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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-20

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-20

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 19 October 2023

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 19 octobre 2023

Chair: Will Bouma
Clerk: 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 19 October 2023

Jeudi 19 octobre 2023

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.

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. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): The first item of business will be the adoption of two subcommittee reports, which were distributed in advance. We have the subcommittee report dated October 5, 2023. Could I please have a motion? Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move the adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated October 5, 2023, on the order-in-council certificate dated September 29, 2023.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Is there any discussion of the motion? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour of the subcommittee report? Any opposed? Seeing none, the motion is carried.

Next, we have the subcommittee report dated October 12, 2023. Could I please have a motion? Member Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 12, 2023, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 6, 2023.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Is there any discussion on that report? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? All those in favour? Any opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. PETER-PAUL DU VERNET

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Peter-Paul Du Vernet, intended appointee as member, Licence Appeal Tribunal.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): We will change the order, as the first appointee is not up. We will turn first to Peter-Paul Du Vernet, who is here. I think he was looking forward to seeing how it went first before he got called up, but here we are.

Peter-Paul Du Vernet is nominated as member of the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

Sir, you may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. For that questioning, we will start with the government side, 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 very much for taking time out of your day to join us. You may make your statement.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Thank you, Chair and members of the committee who are participating here today, for the opportunity to attend before you—and particularly in person, because we've all been too absent in person too long. I do appreciate it, and I thank you for considering my application for appointment as a part-time member of the Licence Appeal Tribunal. Now I propose to direct my introduction to my qualifications to the appointment, and to be brief, so that you all have time for questions, if any.

As indicated in my application and curriculum vitae, I have been continuously in the private practice of law for over 42 years, as counsel to my current firm for over 33 years, and have been certified by the Law Society of Ontario as a specialist in civil litigation for almost 20 years. I've completed the ODACC adjudicators course.

I have had, and have, a broad and diverse practice. I have appeared before courts from coast to coast, and at every level of court, including the Supreme Court of Canada, as well as many boards and tribunals. I have appeared on criminal matters and civil and administrative proceedings of almost every imaginable type. I have had the privilege of representing a broad range of clients, from individuals pro bono, to corporations, to multinational corporations, in a broad range of matters, engaging a number of issues. I am accustomed to being analytical; working with statutes, rules and procedures; and delivering within timelines and against deadlines.

Why have I made this application? Because I believe that I'm well-qualified to contribute to the work of the tribunal to address the issues that arise on the appeals within its jurisdiction in a transparent, fair, inclusive, effective and efficient manner. The work of the tribunal is broad and varied and of great significance to the parties appearing before it. In my view, it's important to the credibility of the tribunal and the appeals process that the parties, particularly the unsuccessful parties, be satisfied that they have been heard and understood, and understand the reasons for the result.

What will I contribute to the tribunal? Well, all of what I have touched upon: my experience, analytical skills and judgment.

I've directed my comments, as I say, to the merits of my qualifications, and I have kept my comments brief.

Again, thank you for inviting me and for your consideration of my application.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Thank you very much, sir. We will now turn to the government side, with 12½ minutes. The first question will go to member Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you for being here, like you said, in person. It's really great to be able to have you here this morning. You certainly are very qualified. We've had a chance to look over your CV, as you said.

I was wondering if you could touch a little bit more on how you think your past experiences in your professional life can help bring good things to the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, thank you for that. The LAT—I'll call it the LAT because everybody does—is busy, there's no question about that, and I've been busy all my practising career, now for over four decades. That's not a challenge for me particularly; it's just a habit now. That's something that I think I can contribute as well—as I say, analytical skills.

Satisfying the unsuccessful party as to why it was that they were unsuccessful is critical to the credibility of any process. You just can't say, "Appeal dismissed." That doesn't satisfy anybody—not even, really, the successful party. They think, "Well, what happened?"

So that's what I would hope to bring—and ensure that the tribunal's work is processed efficiently, fairly and timely.

