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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-31

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-31

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Thursday 9 May 2024

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Jeudi 9 mai 2024

Chair: David Smith
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : David Smith
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 May 2024

Jeudi 9 mai 2024

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will now come to order.

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. David Smith): The first item of business will be the adoption of three subcommittee reports, which were distributed in advance.

We have the subcommittee report dated Thursday, April 18, 2024. Could I please have a motion? MPP Harris, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, April 18, 2024, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 12, 2024.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Harris moved adoption of the subcommittee report. Any discussion? Any further discussion? Are members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

We have the subcommittee report dated Thursday, April 25, 2024. Could I please have a motion? MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointees dated Thursday, April 25, 2024, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 19, 2024.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Harris moved the adoption of the subcommittee report. Any discussion? Any further discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That motion is carried.

0900

Number three: We have a subcommittee report dated Thursday May 2, 2024. Could I please have a motion? MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday May 2, 2024, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 26, 2024.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Harris moved the adoption of the subcommittee report. Any further discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All opposed? That motion is carried.

NOMINATIONS PRÉVUES

MS. GENEVIÈVE PAINCHAUD

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Geneviève Painchaud, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Our first intended appointment today is Geneviève Painchaud, nominated as member of the Children and Family Services Review Board.

You may make any 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. You may proceed, Ms. Geneviève.

M^{me} Geneviève Painchaud: Merci et bonjour à chaque cher membre du comité. Mon nom est Geneviève Painchaud et on m'a suggéré de commencer cette rencontre avec un petit discours que j'ai choisi de faire de façon bilingue aujourd'hui.

Donc, je vous remercie de l'opportunité d'être présente avec vous aujourd'hui pour discuter de mon expérience. Je suis originaire de la ville de Québec, mais j'habite en Ontario depuis environ 35 ans, et plus précisément, j'habite présentement à Orléans, en banlieue d'Ottawa, ça depuis une vingtaine d'années. Donc, je me considère une Franco-Ontarienne.

My educational background is in economics and commerce. In terms of work experience, it has been varied. I started off working in the mutual fund industry, in the sales and in the marketing area, and then I worked for Bell TV. Upon moving to Ottawa and having my children, I decided to venture into real estate, which I did for almost 20 years. But even during that time, I continued to work in marketing. I taught marketing at La Cité collégiale and I worked as a marketing consultant.

A big part of who I am is also focused on community service. I'm always involved in helping others in different capacities. I've served on many boards, including recently with 211 Ontario Services board, which you may be familiar with. I was also on the board of the Law Commission of Ontario and the Ontario Arts Council. I've recently received a Community Builder Award from my city coun-

collor, largely due to my work during the COVID pandemic, when I managed a team of approximately 50 volunteers. We made over 50,000 fabric masks to distribute for free in the community. I've also been very involved in my children's school as an active volunteer, including as president of the PTA, and I've been president of the board of the Parent Resource Centre in Ottawa.

But I know you also want to know about my experience as an adjudicator. I've been an adjudicator for four and a half years. As a member of the board of the Law Society of Ontario, I have the opportunity to adjudicate on the Law Society of Ontario tribunal, both with the hearing division and the appeal division. I've also been adjudicating for more than a year at the Licence Appeal Tribunal, which you'll hear me mention as the LAT, which is also under the Tribunals Ontario umbrella.

I've sat on hundreds of adjudicative events, written reasons and led case conferences towards resolution. For the past few months, I've also been involved in training new adjudicators at the Licence Appeal Tribunal.

I take this work extremely seriously. I come to each of these hearings prepared and with an open mind. As you know, every situation is different and needs to be evaluated on its own merits. We deal with sensitive issues and it's important that we as adjudicators are impartial and that people feel that they've been heard.

I also take every opportunity to learn. In the past five years alone, I have completed a SOAR certificate in adjudication, which is the Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators. I've also completed a credential in public leadership through Harvard Kennedy School, a micro-credential in Modern Board: Board Governance and I'm currently in the middle of another micro-credential called Awareness of Indigenous Values, Identity and Spirit. All of these efforts add to my abilities as an adjudicator and my understanding of many diverse communities in the province.

Comme fière Franco-Ontarienne, je m'assure que les francophones connaissent leurs droits substantifs et que mes collègues anglophones savent aussi comment gérer ces droits.

I look forward to continuing to serve the public in this new, important role.

Je vous remercie de votre temps. Je suis ouverte à entretenir toutes vos questions. Merci.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): The remaining time here—any questions from the government side? MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Geneviève, for appearing here this morning. I have a fairly quick question, but feel free to give it as long of an answer as you like. How do you perceive the role of this specific tribunal in the justice system?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: The CFSRB has a very important role in the justice system. It deals with issues that deal with foster care, with children's aid and with expulsions, so it very deeply impacts people's lives. It impacts children but also all of their families around them. It's basically a mechanism to appeal. We have to have

systems like this within the justice system. Our role as adjudicators in this tribunal is to work with the parties, try to resolve disputes and make findings. It's got a crucial role in our justice system.

