship manager with the bank's national accounts team based here in Toronto. Our clients are incredible Canadian success stories and job creators. They're primarily, though not exclusively, privately held, Canadian-grown companies with revenues in excess of \$100 million a year. Many are still operated by founders who have built these world-class businesses right here in Ontario. They're Canadian heroes, and I love my job.

Before I close, I wanted to share just a few thoughts on governance which I have pieced together through observations across the various private and public organizations of which I've been a part. Though they work hand in glove, governance is not management and vice versa. The roles and responsibilities are quite different.

Three primary responsibilities of boards come to mind: The first is effective financial oversight; the second is strict adherence to good governance best practices; and the third is maintaining a strong relationship with executive management and, where appropriate, the organization's key partners and stakeholders. Practically, this also includes the appointment or approval of certain management positions.

I share these thoughts because I feel very strongly about distributed responsibility according to experience and expertise—in other words, staying in one's own lane. The Species Conservation Action Agency enjoys a clear and narrow mandate which is delineated in the Endangered Species Act and associated regulations. The regulations cover virtually everything down to a short list of species requiring protection recovery as well as the formulas for calculation of conservation charges and the like. This doesn't necessarily make the role of a director easy, but having as a starting point a completely unambiguous mission and mandate is pretty much the dream scenario.

In closing, I feel strongly about serving my community and country, and to that end, I'm eager to support the agency and its protection-and-recovery mandate for the ultimate benefit of the people of Ontario.

Thank you very much, once again, for your time. I'm grateful for your consideration and excited at the prospect of contributing.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

We're just under 10 minutes. We can turn to the government side. Member Coe, go ahead.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Chair, through you: Good morning, Mr. VanderVeer.

I'd like you to elaborate a little bit further about how you think your banking experience, in particular, is going to strengthen the Species Conservation Action Agency, given, as you put it, it has a very well-defined yet narrow mandate. So can you elaborate on that aspect, about the applicability?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Yes, sir. As I understand it, the primary responsibilities of the agency are to collect the funds, and as I mentioned, the amounts that are collected are set out in the regulations. The agency is then a steward of those funds until such a time as they're deployed in service of the mandate. There are a few pieces of my background that I think are helpful to that, in particular when the funds are being held by the agency—maximizing the return on those funds, ensuring that the bankers responsible are maximizing that, of course. So that would be one piece.

And then just in general, as I mentioned, I think the big part of the board is sort of a higher-level fiscal oversight responsibility—and so it's not a day-to-day micromanaging, but it's sort of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organization. That includes things like the annual review process.

I think all those things are things that I've done, particularly in my current position, in this lending role.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you for that response.

Chair, through you to MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, please.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Gallagher Murphy, you have eight minutes.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you, Chair. Through you, as this committee likely knows—welcome, Mr. VanderVeer, and thank you very much for being here—I have the honour of serving as the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, which was formerly held by Christine Elliott. I raise that as she was, as we know, our former Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, but she was also the wife to the late federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, and I see in your background that you had worked with the late Mr. Flaherty.

**0940**

I raise this because I'd like to ask you the question as to how you feel your experience in helping Minister Flaherty craft his final budget, which led Canada onto a path to its first and only balanced budget a year later, would help your work on this committee.

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I don't know if it was the first balanced budget, but it hopefully is not going to be the last, anyway.

I guess I'd say a few things. First, it was just an unbelievable opportunity for someone as young as I was at that time. It was a strong team, and I think it was an interesting time in Canadian history.

Maybe there are two parts to the answer—one is to say that finance in the private sector is actually quite different

than finance in the public sector, and so, though it was many years ago now, I think I have some understanding of how government finances work. I was responsible for managing the budget process, and so I have something of an understanding of how that works in terms of the collecting of the submissions, the setting of the budgets across departments, and the horse-trading exercise in prioritization and trade-offs that go into that. Like I said, I think the mandate of this board is quite narrow, but having some understanding of how that all works is helpful.

And then the second thing I would say is that in my time in Ottawa—four years in total—getting an understanding of how agencies work and the relationship between the board's accountability to the elected members and to the various stakeholders is perhaps a unique experience that I bring to the table here.

**M<sup>me</sup> Dawn Gallagher Murphy:** Thank you.

Through you, Chair, I'll pass it over to my colleague MPP Trevor Jones.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Jones, you have just over five minutes.

**Mr. Trevor Jones:** Through you, Chair: Thank you, sir. You certainly have a diverse and unique set of experiences and skills gained through the Red Cross and financial services. You have these skills that are not often found in candidates to roles like this.