Mr. Mike Harris: Is that something that you do on a regular basis, where you kind of mediate between both parties and help them understand why that decision was made, even if you were unsuccessful?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Occasionally, yes—well, I would say now, frequently. In the city of Toronto, where a lot of my practice is centred, we have mandatory mediation, which is salutary. It has really taken a lot of business out of the courts, which is a good thing, because people find their level, their resolution, on terms that are acceptable to them, not necessarily imposed upon them. That's a good thing.

And yes, I've now participated in, I would say—my goodness—hundreds of mediations; it's got to be hundreds, if not thousands.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Next up, member Saunderson. You have 10 minutes and 20 seconds left.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: I, as well, am a lawyer, and I'm very impressed by your professional credentials, but I'm interested in your volunteer credentials. What experiences do you have in the volunteer sector, and how do you think that will add to your skill set that you're going to bring to the tribunal?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, I wasn't entirely sure that my volunteer work and my community service was germane to the tribunal; however, I have been active

in the community. As you saw from my CV, I had about 10 years as board member and chair of Alpine Ontario, which is the organization that is responsible for delivering alpine skiing in the province of Ontario. It liaises with Alpine Canada and with FIS, which is the international federation, and has between 3,000 and 4,000 athletes competing.

When I joined the board, it was a very challenging situation. It was a volunteer board, as so many in amateur athletics are, with a lot of different ropes pulling in different directions. It was like herding cats, initially. We got everybody on the same page, and we got our budget straightened out and went on to some significant successes. We now have several athletes on the Olympic circuit.

So all of that—it was working with people, it was bringing people together, it was finding common ground, it was moving an agenda forward that was in the interests of the sport and the organization. So I think those skills contribute.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Sandhu, you have eight minutes and 38 seconds.

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

As my colleagues have mentioned, you're a very experienced guy. So my question will be, what motivated you to apply for this particular position, and was this the only position you applied to?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Those are two questions. I'll answer the second first, if I may—only position, yes.

And what motivated me: As I touched upon in my opening, it seemed to me that I could contribute. I had looked for opportunities to contribute, and this one seemed to fit my skill set. I learned of it through the Law Society of Ontario. They post openings and actually include a link, if I'm not mistaken. So that was the way I came to it. It struck me as particularly suiting me because of the nature of my background and experience. That's what prompted me to apply.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Gallagher Murphy, you have the floor.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Monsieur Du Vernet, for being here today.

I totally appreciate your analytical and judgment skills. That's critical. Also, to be an effective adjudicator with the Licence Appeal Tribunal, it does require strong organizational and management, time-setting skill sets. That being the case, could you tell us about some experience where you had a very heavy workload and how you managed that caseload? That would be my first question. The second would be, how would you ensure that you stay on top of that workload and, obviously, deliver decisions within the targeted processing timelines?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: To your first question: I've been doing that for 40 years. I've been managing a heavy caseload with—and in court now, we have fixed deadlines, inelastic, for the most part. We go to case conferences. The deadlines are set at the case conference. Sometimes they're very, very brief, depending upon the

nature of the issues, and we have to adhere to them in the interests both of the clients and the process in the court. As I say, I've been managing that for a very long time. To me, there isn't an end of the day, particularly, and there isn't particularly a weekend—if that's what's required. I've been doing that, again, my entire professional life. So that's the way I manage that and will continue to manage it. Delivering, as I said in my opening, against deadlines and within timelines has just been a part of my daily routine for 42 years.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: So that's like a Monday for you?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: That's right.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Hogarth, you have the floor, with five minutes and 40 seconds.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank you for putting your name forward. We always want good people with great backgrounds like you have brought forward for these positions.

Just a follow-up on member Gallagher Murphy's question about workload: I do believe this tribunal is a little behind in their cases, so being able to play catch-up will be important. You talked about having a busy life. I loved when you said the words—that you want to make sure that it's a credible position, and you bring that credibility to the table, and the right to be heard.