Mr. Mike Harris: Just as quick follow-up, in your professional and personal capacity, have you dealt with children and minors before?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: At the LAT, we do have issues with minors. I've mostly worked on the accident benefits side, so, there are motor vehicle accidents that do involve children, and they're very sensitive issues.

In my work as part of the schools, I've worked hand in hand with principals who have had to make decisions about suspensions, expulsions and things like that, and the parent resources as well. It's in an area of the city that deals with a lot of underprivileged children, so there's also a lot of impacts there.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Gallagher Murphy.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Bonjour, madame Painchaud. Merci beaucoup d'être ici avec nous aujourd'hui. Ma question c'est, comment est-ce que votre maîtrise à la fois de l'anglais et du français contribuera à votre efficacité en tant que membre à temps partiel de la Commission de révision des services à l'enfance et à la famille? La deuxième : veuillez utiliser une expérience précédente pour mettre en évidence cela, ou bien, veuillez utiliser une expérience antérieure pour mettre en avant cela.

M^{me} Geneviève Painchaud: Merci pour la question. Les droits des francophones, ce sont des droits substantifs. Donc ce n'est pas traité nécessairement comme d'autres langues. En Ontario, c'est une grande partie de notre système de justice. Ça fait environ quatre ans et demi que je suis arbitre dans les tribunaux. Je travaille en anglais et en français. Donc, c'est dans les deux langues que je travaille, pas seulement dans une langue. Mais je trouve que c'est important d'assurer que la communauté franco-ontarienne ait accès à ces services-là en français.

Une partie de mon rôle aussi, c'est d'informer mes collègues anglophones qui ne savent pas toujours très bien à quel point ces droits-là sont importants et comment les gérer. J'ai l'avantage de parler les deux langues couramment, donc dans des situations où on arrive devant une audience et un parti peut dire qu'il veut que ça procède en français, je suis capable de juste changer du français à l'anglais ou l'inverse.

0910

Donc, je trouve que c'est important. C'est un droit—les francophones ont droit à l'accès à la justice en Ontario. C'est important qu'ils puissent communiquer dans leur langue, et ça fait partie du rôle que je fais au tribunal des affaires en matière de permis.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Merci beaucoup, madame Painchaud. Je vous remercie beaucoup.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Thank you.

Recognizing MPP McGregor: Go ahead, please.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Good morning, Ms. Painchaud. Thank you for putting your name forward. Public service

is a big undertaking, and it's an important job you've applied for.

I wanted to ask, with this new role as well as the work you're doing on the LAT now, how do you plan to prioritize and manage the large caseload?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I've always worked in a very fast-paced work environment, so I don't have any concerns going into it. I actually thrive on having a lot of balls in the air and a busy workload. I think it's a matter of setting priorities, and I have no issues with that. I've had to juggle that all my life, and I think everybody does.

I've started at the LAT approximately a year ago and realized that there was so much work, I had decided to park my real estate licence. I've done real estate for a long time, but I knew that there was no way that this was going to work in the interests of everyone. In terms of the LAT, the LAT is very busy, but it has also gone through a huge success in terms of addressing the backlog, so I think it's really matter of scheduling.

I do have also another big advantage at this point; I'm an empty nester, so I all of a sudden have all this time that I never knew existed or forgot existed.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Wonderful.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Sandhu, go ahead, please.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you, Ms. Painchaud, for your presentation. I'll keep it very short. What motivates you to serve on this adjudicative tribunal?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I think it's important, in terms of what motivates me, that I go back a little bit, in terms of when I applied to the LAT, the Licence Appeal Tribunal. That was approximately two years ago. I went through the whole application process in terms of I saw the position advertised online. I had been an adjudicator for a while at that point, and I really enjoyed it, so I was looking to do other work in that field.

I applied. I went through the rigorous process of a few interviews. I think the process took a year. But since then, I've been doing quite a bit of work and been challenged all the time to do new work throughout the LAT. I've had a lot of positive feedback in my reviews.

My associate chair reached out to me to see if I would be interested in a cross appointment based on my performance and based on the fact that I could work in French and since I speak fluent French. It's basically because Tribunals Ontario is committed to serving francophones, to have good language services in the province, and cross appointments are not uncommon at all. That's when I was told about this opportunity.

I definitely am interested and am motivated to work at the CFSRB. As you've heard, I've worked with children and matters involving children for a long time. I do believe that is a good balance between my work experience and my life experiences that make me a good candidate for this position.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Holland, go ahead, please.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for joining us today and for putting your name forward for the board as well as for the service you've given to your community over the years as well as the province—much appreciated. It's people like you who really make sure that the province is running well.

In our final couple of minutes that we have left here, I'm just wondering if there's anything that you haven't been asked or hasn't been communicated here that you think would be useful for the committee to know.

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I do have a lot of varied experience, but in the recent past at the LAT, I've taken a lot of courses that make me more suitable for this position. Everything that's been mandatory, I've joined; almost everything that's even not been mandatory, I've followed.