Thinking on a higher level, how can you apply that diverse skill set—the Red Cross, financial services—to serve the people of Ontario?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I'd say perhaps the one thing that comes to mind is just that unique interaction between boards and management in the exercise of governance. The Red Cross committee that you referenced had an advisory role to the board of the Canadian Red Cross, and so I spent some time with the board there. And then, in my first job at the bank, working with the CEO, a lot of what we did, a big part of the calendar, was related to board activities. I think that those sorts of observations of what that dynamic is and how it can be most effective and most healthy would be something I bring.

The other thing that I would say is, I really enjoy working in groups like this, which is why I've sought it out over the course of my career, and so it's something that I feel confident that I can do well at.

And maybe the last thing that I would add is that I've always intentionally looked to stretch into roles. I've found that I can be fairly adaptable quickly. And so, coming to this committee—like I said, I think the other members of the board bring to the table a slightly different skill set than I do, and I very much look forward to working with them to learn a bit more about and to take on that conservation mandate.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Harris, three minutes.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thanks, Sam, for being here. I appreciate you taking the time today to come and appear before us.

I wanted to just shift gears a little bit and talk a bit more broadly about public service. Obviously, we're all public

servants here. I think we all agree that we want to do the best thing that we can for the people of Ontario—sometimes we might have a little bit of a different way of getting there.

I wanted to get a sense from you of what drives you to get into a role like this, where you are serving the public of Ontario, and how do you think that your skill set can help you do that?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Well, it's a big question, I guess. Public service is a description of a career, but it's also an action that you take. So I guess there are maybe two different ways to answer that. On public service as a career—and in that I would include something like this, which is volunteering for a position that has, quote, unquote, some official roles and responsibilities and approvals.

Just to reference back, I guess, to Minister Flaherty, he did this speech once called “Public service is good for you,” I think it was, at the Ivey school of business. He said a number of things there that would be obvious, I think, to all of you in particular—that it expands your horizons, but it should be a mutually beneficial type of situation so the person who is serving the public is going to grow in their career and grow personally etc., but at the same time, having this orientation to service is going to be to the benefit of the people who are represented etc. I guess that's one thing I would say, and I think that's definitely true. I think one key thing about public service that goes sometimes underappreciated is just dealing constantly in trade-offs. Every decision you make is in a world of limited resources, and taking one action means there are resources coming from somewhere else, and it's a very challenging position. It's challenging, obviously, for folks who are elected, but also for folks who are not. He mentioned that in the speech as well, and I think it's a skill set in life that is important. I'd say that's one.

On public service as an action, I was thinking this morning—my family and I visited a woman yesterday—I live in Coburg, Ontario—who was like a grandmother of mine, though not, and she is like that to hundreds of people. If you get stuck, you call her; if you need a place to stay because you're down on your luck, you call her. She's sick, she has got cancer, so she's dying, and her number one worry is who is going to pick up the phone when someone calls her house after she's not there. I think that's actually the highest form of public service—which is helping your neighbour next door, and that's what I aspire to day to day—

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** I'm going to cut you off there. Thank you very much for that response.

We will now turn to the opposition side for questions. Member Begum.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** If you wanted to finish, I was actually very moved by your response, and I'm happy to—

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I think I was basically there—but that was just to say, we're relatively new in the community. I've got three young kids, and I just think this whole—when we think of public service, we often think of such lofty goals and having this massive impact, and I

think when I was in school, that was the same. But I think as you get older, you start to realize some of the most impactful things are when someone shovels your driveway because you haven't been able to get to it, or helping drive someone to the doctor etc. I just think when you talk about public service, both of those things should be part of the discussion.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** You're absolutely right. One of the reasons why my dad is so popular in the neighbourhood is because he shovels people's driveways, and you can never get him to stop, and everybody loves him. Everyone brings him gifts during Christmastime, even though we don't celebrate Christmas, and it's just the most beautiful thing. You're absolutely right; I think there are different ways of showing public service, so I thank you for that.

I also want to thank you for coming in and doing this interview. It's like my colleague stated before: It's one of those daunting tasks, where you come here and everyone's looking at you and asking you all these questions. It's sometimes a little bit uncomfortable as well.

I know that you've got a wide range of experience in finance. We talked about your experience in government, as well.

Can you tell us a little bit about your experience at Scotiabank and how that would transition or fit into the role that you're taking on for this?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Looking at the materials ahead of time—of course, I haven't met with anyone on the board yet, but the piece of it that seems most practically applicable in the near term is that the agency collects funds and then is a custodian of those funds for some period of time. I don't think it's going to be the board's responsibility to be making day-to-day decisions on that, but there is, I think, some level of financial experience that's useful in terms of that custodial role. Even on the distribution—again, it's not making decisions on where the funds are going necessarily, but in terms of the longer-term trajectory and sustainability of the organization. That's what I've done at the bank that can be most useful.