I know you probably can't talk about specific cases, but just in generalities—how important is it to hear both sides of the story?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: That's critical, as I said. It's critical to the credibility of the process, critical to the satisfaction of the parties. Oftentimes, I found, at least, that parties that are unsuccessful or don't achieve what they thought they wanted can often be shown that they have been successful in some respect, when the results are presented appropriately. It is important to listen to both sides to ensure that they're both heard, to ensure that their positions have been properly apprehended—and as I said, in reasons to demonstrate why whatever occurred or whatever transpired, whatever the outcome, is the outcome. In my personal experience, that has been critical. People aren't unhappy if they understand why they weren't successful—I shouldn't say they're not unhappy; they're not as unhappy. They understand, they get it, and that's important. Otherwise, the process is not credible—it looks like a black box, and somebody pulled a number out of the box, and that was that. That's not satisfying.

0910

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I agree.

Once again, I want to thank you for putting your name forward.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Pang, three minutes and 45 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the candidate. Thank you again for putting your name forward.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: My pleasure.

Mr. Billy Pang: You have a very, very impressive CV, with a lot of experience and qualifications.

The question is about what you believe—not only yourself—it takes to be an effective member on the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: I believe that it is what I have touched upon: that it is to deal with the volume of appeals that come before the tribunal and that may come my way in a fair, efficient and effective manner, so that the process and the results are transparent to the participants, everybody feels they've been heard, and everybody understands the outcome.

They're typically written reasons. I understand most of the business of the tribunal now is conducted virtually, which does sometimes present challenges, and we have to address those challenges. We have to ensure that everybody knows how they can be heard and understood; how material, if there's to be material, gets filed, gets reviewed; and they have to be satisfied that it has been reviewed. Those are some of the challenges.

But that's the way I believe that I can contribute.

Mr. Billy Pang: How are you going to deal with those people who are not happy with the end result?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, typically, you don't have to deal with them after the result, but that said, as long as they understand the result, I think that's the best that the tribunal can do. The tribunal can't make everybody happy. That's not its mandate. The tribunal can only ensure that its process is fair and transparent and that the result is understandable.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Back to member Harris, with just under two minutes left.

Mr. Mike Harris: We don't have a whole lot of time left, but I just wanted to ask you if there's anything else that you wanted to include in your testimony here today. The floor is yours.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: No, I don't think so. I think I've expressed myself in my opening and in answer to your questions. Thank you very much. I don't know that there's much more that I can add at this stage. I can't comment on the business of the LAT because I'm not a member of the LAT. But otherwise, I understand process, I understand timelines, I understand efficiency, I understand fairness, and I appreciate that everybody's got to get it. That's where I would be headed.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): The government has no further questions.

Moving to the opposition side: You have 15 minutes. We will begin with member Bourgouin.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Merci. With a name like Peter-Paul Du Vernet, do you speak French?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Oh, no. I was asked that, actually, at the time of my interview. My spoken French isn't very strong. I can read and I can write, but my spoken French has lagged because I really haven't kept it up. I apologize.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: No, you don't have to apologize. I just wanted to know because I would have asked you a few questions in French, but it's fine.

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: I had some clients from the Ottawa Valley who were just completely incomprehensible to me, so I apologize for that as well.

Mr. Mike Harris: Try Hearst.

Laughter.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Try my region; that's a good one. What's your main motivation for this appointment?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: As I indicated in answer to some of the previous questions, my main motivation is to contribute. I've looked for places to contribute. I served out—I shouldn't say served out; that's an inappropriate way to put it. I spent time with Alpine Ontario and was very happy with what I did there and with the outcome and the results, and it's now on a trajectory which I would not have imagined when I started.

The LAT seemed to me to be appropriate to my skills, so that's my motivation for applying. It's a place I can contribute and it's, in the vernacular, up my alley.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The LAT has come under fire from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association with serious conflict-of-interest allegations. It has been reported that there have been LAT adjudicators who have made insurance-friendly decisions and then accepted offers of employment from insurance companies. As a member of the LAT, how will you approach and find solutions for these allegations?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, I don't think finding solutions for the allegations is within the purview of the members of the LAT.