But I do learn a lot from others. I'm someone that asks a lot of questions. I don't want to say I'm the keener of the class, but I do ask—and I prepare in advance all the time, so I know that I'm always prepared when I'm going into any situation.

Mr. Kevin Holland: That's really important. I appreciate you sharing that with us. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Go ahead, MPP Triantafilopoulos—45 seconds.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you very much for being with us today. I don't have long, so I'll be very quick. Could you describe to us what your experience with the Licence Appeal Tribunal was like and how it would assist you in your new role?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: It's been a lot of learning, but that's something that I'm very used to because I do thrive in learning. I do believe that the skill there, in terms of adjudication, in terms of dealing with very delicate situations—at the LAT, we're dealing with, often, people who have had serious car accidents. I have dealt with issues of mental health—

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): That concludes the available time. Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now turn to the opposition. Go ahead, MPP Pasma.

M^{me} Chandra Pasma: Merci beaucoup d'être ici ce matin, madame Painchaud. Je sais que ce n'est pas toujours un processus facile ou confortable, mais c'est une partie importante de notre processus public pour les nominations, pour que le public puisse avoir confiance que les nominations sont faites sur la base du mérite et ne sont pas dues aux connections avec le gouvernement ou pour le service rendu au gouvernement.

Je veux dire aussi que j'ai beaucoup apprécié vos commentaires sur la nécessité d'offrir des services en français en Ontario. C'est très important que les franco-phones puissent recevoir des services dans leur propre langue, et c'est un autre sujet sur lequel le gouvernement ne fait pas toujours assez attention.

But I want to start with a question about your background as it relates to the Child and Family Services Review Board. As you may know, the government has tabled a bill addressing the child protection sector, Bill 188. I attended the committee hearings on this bill on

Tuesday, and there was incredibly powerful testimony from the witnesses who attended about how broken the child welfare system is and how we have failed numerous children in Ontario. There was the ombudsperson's report last week about the death of Mia, who was not protected and who died in care. There were witnesses who spoke very movingly and with raw emotion about their own experiences in the child protection system which have given them ongoing trauma. There are reports about how group homes and foster homes have treated children in care as an income opportunity, literally calling them cash cows and paycheques.

I say this just to lay the context that this is an incredibly important role, and the consequences matter deeply for families, for children, for the future. Yet, when I look at your résumé, I don't see any experience that actually relates to the issues of children in care, to the kinds of issues that will be dealt with by this board.

I hear you about the importance of French-language services, but, given the gravity of the decisions that will be made here, why apply for this job when you have no background in the issues that will be coming before this board?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Thank you for this question. I am saddened to hear about the issues that you've just described. This is a very important tribunal. These issues impact so many people at a very deep level.

I do believe I am qualified for this position without the experience that you've mentioned. I do have a lot of experience as an adjudicator, and I've dealt with very sensitive situations. Of course, I can't get into the details here today. I do have a very human side, and I believe you can see that through all my community work. I'm very involved with people.

0920

My approach to adjudication is also very collaborative. I like to work with the parties. I am not into legalese. I like to write in plain language. I like to speak in plain language. I take the time to make sure people have been heard and that they know they've been heard. I also take the time to make sure that I communicate things very clearly, so that people understand what's going to be happening at the hearing—especially when I'm dealing with self-represented individuals, which does happen. I tend to spend a lot more time with them and not just go through the process of a hearing, so I work with them in trying to find a resolution.

I especially like it when the parties can find a resolution together. So that's another part of my role and the experience I've had, is to see if a resolution can be had between the parties.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I appreciate that your experience is extensive with regard to adjudication and communication, and I can see how at many tribunals those would be the only criteria you need to successfully perform this role. But in this case we're talking about decisions that could remove a child from a home that they're attached to, a home that may or may not be safe for them, a home that may be traumatizing them. It addresses complaints about

children's aid societies, which could have to do with situations where children are being placed in a dangerous home or where there are gaps in the care.

It deals with the admission of children to treatment programs. Another thing we heard at the committee on Tuesday was the severe lack of wraparound services and treatment options for children, particularly with mental health, also with substance abuse and just therapy for the trauma they experience in their childhood. These are incredibly weighty and important life-and-death decisions, and I have to ask again: Where is the experience that you're going to bring that will allow you to make decisions that will protect these children's lives?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Thank you for this, and I appreciate it, because it is a very important role. I agree that it is often life-and-death, and I'm sure this work is not easy and it is a big challenge to undertake.

I don't want to go into too many personal situations. I've dealt with a lot of mental health around me. Like, I've had to deal with people very close to me in situations of crisis, and I understand many of the gaps in the system.

But I've also been on the board of 211 services, and I'm not sure if you know: Dialing 211 is basically what the services do, and 211 is very, very involved in a lot of crisis situations. So as much as I can hear that you feel I'm lacking in certain experience, I've had a very diverse level of experience in a lot of matters that touch on these issues and I'm going to take it very seriously.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay. Thank you, Madame Painchaud.