0950

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Now I want to move to a little bit about the board itself. This specific one is focused on endangered species and the risk that they're facing. Recently, I had a chance to meet with a lot of advocates who came to Queen's Park for their lobby day. They talked about the ways that we're facing this reality across the province and in some of our lakes, and what is happening.

Even in my riding, this is actually a big issue, in Scarborough, where we have advocates who have very strong feelings about this.

Do you have any experiences that are relevant specifically to dealing with endangered species and the environmental impact of it, or anything to do with understanding the environmental impact assessments, and would you be able to share a little bit of that?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Not directly. I could give you the unsurprising answer, which is that I classify myself as a bit of an aspiring outdoorsman. I spend a lot of time—as much as my kids will allow me—outside, but I wouldn't say I have direct experience with it. My neighbour

Margaret is a very active member of Ontario Nature. I was talking to her yesterday about this, and I know that she is going to be all over me about that.

So the short answer to your question is, I wouldn't have direct experience with conservation in an official capacity.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Do you think that you would be able to take on the position, despite having that lack of experience?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I believe so. I think I'd just refer back to my comments about distributed responsibilities. In coming before this committee and approaching this opportunity, I really would view myself as having some of that expertise on the finance side. The other board members—one is a University of Toronto professor, and the other one is the CEO of the Toronto Zoo; I certainly wouldn't expect to have more expertise than them, so I would expect that they'll take the lead on that, and I very much look forward to learning from them.

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I will pass it on to MPP Glover.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Glover, 10 minutes.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you so much for being here, for putting your name forward.

I am deeply concerned about endangered species in this province and about endangered species around the world. Around the world, the number of animals has declined by 70% over the last 35 years. I'm also concerned that—this was a recent stat, and I can't verify it—the mass of humanity and the animals that we keep is greater than the mass of all animals in the woods, in the wilderness now in the world. I'm looking at this in terms of in Ontario—I'm looking at this period of rapid climate change and also rapid development. The stewardship of these species into the future is for future generations. You mentioned that you've got three children. I've got two kids and a grandchild now, and I want to make sure that they inherit a healthy planet from us, and all of the species that we inherited from our parents that are on this planet.

I understand that you don't have direct experience working with endangered species.

What is your commitment to protecting those endangered species for the future generations?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I'd say it's strong. Conservation is important to me in all areas of my world view.

I was thinking, on the way over—we lived in the country when I was growing up, and I remember a few times hearing the song of the whippoorwill, which is one of the birds that's endangered. It's interesting, because they sing mostly at night, which is not common for birds, obviously. They're more active at night. It's special when you hear that. It's partially special because you don't hear it often.

I'd say that my commitment to that is strong. I think there's a scientific answer which talks about the impact on food chains and ecosystems etc. when a species disappears, and that's an answer that you will probably need to get from somebody who has more of a background in it. But I'd say that my commitment to it is strong, as much as it's in principle and philosophically.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'll pass it to my colleague.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Member Stevens.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** How many minutes do we have left?

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Seven and a half.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I don't know if I'm going to use it all up, but I'll try.

I'm the MPP for St. Catharines, and in St. Catharines we have a family called the VanderMeers, not the VanderVeers, so I just wanted to—

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** People often confuse me for that, yes.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Yes, great.

At this part of the interview, of course, I have to ask some of the tough questions. Being the official opposition, we have to ask some questions just to feel out some of your affiliations. Again, I know this could be a little bit uncomfortable, but they're necessary questions for my colleagues and for everyone in the room.

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

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Yes.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Okay, and are you currently?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Yes. I don't want to front-run the questions, but I think—I actually meant to call before I came here, to find out. My blanket answer would be this: I've been a member of the federal and provincial Conservative parties from about the time that I graduated university, and to the extent that I wasn't, it was because it lapsed, rather than for any reason. Usually, you would get a membership around a leadership, as you know. So I think that I'm a member; I may not be at this exact moment.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** So you haven't renewed, then? Those people over there are going to—

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** They're going to come after me after, yes. That's right.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** The next question would be, of course, then, you were a member—so did you donate to anyone's campaign over the past?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** My donations have primarily been at the federal level, and they've often just tracked nominations of people I know. Looking at the record, I think I have two contributions to PC members: One would have been in 2020; the last one was in 2017—the 2017 I think was a nomination, and 2020 was an event ticket.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Thank you for those honest answers, because it's very important that we get that information.

Actually, one of my best friends works for Scotiabank—go, Scotiabank team—in St. Catharines.