I've seen those allegations reported in the press. I have no such connections whatsoever. I've been through a conflict vetting, and I don't have any conflicts of which I'm aware. If I were to come across any conflicts, we've got a protocol in place to protect against any appearance of unfairness—because the old adage is that justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done. So it's the appearance that is important. That's why I say that the most important thing is that the parties understand what happened and that they appreciate that they have been heard, their position has been understood, and they understand why the result was obtained.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: A recent article published by the Investigative Journalism Foundation said that an exclusive data analysis revealed that a majority of tribunal members have Conservative ties—members who do appear in front of this committee.

Would you say you have ties to the Conservative parties, federally and provincially?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: None that I'm aware of.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The Licence Appeal Tribunal is currently falling behind—and you did speak a little bit about trying to give decisions as quickly as possible, within time—on their goals in Q1 and Q2 of 2022 and 2023 in three categories:

—decisions issued within 90 calendar days from the conclusion of the hearing: target 80%, actual percentage 64%;

—percentage of cases within the 12-month life cycle of the LAT: target 80%, actual percentage 69%;

—percentage of cases that are resolved through alternative dispute resolution, in whole or in part, with the LAT: target 80%, actual percentage 45%.

What expertise do you offer to help the LAT reach these goals?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, I can't comment on the statistics; I have not seen them, and I don't know where they derive from. But I can tell you again, as I indicated in answers to the questions and as I indicated in my opening, that I am accustomed to working against timelines and with timetables, and delivering timely material and results. We sometimes have very tight timelines in the litigation types which I'm involved with. That's what I would bring to the LAT. I don't see that I would have any difficulty with that whatsoever.

I appreciate that there's a very high volume of cases, and I expect that it will increase as more first instance tribunals come under the jurisdiction of the LAT.

So that's what I would hope to contribute.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Harden, you have just over 10 minutes left.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, sir, for being here this morning and for your interest in the province and this really important appeals body.

You were very succinct in your introduction, and I'm wondering if you could, for the benefit of the committee, give us a little bit more context about, as you're seeking this position, a challenging circumstance you could imagine happening and how you might handle it. You've been practising law for a long time. You mentioned that people not only need to know why an appeal was unsuccessful; the successful party needs to have that disclosure as well. Could you add a little bit more context so we have a really great idea about a particular instance that could happen, a hypothetical situation, and how you might resolve it?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: I think the most typical types of situations are parties that are either disrespectful to the tribunal or disrespectful to the party opposite, and that tends to bring the process into disrepute. That has to be corralled. That also happens in court, and it happens, typically, with self-represented litigants, and there are lots of those in front of the LAT. We all have strategies to deal with those things. You slow down, typically. I was in a hearing yesterday where the judicial officer said, "Stop, stop, stop," and eventually the litigant did stop. That's one of the things we have to do—maintain control over the tribunals process, and be respectful to all parties.

The other thing that has happened since hearings have gone virtual is that—not everybody is equally conversant with virtual process. They don't have equal access, they don't have equal facility, so we have to be sensitive to those things—dogs or children or signals dropping out or not having Internet. I dealt with a fellow in southwestern Ontario, in court, who didn't have Internet, and he was calling in from his cellphone, on his tractor, because it was harvest. Those things have to be accommodated. It doesn't affect the fairness of the process; in fact, it enhances the fairness of the process.

0920

Mr. Joel Harden: I appreciate what you just said. I've also heard from people on appeal bodies that cultural competency is really key—particularly, in some cases, newcomers to our country who are not expressing themselves in their first language, or others who are just unaware of how quickly processes can turn, sometimes not in their favour, and then respond emotionally in the moment.

You were describing earlier how you might de-escalate somebody who is being disrespectful to the process or to the opposite side.

