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des débats
(Hansard)**

A-8

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 20 November 2025

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Jeudi 20 novembre 2025

Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Présidente : Mary-Margaret McMahon
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 20 November 2025

Jeudi 20 novembre 2025

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Good morning. Welcome to the best standing committee at Queen's Park.

I have some exciting news, and that is that the clock is working, so thanks to Vanessa.

Applause.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Woohoo! We'll see if it keeps working, because there are spirits here, as we know.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now come to order. As always, all the comments and witnesses should go through the Chair.

The first item of business will be the adoption of the subcommittee report. We have the subcommittee report dated Thursday, November 6, 2025. Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, November 6, 2025, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 31, 2025.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much. Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That carries.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

NOMINATIONS PRÉVUES

MS. ADAL SIMEONE

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Adal Simeone, intended appointee as member, Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now we are ready to review the intended appointees. Kind of some sad news but they're not here in person—boohoo—but we are happy to welcome them anyway online.

Our first intended appointee today is—I didn't even get full pronunciation because I didn't meet her, but Adal Simeone. Is that how I say it?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Adal Simeone.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Okay, not even close. Adal Simeone. Thanks.

She's nominated as a member of the Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

Adal, you will be making an initial statement. Then, following this, there will be a round of questions, 10 minutes for each party. The time you use to speak—you have all the time in the world—will be deducted from the government party.

Whenever you're ready, the floor is yours. Welcome. Thank you.

Ms. Adal Simeone: Thank you and good morning, Madam Chair, Vice-Chair and honourable members of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. As you know, my name is Adal Simeone. It is an honour to appear before you today regarding my intended public appointment as a member of the Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario. I sincerely appreciate the invitation to participate in this integral part of the process and for supporting my virtual appearance. I'm honoured to be considered for this public appointment and trust that my credentials will demonstrate the meaningful contribution I can offer to the council, strengthening your confidence in my abilities to assume this role.

The Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario—it's a mouthful—functions as the governing board of the college. Its authority comes from the Regulated Health Professions Act, the health professions procedural code and the Dentistry Act. Together, these define a clear mandate to regulate the dental profession in Ontario in the public interest, ensuring that all Ontarians receive safe, ethical and competent dental care. The obligation to serve and protect the public guides everything the college does, from registration to standards of practice, quality assurance, complaints, investigations and discipline.

As a public member, my responsibility is not to bring clinical expertise. Rather, my role is paramount in representing the public's perspective by providing an independent, citizen-focused lens grounded in fairness, transparency, accountability and ethical governance.

I believe that regulators are most effective when they balance professional knowledge with thoughtful, independent public oversight. I see my role as asking the questions the public would ask: "Is this a fair process? Is it transparent? Does it serve the public interest? Are the decisions consistent, unbiased and aligned with legislation?"

I see the council as a governance body staying at the strategic and oversight level, assessing risks, evaluating whether policies and standards align with legislated obligations and public expectations, as well as ensuring the registrar and the committee function with integrity, consistency and due process. It also means asking questions like, “Is this decision understandable for the public? Does it promote safety and trust? Does it align with our legislative objectives?”

My professional background has prepared me for this type of governance role. I have a unique combined skill set, having started in business operations and then transitioning to a lifelong career of human resource leadership.

I’ve been a successful human resource professional for over 20 years, with experience in both public and private sectors, across industries and on a global scale. I earned my professional designation in 2004 and have been an active member in excellent standing with the HRP, which is the governing body for human resource professionals.

Currently, I volunteer as a board of director for Bethell Hospice and chair of the human resource committee, extending my commitment to governance and community health. Over the course of my career, I have strategically advised C-suite leaders, government executives and boards, and I’m very comfortable working in environments where decisions must be principled, evidence-based and publicly defensible.

I have a deep understanding of how culture, ethics and leadership behaviours influence outcomes, as well as how vital transparency and trust are to the regulated sectors. Looking ahead, I see important public interest issues such as changes in dental technology, access-to-care challenges, infection prevention expectations, workforce pressures and rising expectations around regulatory transparency. These are areas that require thoughtful, principled oversight, and I look forward to contributing to that work.

If appointed, I would bring an unbiased lens, with a focus on fairness, transparency and accountability. I would approach the role with importance, humility and respect for the legislative framework. I would uphold confidentiality, work collaboratively with other council members and keep the public’s interest at the centre of every decision.

Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to a regulatory system that Ontarians can trust, one that ensures safe, ethical and high-quality dental care.

Madam Chair, Vice-Chair and honourable members, it has been an honour to be with you today, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Adal.