And just backing up on what I was asking you, did anyone ask you to submit this application for the position?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Minister Piccini is my MPP. I mentioned that I live in Cobourg, Ontario. It's pretty small, so I see him around. We were talking late last year. I was with my family, and so he was asking about us, and I mentioned that I'd like to volunteer for something if there was an opportunity. And so then, I think knowing my finance background, he and his office suggested this role,

because there was an opening, and suggested that I fill out the online application, so that's what I did.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Great.

And just one other question before I pass it over to my other colleague: Can you give me three ideas that you will bring to this board that relate to endangered species and why it's so important to you personally?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** Three ideas—I don't know exactly how to answer that. I haven't spent a lot of time with the members yet, and so I'm usually afraid to come to the table immediately with ideas for fear of sounding foolish—but I guess some of them we've talked about here already.

**1000**

One is, I just think fiscal discipline is so important, and I'm sure that's already the case—relatively new agency, relatively new board, of course. But I just think the impact of the dollars is very important. I know the agency hasn't yet had an annual report; I think the first one is coming in September. So there will probably be an opportunity to look at that and see. I guess one thing I will be interested in is what the metrics are in terms of the impacts. So that would be one.

I guess number two I said before—my sort of philosophical position on conservation.

I don't know if I can give you a third without just sort of blathering on like this, so I won't waste your time.

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** That's perfectly fair.

I have two minutes left, so I'm going to pass it on to MPP Fraser because he is itching to ask you something. I can see him swinging his chair around.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'm sorry; I had to step out for a second, so I may have missed this in the meeting. These are actually a couple of educational questions so I get an understanding of what is going on. What is the source of the trust? What is the source of income? Who pays?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I think it primarily is conservation charges to developers. This is my understanding; I may be proved wrong. If a development is going to encroach on the habitat of an endangered species, there are a few things that developers can do. One of them is, they can elect to pay a conservation charge. And if the development is going to impact the five species in this, then there's a formula set out in the regulation. It goes in. You can also donate if you'd like, and I think municipalities also have the option to contribute.

**Mr. John Fraser:** What is the size of the trust? Do you know?

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I actually don't know. I asked the question, and they said they won't tell me until I—

**Mr. John Fraser:** It was for my own edification. That wasn't a trick question.

In terms of disbursements—what's the board's interaction with the disbursement of those funds? Is the board part of that selection process, or do they approve the selection process of the—

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I'm not familiar with the process yet. My guess would be no. My guess would be that the management of the agency is responsible for the

disbursement and the board is more responsible for the high-level financial position.

**Mr. John Fraser:** That, to me, is an interesting question, because you need oversight over that disbursement from a governance perspective. So it would be interesting when you get there to find out what that is, because for a selection process to have merit, it has to be overseen, and there has to be fairness in application of criteria that are consistent across—

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** I agree.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** That's it for me.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I'd like to raise a point of order.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Point of order.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** I had said about the animal populations—the animal populations have plummeted by nearly 70% over the last 50 years. I just want to correct my record on that.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Thanks for googling that.

That concludes the time that we have available.

Mr. VanderVeer, thank you very much for joining us today and for coming down. You can stay for the rest of the deliberations or you are free to go.

**Mr. Sam VanderVeer:** My wife is watching, so she'll know if I—

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Moving right along—we're on good time right now. We will consider the intended appointment of Meg Davis, nominated as member of the Toronto Metropolitan University board of governors.

Do we have a motion? Member Coe.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Through you, Chair: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Meg Davis,

nominated as member of the Toronto Metropolitan University board of governors.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Is there any discussion on that motion? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? All those in favour? That is unanimous. That's carried.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Sam VanderVeer, nominated as member of the Species at Risk Conservation Trust. Member Coe has the motion.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Through you, Chair: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Sam VanderVeer, nominated as member of the Species at Risk Conservation Trust.

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Is there any discussion on that motion? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

Committee members, moving on: The deadline to review the intended appointment of Sondra Read, selected from the February 10, 2023, certificate, is March 12, 2023. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointment of Sondra Read to April 11, 2023? I heard a no.

**Mr. John Fraser:** The party of no.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma):** Order, order.

The deadline to review the intended appointments of Jane Waechter, Sandi Bell, Yacout (Rob) El-Sayed and Lisa Yong, selected from the February 17, 2023, certificate is March 19, 2023. Do we have unanimous agreement to extend the deadline to consider the intended appointments of Jane Waechter, Sandi Bell, Yacout (Rob) El-Sayed and Lisa Yong to April 18, 2023? I heard a no.

That concludes our business for today. This committee now stands adjourned. Thanks, everyone, for a very good committee this morning. I appreciated the conversation.

*The committee adjourned at 1006.*

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Mr. Lorne Coe (Whitby PC)

Mr. John Fraser (Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud L)

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