How important do you think cultural competency is in understanding not only the case before you, but the person before you?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Well, it's certainly important, and we're all sensitive with that. It's not mandatory by any stretch, but there is an awareness now of unconscious bias, for example, and we're all alerted to it, and that was a tangential part of the ODACC process and the training process. Those issues are important. We all have to be aware of them. And you're right about familiarity with the process—for even as simply as people coming from common-law jurisdictions as opposed to civil-law jurisdictions. That process is entirely different, and you get an entirely different approach. I agree with you. It's important to be sensitive with that. That's what makes the process credible.

Mr. Joel Harden: Back to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Bourgouin, you have six minutes and 40 seconds left.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I'm going to ask you some quick and uncomfortable, but necessary, questions.

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

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Have you ever been a member of the federal party?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Have you donated to the Conservative Party?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Not to my knowledge. Not that I can recall. I should say, I've gone to a number of galas and things of that nature. Whether they somehow peripherally related in contributions to a party, I have no idea. I don't recall.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Have you ever worked for a Conservative election campaign?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: Ever? Oh, I did as a kid, yes.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Did anyone ask you to apply for this position?

Mr. Peter-Paul Du Vernet: No.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I don't have any more questions. Thank you for coming in person. Good luck.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Thank you for those questions on both sides.

Thank you very much for the responses today, Mr. Du Vernet. That concludes your time here at committee. Feel

free to stay, if you wish, but otherwise have a look around the building. It's supposed to be closing, after the next election, for an indefinite amount of time while we redo it, so this might be one of your few opportunities to have a look.

Again, thank you very much for joining the committee today—and after hearing the testimony, especially, I'm struck again by the incredible, qualified people who come before us. I really appreciate your time today.

MS. MELANIE PARADIS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Melanie Paradis, intended appointee as member, Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): We will now move on to Melanie Paradis, nominated as a member of the Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

Thank you for joining us today, Ms. Paradis. You may make an initial statement, at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. For 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.

Again, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to join us today. You have the floor to make your initial statement.

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Good morning. My name is Melanie Paradis. I live in Belleville, Ontario. I'm a mother, a business owner and an employer.

In August 2022, I was invited to join the local business and professional women's organization by Jennifer May-Anderson. She is the president of the local club, which works to advance the cause of women and girls. As a new mother and entrepreneur, I was eager to get involved and expand my network with women in my area.

Soon after, Jennifer sent me an application form for the Loyalist College board of governors and encouraged me to apply. At the time, Jennifer was the vice-chair of the board of governors, and now she is the chair. I was encouraged to apply because of my skills and experience; specifically, more than 15 years of progressively senior experience in public relations, community engagement, government relations, Indigenous rights recognition and communications.

While I may be known by members of this committee for my political engagement and regular appearances on television, radio and in newspapers, I am known professionally as one of the best executive speech writers and communications advisers in the country. My business, Texture Communications, advises some of Canada's most influential executives, Indigenous leaders and advocacy organizations. I help my clients be heard. This skill set was and continues to be an advantageous fit for the board.

Throughout the fall and winter of 2022, I underwent a competitive process with the board, including a formal interview. I understand that there were three candidates. In January 2023, the board contacted my references to conduct a reference check. Strong references were provided by Tim Murphy, a former president of the Ontario Liberal Party, now CEO of McMillan LLP; and Erin O'Toole, the former leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, now president of ADIT North America. I have copies of the reference forms they completed, and I would be happy to share them with the committee.

I was selected by the nominating committee as the successful candidate at the end of January 2023. I attended my first board retreat on February 9. I have diligently attended every board meeting since then, for the past eight months.

Desiring a full board, the nominating committee decided that they would apply to have me fill the LGIC position. My understanding is, the board communicated this request to the government of Ontario directly. In March, I was asked by the college to complete a profile on the public appointment management secretariat website, and I did so. In August, the government of Ontario asked, through the college, that I give my approval for a criminal record check, which I provided. At no point during this process did I communicate directly with anyone from the government of Ontario regarding my application or subsequent appointment.