Speaking of the issues that are involved, there are a lot of systemic issues that result in children being taken into care. This was another thing that the witnesses really stressed at committee on Tuesday: that too often we address situations by taking children away from their kin families, rather than addressing the systemic issues in a preventive manner that might have meant that they weren't taken into the child welfare system at all.

So I wonder if you could tell us: What do you see as those systemic issues and how will you intend to address those systemic issues as you're making adjudicative decisions on this board?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I do agree there have been systemic issues and there are likely still systemic issues in the system. I believe the first point is awareness. I'm currently taking courses on Indigenous issues to learn. These are all courses I've taken upon myself to take and I'm saddened to hear everything that's gone on for this population.

I am also part of the board of the Law Society of Ontario. Systemic issues are at the top of our agenda there in terms of ensuring the access-to-justice issue. Of course there are all sorts of other issues, such as over-incarceration.

I do believe that it's being aware. It's ensuring that people are aware of bias. I have taken a lot of other courses on that to make sure that none of that comes through and to be very, very aware and keeping it top of mind that it is an issue and that we have to be careful how we navigate this to make sure it doesn't continue.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, thank you. One of the systemic barriers that's been identified by people involved in the system is poverty and homelessness. There are people who are losing access to their children for no other reason than that they're poor and they can't afford to pay rent for decent housing.

I notice you said on your application that you are a landlord for 10 rental units. I'm wondering, have you ever applied for an above-guideline rent increase for one of those units or evicted a tenant from one of those units?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Yes, I am a landlord. I've been a landlord for many, many years. I have never applied for an above-the-guideline increase. My units are all below market rent. I have absolutely amazing tenants. We have a great relationship. I think they would give me a reference letter today. It is a good experience.

But about 20 years ago, I had to evict a tenant. It was a very unfortunate incident, with the police involved in the matter. It was sad.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you.

I'm going to turn the rest of my time over to MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: How much time do we have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): You have just under four minutes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much, Madame Painchaud. Is it Madame?

M^{me} Geneviève Painchaud: Oui, vous pouvez m'appeler madame. M^{me} Painchaud, pour moi, c'est ma mère, mais—

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay. Thank so much for putting your name forward and thank you for coming here to this committee meeting.

I'm going to ask some quick, uncomfortable but necessary questions. Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party provincially?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: For how long?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I can't tell you because I don't know. It's been sporadic, I guess.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, and are you currently a member?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I don't know either. I haven't taken out a membership recently. I don't know if there's one that's still dragging.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party federally?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Yes, I have. I guess you're going to ask the same question, so I'm going to say I don't know if I am a member right now.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right.

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I haven't been involved politically in a few years, so unless it's something that's been there for a long time, I'm not sure.

I've also been a member of other parties. I've been a member of the Liberal Party of Canada and I've been a member of the Liberal Party of Quebec.

Mr. Chris Glover: Sorry, what was the first one that you mentioned there, before the Liberal—?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: There's the Conservative Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada and the Liberal Party of Quebec.

Mr. Chris Glover: I see. Okay, thank you.

Have you ever donated to the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you ever donated to the federal Conservative Party?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I believe so, yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you assisted in a Conservative election campaign?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Yes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Do you remember when?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Maybe two federal elections ago.

0930

Mr. Chris Glover: Going back to the donations, when was the last time that you donated to the Progressive Conservative Party?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: In the past year. I just did my taxes.

Mr. Chris Glover: Did anyone ask you to apply for this position?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: I've discussed this. It's a cross appointment—so that's my associate chair. But in terms of my previous one, which was the Licence Appeal Tribunal, nobody asked me to apply for it.

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to pick up on something that my colleague MPP Pasma was asking you about, and these are systemic barriers. At this tribunal, you're going to be dealing with children and children's aid and foster care and expulsions. There are a lot of systemic barriers and discrimination that leads people to be in difficult situations. You were talking about taking courses and things, but when these decisions come up, how will you address these systemic barriers and your lack of experience in dealing with or even knowledge of these systemic barriers that could have led that person to be in that situation?

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: This is not a policy-making role, so there are some issues that I have no control over. I believe there's a lot of this work that's done at your level, and I appreciate that.

I do think that it's important to take time to reflect and not just jump to conclusions and to be investigative, in a sense, and ask the right questions to get more than what you're presented—

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): A very interesting topic, but we have to conclude the time for this session.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Ms. Geneviève Painchaud: Thank you. Merci.

MS. BONNIE OAKES CHARRON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Bonnie Oakes Charron, intended appointee as member, Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): We will be turning to our next presenter. The second intended appointee today

is Bonnie Oakes Charron, nominated as member of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

You may make the 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. You may begin.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Good morning, Mr. Chair, and honourable members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here today. My name is Bonnie Oakes Charron, and I am here to present my credentials for my intended appointment to the Child and Family Services Review Board.

It was approximately a year ago that I appeared before this committee in relation to my current appointment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. My work for Tribunals Ontario is 100% remote, and for that reason, I appreciate the opportunity to appear by video conference.