There are four minutes and 54 seconds left for the government side. MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you very much, Ms. Simeone, for attending virtually. We appreciate your contributions.

You talked about your work. You’ve got board of director work with a hospice. You also talked about being citizen-focused, accountability, and you have 20 years of

experience, I believe, in human resources. Can you talk about how that experience will contribute to the college council business?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Yes, of course. Thank you for your question.

All of my skills in human resources are transferable across businesses, across the public sector and the private sector. Specifically, the board experience that I have currently with Bethell—and I’m in my second year—has allowed me to really hone in on the skill set of the board member, staying at that level of strategic evaluation, staying at the level of oversight and not getting involved in the operational levels. I really look forward to extending that governance role even further to the college.

As far as my background and my experience—as a human resource professional, we lead a very lonely life. We sit and always think about this focus on the employee, this focus on the community, the reputational risk that’s involved with the people it affects as well as the corporation. Very many times in my profession—it’s not an enviable position, where I’m talking to leaders that want to make transitions or transformations happen, and it affects the people. It affects the communities, whether it’s the work that has been transformational in offshoring, nearshoring, right-sizing, downsizing. It affects communities as a whole and it affects the people within the corporation as a whole.

So, my work is really thinking about—we’re not just looking at feasibility and the cost and the benefits and the profitability and the market share that organizations, corporations are constantly competing with. But my role at that table, and extending over to this council, is really about thinking about the people at the end of it. How does this impact them? How is this process fair? Are we working through a process where everyone has been treated the same? Are we looking at any prejudices there? Are we looking at the ability to perhaps think of a different way to extend a safe culture—psychologically safe as well as physically safe?

0910

All of these factors come into my work regardless of where I’ve been working. I look at the culture, and I look at the ability to bring in the differences within people’s backgrounds, the diversity and the inclusivity. Every process, every policy, every transformation, every movement is really about looking at how it affects this person and the community and the people within the community. Is it the right decision? Are we making the right decision? Is there a different way of doing this? Ultimately, what does this mean for the overall corporation from a reputational perspective? So it’s really balancing that out.

I have to ask the hard questions, and I do ask the hard questions, sometimes questions that are not favoured, sometimes questions that are uncomfortable, but I do have to ask those questions, and I do have to remain firm in my resolve that the people are the ones that are impacted the most, and that’s where the work should be done.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): One minute.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Anyone else in the next 50 seconds? MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you so much, Ms. Simeone, for being here. Can you share an example of the situation during your role being an executive leader in HR operations and transformation that would really translate valuable experience toward the effective governance of a college council?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Yes, of course. Sitting at that level, I'm constantly looking at not just the operational piece, but I really elevate to the point where I'm overseeing how the work is done; I'm overseeing what is affecting the overall decisions that are being made. I look at the decisions that are being made, and I sit back and really adjudicate for myself and look at, is this fair process? Is there the ability to be able to extend this outward and have a full view on—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much. All right. That ends the government questions.

We will go on to the official opposition. You have 10 minutes. Welcome.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Ms. Simeone. Thank you very much for joining us. This is a unique selection, and I would say it's a very important role. Just listening to you, I feel that you recognize that, as well. I've looked extensively at your bio and some of your past experience. You do bring a lot of experience, especially in HR, as well as some experience on boards, and I can tell that you feel that sense of that need to contribute and give to the community and make sure that people have access to services, so I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to ask some questions.

First, I will begin with some awkward questions that we usually have. As opposition members, we have to make sure that we keep the government to account, and sometimes it means that good, qualified candidates also have to be asked the exact same questions as everybody else. It's also to make sure that the public who get to watch these sessions know exactly who the individuals are and how they're appointed.

First, I'll start with the awkward one, and then go into some of the other detailed questions about your qualifications. Are you a member of the Ontario Conservative Party?

Ms. Adal Simeone: I am not.

Ms. Doly Begum: Have you made any donations to any political party?

Ms. Adal Simeone: I have, probably 30 years ago.

Ms. Doly Begum: All right. Those are the only awkward questions that I had.

You spoke about your 20 years of experience. I wanted to ask, because this is different in terms of the Council of Royal College of Dental Surgeons, what motivated you to apply for this position in the council?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Thank you for your question. What motivated me was simply the fact that I have been doing my profession for a very long time, working at the level

that I have, and I felt the need, after the pandemic, to take a little bit of a step back and to really focus on different types of contributions, which led me to then going into board work on a volunteer basis with Bethell. I enjoyed it so much that I felt rooted in the ability to really contribute in a different way that I decided I'd like to continue to extend part of that community service in a different way, and I started just searching and I [*inaudible*] portal. I started reviewing some of the positions that were available and decided that this was an excellent opportunity where I could really balance out what I love to do from a professional perspective and what I will continue to keep doing and apply but also continue to contribute in a different way.