Over the last eight months, I have had the tremendous pleasure of working alongside a very talented and passionate board of governors and with the truly inspiring president and CEO of Loyalist College, Mark Kirkpatrick. The community that Loyalist has built is unmatched. This is a vibrant campus filled with innovation, culture, friendship and hard work. Yes, it is a small college, but, as our motto proudly states, "Small gives us the power to do big things." Being small gives Loyalist the ability to personalize learning, with one-on-one attention for students. This is something that is personally important to me, as the daughter of a teacher. This results in job-ready graduates with the skills needed to immediately make an impact in biosciences, health, business, and in the media. From culinary to nursing, from journalism to carpentry, Loyalist College is a destination school.

It is no surprise to me that, this fall, Loyalist College is boasting the highest enrolment ever, with a record of 3,870 students. Our main campus is in Belleville, and we have locations in Tyendinaga, Bancroft, Toronto, and Port Hope. The college supports more than 6,000 jobs across those communities.

Loyalist is a really special place, and so is Belleville. I routinely describe my life in Belleville as a Hallmark Christmas movie. I feel grateful every day that I get to live in a community that is so warm and welcoming, and that my two-and-a-half-year-old son gets to grow up here.

My hope is that my contributions to the board of governors of Loyalist College will result in my son wanting to go there for a world-class education and learning experi-

ence. I know that there is no better place to get him job-ready than Loyalist.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

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

We will now turn to the government side for questioning, and we have just under 10 minutes. Member Harris, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Ms. Paradis. It's good to see you this morning.

I'm just wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about your experience over the last eight months as you've been sitting on the board, and how your background in communications is serving the board and serving the college at this time.

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Well, as you know, risk management is one of the core functions of the board of governors, so being able to help identify potential risks to the executive is a key function. In the past few months, we've had a number of crises—including international crises. You are well aware of the challenges the government of Canada is currently having with India. India is a country that sends many, many students to colleges across Canada, and certainly to Loyalist College. A large portion of our students come from India. So being able to, early on in that crisis, identify it as a potential risk and communicate with the president to relay to him my concerns was certainly impactful. He is actually in India right now. I'm hoping that he is having a very successful trip there, meeting with representatives from both the government and from industry across the country.

0930

Mr. Mike Harris: You mentioned that you have been attending every meeting and doing your best to be part of that. How are you finding balancing that with all of the other work that you're doing currently?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: It has certainly been busy, although my two-and-a-half-year-old is the one who keeps me the busiest, certainly. But it has been a challenge, and it has been a welcomed one. The board is very accommodating. Sometimes we meet in person, on campus, which is an incredible experience, in no small part because we get to walk past the culinary department and sometimes sample their incredible treats. But we also have meetings virtually. So they've been very accommodating and flexible for a mom like me and for a young entrepreneur.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Gallagher Murphy, you have the floor.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I appreciate the passion you have for your community as well as for Loyalist College and, of course, your passion for being a mom. Thank you very much for all of that.

In your current capacity as a member of the Loyalist College board of governors, could you please tell us a bit more about any initiatives that you've been involved in, whether it has been related to the nursing, military—you name it. Please talk about any initiatives there.

Ms. Melanie Paradis: It's not so much the ones that I've been involved in, but the ones I'm proudest of are the

ones that the students themselves have led. There is an incredible initiative by international students to help the junior international students to better get acquainted with the community and to help them to transition to a city like Belleville—which is a much smaller city, certainly smaller than what a lot of international students are used to—and helping them to understand our transit system and helping them to find housing.

I'm very proud that the school does not have a housing problem. This year, they were able to find housing for all of their students, including the international students. I understand from the president that there were only a few days in the beginning where there were a few in some hotels, but they have been able to find great housing solutions for everyone. I'm very proud of the school for doing that.