Today, I join you from Ottawa, where I have lived and worked for over 25 years. I am originally from a small town in southwestern Ontario. Both my parents were immigrants to Canada, each from a different country. As a child with few relatives nearby, I found community in the many parents and families who volunteered in the community and in my schools. Their civic engagement benefited me, and no doubt it motivated me to pursue a career in public service and community engagement.

To prepare for my career, I pursued a degree in the humanities, a liberal arts program with a focus on history, literature and the arts. My academic accomplishments gave me skills in analysis, critical thinking and writing. I added a master's degree in library and information science with the intention of working in a public library in community services.

During my career, I went on to hold positions at the House of Commons, at the Treasury Board Secretariat and at various other federal departments and agencies. Later, as a governance professional, I served as board secretary for several boards of directors and went on to serve as a board and committee member, committee chair and adjudicator myself.

Looking back over my career, the common thread is a focus on good governance in the public sector. Beginning in 2019, my career took a turn more toward adjudication. I served four years as an adjudicator for the committee of adjustment, a municipal tribunal for land use and planning and a year on the investigations committee at the governing council at the Ontario College of Teachers.

Since 2023, I have served as a full-time member on the Licence Appeal Tribunal. This role has provided excellent grounding in administrative law which, in turn, will prove very useful in adjudicating matters before the CFSRB. The skills I've built during my career in the public service, professional administration, information management and evidence-based decision-making have all served me well

while adjudicating matters in the public interest. In 2023, I obtained my paralegal licence as additional preparation.

Today, I am here to discuss a cross-appointment to the Child and Family Services Review Board, which involves conducting reviews and hearings on matters that affect children, youth and families in Ontario. In this role, I will draw on the skills and experience obtained from my professional work, as well as my volunteer activities. I ensure fairness and impartiality in my day-to-day decision-making. I have served on the board of my local community association and school councils, as well as other activities, working groups and advisory committees that impact the lives of families and children in my region.

A few of the personal qualities I would bring to the role are the ability to remain calm when faced with conflict, to keep an open and objective mind, and to see issues from all perspectives.

In conclusion, I believe that my background, both personal and professional, prepares me to take on this role and to meet both the challenges and opportunities it will present. Thank you for your time and consideration today regarding my intended appointment to the Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): I'd like to return the remaining time over to the government side.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Bonnie. Actually, I remember when you were here about a year ago. Nice to see you again.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Thank you.

Mr. Mike Harris: I wanted to ask you, just building a little bit more off some questions that MPP Pasma had asked earlier: Obviously, don't get into specific situations or name names or anything, but tell us a little bit more about some of the sort of family situations or dealing with minors—say, working with the school board and schools—that maybe help sort of put forward more qualifications for this specific role.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Well, I have spent many years in the community locally, working with both the school board and my community association, so at the very local level, serving on parent councils and working with other parents and families to try to get the best education we can for our children.

I also volunteered to move on to the regional level by representing my parent council at the regional council of all parent councils from each school, so broadening horizons, meeting parents and families from all across Ottawa, which is a very large city, a very diverse city. They brought lots of different issues forward that may not be present in my local school, but then I was able to work with various groups to bring forward our concerns as parents to the school board. I served on the executive of that body, and I also went on to be appointed to the parent involvement committee, which is an advisory committee directly to the school board.

Apart from that more formal side of it, I did participate in a lot of community activities in the various schools, as

well as at our community centre. I was on the board of our community association, participated in grassroots working groups at the community centre where we have representatives not only of boards and committees working in the region on various non-profit initiatives, but we had a lot of just individual parents, concerned citizens, individually working toward solutions. This was a wonderful group that met twice a month, and I really was able to expand my network and see much deeper into the community than I could on my own. That was very valuable time spent for me on both the school board volunteering and the committee-based volunteering.

With regard to the community-based volunteering, I also served at the regional level, moving on to be the liaison to the Federation of Citizens' Associations—again, the very diverse city that Ottawa is, many different associations working together to bring community concerns forward to city council. So I feel like I do have a good cross-section, a good broad view of all the different walks of life that exist in our community.

Mr. Mike Harris: That's great. Thank you.

I'll pass it on, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP McGregor, go ahead, please.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Ms. Oakes Charron. Thanks for putting your name forward, and I'm very glad to see you reside in Ottawa—

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Yes.

Mr. Graham McGregor: —which is somewhere that our government has really—previous governments really neglected Ottawa, and we've put a lot of emphasis into supporting Ottawa. Actually, we even announced a new regional office in Ottawa to make sure they get the love that they need from government. Some of the members on the committee you're going to hear from have criticized that move, but we do it because Ottawa is important. It's a part of Ontario, an important part of Ontario, and something that we have to do.

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Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Point of order—yes, sir?

Mr. Chris Glover: The political speech from the member opposite has nothing to do with the matter at hand.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): It's not—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Excuse me. You only speak through the Chair.

It's not a valid point of order, sir. We'll continue.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Yes. I think that member has been here long enough.