There is a great anecdote of upper-year international students going to bus stops in Belleville and coaching the new students on how to get on the bus without rushing the bus, because in a lot of other countries, transit is not nearly as—it's a lot busier, shall we say, in other countries. That can be an overwhelming experience for new students—to understand sort of the culture here and what the norm is. So the senior students have taken upon themselves to develop a community outreach program to ensure that new international students, when they arrive, know how to integrate really seamlessly into the community. I think that's a beautiful thing.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Hogarth, you have the floor, with four minutes and 50 seconds left.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Welcome, Ms. Paradis, to committee.

First of all, I want to thank you for putting your name forward. I understand that you were asked by the college and your peers to actually put your name forward, so that's certainly a vote of confidence from those who work with you. Congratulations on that.

My question is regarding the board itself and some of the actions that they will be doing, such as passing budgets and approving plans for future initiatives. As a potential board member, what would you do to ensure the continued and future success of Loyalist College? Secondly, what would you think is important for post-secondary education as a whole? What would you like to see move forward?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: I think one of the great things about Loyalist is their ability to identify the demand for new programming—and the need for them. One of the examples I like to provide is our 911 operator training program. This is a job that is extremely stressful. There is a very high turnover rate. People who work as 911 operators are helping people in the worst moments of their lives to get the services that they need to survive. It's an incredibly important role. The board recently approved a new program, which I believe started this year, to train up students to fill those essential jobs and to set them up for success to do so.

The role of the board has certainly been some oversight over that programming, but more importantly, it's filling the function of risk management, and developing and

maintaining the strategic plan. We have a strategic plan, but it is coming due, so the board will be working on developing a new strategic plan for the years ahead in the next year. I am very much looking forward to helping contribute to writing that strategic plan and then helping to ensure that the college—everything that it does is rooted in its core values and aligned with that strategic plan.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Did you want to make a comment on post-secondary education as a whole?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Yes, thank you.

In this country, there has long been an emphasis on—and certainly for me, when I was growing up—that students should go to university. Colleges were often overlooked, and I think this is a major missed opportunity. The programs that are being offered at colleges across Ontario are incredible, not only for job readiness, but for life readiness for so many young people and for people who are looking to transition in their careers to perhaps do something different with their lives.

Loyalist has been incredibly innovative in its approach. One of my favourite examples is the nursing program. Loyalist College now offers a transition program so that you can get a four-year degree now—a university degree in nursing, through Loyalist College—which is an incredible innovation that they did in partnership with the government of Ontario.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: No further questions.

Once again, thank you for putting your name forward.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Member Pang, you have the floor, with a minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Billy Pang: International students are a main pillar in our education system. I was one of them, three decades ago.

As Ontario is an international leader in post-secondary education—as someone 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 support for international students will you work to continue to implement, and to make international students feel at home at Loyalist?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Thank you for the question. It's a very important one, certainly for Loyalist. A significant portion of our students are international students. Actually, our student governor is an international student, as well, so the representation on the board is quite clear.

We work hard to be involved in cultural activities and in gatherings with international students. Mark Kirkpatrick, the president, is a regular, frequent attendee at many of their events. He is very passionate about making sure that all students feel welcome, and he certainly goes above and beyond to ensure that international students do too, and that they have the resources they need to study to their fullest potential and to feel safe and comfortable and wanted in our community, be that through housing—

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): I apologize to cut you off, Ms. Paradis.

Thank you very much for the questions.

We will now turn to the opposition side. Member Bourguin, you have 15 minutes.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Thank you, Melanie Paradis. Do you speak French? That's a French name.

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Un petit peu, but I'd rather do this in English.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I was going to ask you a couple of French questions, but that's fine. I don't have a problem with that.

In your profile, you say—experience in crisis communications, public relations and Indigenous consultation. I represent a lot of First Nations. So could you elaborate more on your experience?

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Ms. Melanie Paradis: Early in my career, I had the privilege of working directly for the Métis Nation of Ontario as their director of lands, resources and consultations, for about three years. In that role, I helped them negotiate deals both with the government but also with industries and with mining companies. In fact, we successfully negotiated the first-ever impact benefit agreement for a Métis community anywhere in the country here in Ontario, with Detour Gold. Since then, I have continued to work with Indigenous governments, and some of my current clients are Indigenous leaders.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: In your profile, it says you also worked with McMillan Vantage—"with over a decade of experience in crisis communications, public relations and Indigenous consultations."

You worked with the Métis Nation of Ontario. But have you worked with groups of First Nations?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Yes, I have. Going back to my time working for an engineering firm, we did consultations with Indigenous communities; Walpole Island is one that comes to mind. I worked on the line 9 reversal project with Enbridge, and through my work with National Public Relations, we did extensive outreach to First Nations communities along the corridor. I've worked with communities in Alberta over the years, as well. I've worked in response to pipeline ruptures, to oil spills, and the impacts that those may have on First Nations communities, on Métis communities.

Over the past 15 years, I've worked with a number of communities, both on behalf of industry as well as working on behalf of the communities.

But I think probably my proudest contribution has been, in all of my political work, as well, I have made a point of ensuring that Indigenous people and Indigenous rights are reflected in the party platform, are reflected in campaigns that we've worked on. That's a really important part of the work that I've done with Indigenous people—ensuring that at the political level, we're also being reflective of their rights.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Maybe I misunderstood what you said, but mostly, it was for industry. Have you also worked with individual First Nations communities? I may have missed that. You mentioned that most of your experience was for industry, of course, addressing and respecting First Nations. But as for First Nations directly—have you represented First Nations also?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Yes, I have had clients that are First Nations.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Who were they?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Not recently, but yes. In previous years, when I worked for Gartner Lee, which was then purchased by AECOM, we had a number of clients; Walpole Island was one of them.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Your résumé lists stakeholder relations in private firms—as well as senior communications staff for the federal Conservatives and the provincial Conservatives.

The position at the board of governors is—appropriately manage the Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology to achieve their mandate of offering education and training and helping individuals meet the needs of employers. How do you link your experience with the said mandate? I think you did mention it, when the questions were asked from the government, but could you elaborate some more?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: Certainly. The function on the board is really to identify risks to the college and to help ensure that the college stays the course with a strategic plan, and that it's always aligned with its core values.

My breadth of experience across the country and specifically in crisis and risk management gives me the ability to identify risks early on, to anticipate what challenges may confront the board, and to raise awareness of those issues to the executive so that they have the time and the opportunity to prepare themselves.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Do you believe your link to the Conservative Party, both federal and provincial, has any thing to do with your appointment?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: None, whatsoever.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: How do you understand your mandate at Loyalist College—in the context of the new funding model that wants to ensure that students and graduates are prepared to succeed in rewarding careers? Which ideas are you bringing forward to make sure the college accomplishes its mandate?

Ms. Melanie Paradis: I think the college is doing an incredible job on that already. My job on the board is purely to ensure that they continue to adhere to their core values, which they're very good at doing, and developing programming that is going to train up a future generation and help fill jobs that desperately need to be filled.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have no more questions.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Thank you very much for the questions from both sides.

Thank you, Ms. Paradis, for joining us today. You can stay on as we do our further deliberations, but otherwise, at this point, you can go chase around your two-and-a-half-year-old if you prefer to do that.

Colleagues, we will now move to concurrence. I would like to just change the order a little bit and move the concurrence first for Peter-Paul Du Vernet.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Peter-Paul Du Vernet, nominated as member of the Licence Appeal Tribunal. Do we have a motion? Member Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Peter-Paul Du Vernet, nominated as member of the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

The Chair (Mr. Will Bouma): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by member Harris. Is there any discussion on that? Seeing none, are members ready to vote? All those in favour? That was unanimous. Thank you, colleagues.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Melanie Paradis, nominated as member of the Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. Do we have a motion? Member Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Melanie Paradis, nominated as member of the Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

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

That concludes our business for today.

Members, I would just like to state on the record that I very much appreciate the work of the legislative staff in order to make both an in-person meeting and a virtual meeting happen for the convenience of those appearing before us.

Thank you to all members for your presence today. It was a good meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0950.

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