I know our talk about our support for Ottawa makes some members uncomfortable, but it's still important to get on the record.

Interjections.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Just for the note, I think that member is actually laughing. He's actually laughing about Ottawa right now.

Anyway, very happy to see that you're fully bilingual as well—that's another priority our government has put. We want to make sure that services are available in French and English. I won't mention we've put investments in French-language university and other French-language programs. Some of the members on the committee voted against those amendments.

Anyway, I do want to talk about your qualifications. With the work on the tribunal that you're applying for, making sure all the parties are aware and informed on the proceedings is obviously a very sensitive issue and a very important responsibility that you'll be having. How do you ensure that all parties involved in a case understand the proceedings?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Well, indeed. Thank you for the question. It's very important that all of our participants understand the proceedings and are fully able to participate. It is about delivering services to Ontarians, and the issues and disputes are very important to their lives, so it is important.

I would say that what I try to do is use plain language, not use legalese or terms that wouldn't be familiar. Of course, we have a lot of proceedings that involve interpretation, so making sure that the correct interpreter is available is very important. Sometimes I've had to pause during a proceeding to change interpreters and make sure that we have someone with the correct dialect.

Another thing that I focus on is courtesy, so greeting all participants directly, even though I'm working with their legal representatives, making sure that an applicant feels that they've been seen, they've been heard.

When it comes to written decisions: again, using very plain language, making sure that it's very easily understood by the participants. In particular, we usually have a results section, so I take a special focus on that to make sure that it's stated very plainly what the outcome is so that any participant can easily understand what the outcome of the case was.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Excellent. I appreciate that. I think you're going to do great on this tribunal, and I think you're going to be a great representative for the people of Ottawa. Thanks.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Thank you.

Mr. Graham McGregor: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Recognizing MPP Sandhu: Go ahead, please.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you, Ms. Oakes Charron, for your presentation. My question is, what role do continuing education and professional development play in your career?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Thank you for the question. I am definitely a lifelong learner and truly enjoy continually adding to my education. As I mentioned, I started my career by studying for a master's degree, but

I've continued on from there and pursued certificate programs in governance and protocol, continuing education with regard to my French-language skills as well, to keep those up. More recently, I studied for my paralegal licence and successfully passed that exam last year. All of these things contribute to broadening my horizons, learning new things, and it is an important aspect of my career.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Recognizing at this time MPP Triantafilopoulos.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Madam Oakes Charron. My question relates to the role of technology and how you're able to use that technology in being able to enhance your tribunal operations and experience.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: All right. Thank you for the question. As I mentioned at the outset, I have a remote office. I do the work 100% remote for Tribunals Ontario. I haven't experienced any negative issues at all. I conduct teleconferences; I have done dozens of them with no issues, and video conferences as well. Participants have never voiced to me that they had any difficulties with the technology. I think that people do appreciate being able to join from their home or from whatever other location may be comfortable for them, including legal representatives. I think after COVID, most people—or most whom I've encountered, in any case—are completely comfortable with the delivery of technology-based service.

If anyone did need some kind of special accommodation, that's definitely available. They just have to voice that. Tribunals Ontario offers plenty of options. They can make a request for accommodation. There are still the occasional in-person hearings if there is a requirement for that. If the participants voiced to me that they had some type of difficulty with the technology or a need that had to be addressed, of course I have lots of options for doing that and I would make sure that was done.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): MPP Gallagher Murphy, go ahead, please.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Chair.

Bonjour, madame Oakes Charron. Merci beaucoup d'être ici avec nous ce matin. Alors, ma question pour vous, c'est : comment est-ce que votre expérience au tribunal des appels en matière de permis vous aidera dans votre rôle au sein de la Commission de révision des services à l'enfance et à la famille? Et y a-t-il quelque chose que vous avez appris au tribunal des appels en matière de permis que vous aimeriez apporter à cette commission? Merci.

M^{me} Bonnie Oakes Charron: Bonjour et merci pour la question.

Définitivement, j'ai appris beaucoup comme adjudicateur au tribunal des appels en matière de permis cette année. Je vais commencer avec mes expériences : j'ai participé dans plusieurs téléconférences pour les conférences des cas préparatoires, même une en français cette année.

À part de ça, j'ai eu plusieurs cours et la formation qu'ils nous ont donnés quand je venais de commencer avec

le tribunal. On a eu des semaines de formation, et pendant cette formation, on a eu aussi des cours livrés par une société qui s'appelle SOAR, « the Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators » en anglais. Je ne sais pas qu'est-ce que c'est en français, mais ça fait partie de notre formation aussi, donc ça c'était vraiment une prime d'avoir ces cours-là.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): That concludes the allotted time to the government side.

Opposition, go ahead, please. MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you for being here again, Ms. Oakes Charron. As you know from your previous experience before this committee, it's not always the most comfortable experience, but it is an incredibly important part of the public appointments process, so that the public can have confidence that appointments are being made on the basis of merit and not on people's connections or service to the government, and it's unfortunately not a role that the government allows us to play as often as we should be able to. But thank you very much for being here this morning.

The work of this board is incredibly important. It deals with incredibly sensitive subject matter, so it's disappointing that the member opposite chose to use his time for a campaign speech rather than dealing with the incredibly important work of this board.

You may have seen that the government has tabled legislation addressing the child protective sector, Bill 188. I had the opportunity to participate in committee hearings on Bill 188 on Tuesday, and we heard incredibly powerful and moving testimony from people who are involved in the child welfare system about how broken the system is and how much work there is to do to fix it. The ombuds-person just released a report last week about a child who was failed by the system and who unfortunately died, identifying the many gaps where the system failed.

0950

We heard testimony from witnesses who had lived experience in the system, speaking about the trauma they had as a result of their time in the system, the way the system had failed them, the lack of wraparound supports and mental health care, but also children being placed in unsafe and dangerous positions, particularly in foster homes and group homes that are for-profit that saw these children solely as an income source, literally calling them paycheques and cash cows.

As you can understand, the work of this board is far more grave and sensitive than the work of the Licence Appeal Tribunal. We are literally talking about decisions that could mean the life or the death of a child or the lifelong trauma of a child in Ontario.

You do have very diverse experience. It's incredible to see some of the positions, from a master's of library and information science, to the urban panel for land use and being an assistant at the Bank of Canada, and you mentioned your time on the parent council. But none of these experiences have to do with the incredibly serious

decisions being made by the board. They don't have anything to do with the placement of children; whether or not children are being placed in a safe group home or foster home; whether or not a child should in fact be apprehended from their parents.

So I'm wondering, given this lack of experience that's relevant to the work of this board, why do you believe that you should receive an appointment of such a serious nature?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Thank you for the question. I completely agree with you that there is nothing more important than the safety of our children and the security of our families in Ontario. That was always front of mind when I was volunteering in the community, in the schools and in my community association.

I don't agree, however, that I don't have the correct skill set for this role. I feel that my career, as you mentioned, has been very diverse, but it's primarily focused around good governance and decision-making skill. I do believe that this is a merit-based appointment based on skill.

One of the things I didn't speak about yet is my time serving on the governing council at the Ontario College of Teachers, with its regulatory mandate to regulate the teaching profession. One of the reasons for that is the protection of children. On that investigations committee, I saw my share of very difficult files. There are a lot of stakeholders involved in those files, thousands of pages sometimes, with the involvement of children's aid societies, the police, all kinds of different aspects. So I would say that I do have experience seeing the very difficult side of life that some children are facing, and knowing and understanding the importance of the decisions that we are making.

In my decision-making career, I think that the decisions I have made are very important and impact people's lives, and not just their life, but their family's lives in many cases, and even their communities. So I would point to my skills in decision-making, all of the training and education that I've had, and diverse experiences making decisions in different domains, but that all affect the quality of life for people in community.

Some of the specifics I might cite are an ability to observe, to listen carefully, to see people for the individuals that they are, to take in the full context, but to be very aware that as a decision-maker, I work within the four corners of my decision-making framework: the legislation, the regulations, the rules, policies and directions that exist. Policy-making is for someone doing a different role.

I'm very aware of that when I come into any new position. I learn quickly my decision-making framework. As you mentioned, over the course of my career, having done many different things and worked in different domains, although always in the thread of good governance, I'm very adept at doing that and I don't have a concern about being able to do that.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you. I appreciate that your experience has given you a lot of insight and expertise in good governance. But with all due respect, making deci-

sions on a parents' council about fundraising for a playground or even at the Ontario teachers' college making decisions about discipline of a teacher is quite different from making decisions on where a child will be placed that could have lifelong repercussions for the child.

We're talking about decisions where a child could be removed from a home that they've been in for two or more years. We're talking about investigation of complaints related to the children's aid society; we've seen in some of the reports that some of these children have been completely failed by the system. They haven't been appropriately monitored and supported. It has to do with the emergency admission of children to secure treatment programs, and one of the things we heard at committee was the real absence of wraparound services to support these children, particularly with regard to mental health, but also for substance abuse and even just counselling to deal with the trauma of being taken away from their families and placed in care.

Even if you're a fast learner, there are decisions you're going to be making in the period where you're learning that will affect the lives of children forever. Don't you think you should already have experience with these issues before making a single decision?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Well, I appreciate what you are saying about the seriousness of the decisions, and I fully agree. I would again point to how some of those decisions made on the investigations committee at the Ontario College of Teachers did involve the protection of children, ultimately, through the outcome of our work. So I would say that I have been sensitized to that.

And I would point to the incredible support, formation, training courses and ongoing training available at Tribunals Ontario. They, when considering people for these nominations, review all of our qualifications, our aptitudes, our demeanour, our past success, and they make these decisions based on having confidence that we will be able to fulfill the role. I have every confidence that I will be able to do that.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you.

One of the things that was also identified by the witnesses in committee on Tuesday was the number of systemic issues that result in children being taken into the child welfare system, and that so much of our system is just focused on what happens afterwards instead of the prevention side and making sure that children are able to stay with their kin families in the first place.

From your experience, what would you say are some of the systemic issues that could affect the decision as to whether or not a child is taken into care or what the appropriate form of care would be for a child?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Well, I think that there are definitely systemic issues in any of the systems that govern us. What I can say is that in my intended role as a decision-maker I wouldn't wade into the specifics, because I'll be working within the decision-making framework that I have available to me, and I will be informed and made

aware of the full context of the decision-making framework through the training, formation and education available through Tribunals Ontario.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: One of the systemic issues that was identified by witnesses at committee is poverty and the ability of families to provide care based on their income level. There are people losing access to their children in Ontario for no other reason than that they're poor. One of the things that we've seen with other tribunals, particularly the Landlord and Tenant Board, is that when people are low-income, they are less likely to have access to Internet and they are less likely to know what their rights are, and that the Digital First strategy has failed people with low income in terms of being able to have equitable and fair access to tribunals in Ontario.

So when you say that the only way that somebody can have an in-person hearing is if they ask, I'm concerned that some of the people who will be participating in these hearings will not have good, reliable access to Internet, but will not know what their rights are to demand an in-person hearing, and that, therefore, they will not receive a fair hearing and the opportunity to fully lay their case before the tribunal. Would you share that concern?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: Well, as I mentioned earlier, in my experience over the past year, I haven't experienced any such difficulties, so I can't look to any specific case or experience that I've seen. I've seen only success with the technology-first approach.

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As for the rest of your question, it sounds like something not for the adjudicator to address because it's external to the actual adjudication role. What I can say is that all of the information is available on the website.

In the case of the Licence Appeal Tribunal, most participants—not all, but certainly all that I've encountered are represented by legal representatives. I am not a member of the Landlord and Tenant Board so I can't comment on that.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I'm going to turn over the rest of my time to MPP Glover.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Go ahead, MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Ms. Oakes Charron, for putting your name forward. I'm going to ask some quick, uncomfortable but necessary questions.

Have you ever been a member of the Conservative Party, either provincially or federally?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: No.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you ever donated to the Conservative Party, either federally or provincially?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: No.

Mr. Chris Glover: Did anyone ask you to apply for this position?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: I had an informal meeting with my associate chair, who had asked if I was interested in putting my name forward because I had been assessed as someone who had the qualification.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you.

One of the concerns that I have with your responses—you were talking about your framework for making deci-

sions: the legal, the regulation, the rules, and then there was a fourth corner—is it didn't include the knowledge of the children's welfare system and of the neighbourhoods where children are coming from. We know that Black, Indigenous and low-income children are grossly overrepresented in this system. How will you make decisions without that systemic knowledge of either the system that they could be put into or that they are in or the neighbourhoods that they're coming from?

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: I'm not sure, but I may need clarification about the question, because when I spoke about the decision-making framework and that all of the elements are considered, part of that is context and understanding the full background of each case. So I may need additional details as to your inquiry.

Mr. Chris Glover: So, for the last 15 years, I've done a lot of research and work and advocacy to bring an end to gun violence in the city of Toronto, and it's taken me into neighbourhoods. I've attended funerals of young men killed in gun violence. I've tried to assist with children who have been shot in playgrounds and at birthday parties. And I've come to understand through conversations and through research—I've got some inkling of the challenges of growing up in a low-income and violent community.

Even then, I would be very hesitant to make decisions about the future of children in the system with even that inkling of knowledge that I have. I worry about making decisions without a true understanding of the systemic challenges that those children, that are coming before this tribunal, would be facing.

Ms. Bonnie Oakes Charron: As I mentioned earlier, I do have—

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): That concludes the time available. I'd like to thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Geneviève Painchaud, nominated as member of the Child and Family Services Review Board. MPP Harris, go ahead.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Geneviève Painchaud, nominated as member of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Gallagher Murphy, Harris, Holland, McGregor, Sandhu, Triantafilopoulos.

Nays

Glover, Pasma.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): The motion is carried. We will now consider the intended appointment of Bonnie Oakes Charron, nominated as member of the Child and Family Services Review Board. MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Bonnie Oakes Charron, nominated as a member of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): Any discussion?

Mr. Chris Glover: Recorded vote.

Ayes

Gallagher Murphy, Harris, Holland, McGregor, Sandhu, Triantafilopoulos.

Nays

Glover, Pasma.

The Chair (Mr. David Smith): That is carried. That concludes the committee. Thank you all for coming.

The committed adjourned at 1008.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente

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M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy (Newmarket–Aurora PC)

Mr. Chris Glover (Spadina–Fort York ND)

Mr. Mike Harris (Kitchener–Conestoga PC)

Mr. Kevin Holland (Thunder Bay–Atikokan PC)

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Mr. Graham McGregor (Brampton North / Brampton-Nord PC)

Mr. Billy Pang (Markham–Unionville PC)

Ms. Chandra Pasma (Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean ND)

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu (Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest PC)

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