Health care is a portfolio that I looked at and said, "This is where I think I want to make a significant contribution, but I want to do it from a level where I feel I can really make a bigger impact." I know my role within council is to have the oversight and we're not here to make decisions, but we do have the ability to really apply that lens where everyone is treated fairly. This is really at the core of what I do in my work and what I love to do in my work, and so I think that is really my contribution and why I came to this role.

Ms. Doly Begum: Absolutely, and you're right; the council has an important role. It regulates the profession in the public's interest. You briefly spoke about that in your introduction as well. It really is to make sure that individuals have access to services provided by competent health professionals and are treated with sensitivity, with respect. It also develops and maintains standards of practice, entry-to-practice requirements and standards of professional ethics and promotes and develops standards of continuous practice as well and competence within the profession.

One of the things we have difficulties in is having enough health care professionals. I guess, first, I would ask, can you explain your qualification for this role, because of exactly what it does, and what do you see is the need right now in terms of the college, seeing what's going on in our health care?

Ms. Adal Simeone: So, the qualifications for this particular role: In my background, it's easy for me to transition into this because of the fact that I look at everything from a very broad perspective and then I assimilate everything in and apply it specifically to whatever challenge we're facing.

More specifically with the college, they do have challenges like—the health care portfolio has had challenges in recruitment of skilled doctors that are going to really serve the best interest of the people. I think the college is still going to continue to have that challenge in bringing people in, and then it's also applying the education that they need. Is the college even teaching the updated materials? Do they have enough experience once they leave their studies to be able to practise with the public? That is going to continue to be a challenge, and I feel that that's an area where, if the committees are working on something like that, we need to look for innovative ways

to be able to bring them up to standards and the standards of the council.

I think it's important that people realize that, at the core of it, there are many immigrants that have come to the country who require assistance in navigating, who require assistance in finding people in dentistry, in the health care industry that will be able to provide equitable resources to them to assist and have that same opportunity. And I think that, using that lens, I can definitely contribute in asking those types of questions when there are decisions made from the college on making changes or how they want to proceed with something. I'll be that person that probably will look at that and ask some of those hard questions and make them stop and think whether we've done everything that we can do to provide that accessibility.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that. Can you say a little bit more about your experience in terms of health services and maybe in relation to the profession of dentistry? I know that you have a bit of experience for the hospice that you've been a part of. So if you could just elaborate a little bit in terms of your experience with health generally and, if possible, then dentistry.

0920

Ms. Adal Simeone: In health care—that is one of the industries that I've just started to explore a little bit more. And so this is why I bring that objectivity to the role. With health care, I think, really, what I'm focused on is assisting with making the right decisions and staying with legislation in terms of, "Are we applying legislation appropriately?"

In terms of looking at the challenges that we are facing, it's really about studying more what it is that the government wants to put forward, what it is that we need to put forward—not just what's there, but what we need to bring in—and being able to be that voice that can support and possibly create opportunities.

In terms of health care, my work with the Bethell Hospice has really opened my eyes to the challenges, but it's also given me an opportunity to think about ways that I can become a voice and become a support, also, for the current sitting government, but also think about other opportunities that may help mitigate some of the challenges that we're forced into or that we're experiencing.

With dental, I really don't have a lot of experience, but I do have to share that my father-in-law was a dentist. He's now passed; it's been 18 years. I enjoyed the camaraderie when I was around his dental practice and the people that—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): One minute warning.

Ms. Adal Simeone: What I think is important is that people still continue to have that human touch with their people. I think that's one of the most important factors that we have to bring to the table.

Ms. Doly Begum: That's perfect. I just have one more question, and that's it: Given your experience, or understanding your qualifications, how would you develop and maintain the standards of this profession's ethics in dentistry?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Well, definitely, I'd have to look at what they are encountering. Some of the areas that I explored when I looked at their site were the disciplinary matters that are sitting before them.

Ethically, my role in this would be to really work with the members of council and the college to ask those hard questions about whether or not we have the proper practices, the proper policies in place, and whether we find the—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much.

The last round goes to the third party. MPP Smyth, my colleague, take it away.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for that introduction, Madam Chair, and thank you, Ms. Simeone, for being here today. It's nice to meet you—I guess e-meet you, or virtually meet you—and hear about your interest in the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario. I deeply respect your background in HR and the work that you've done. Now we turn the focus to what you want to do, and I totally understand seeking out new opportunities and challenges.

What we know about the Royal College of Dental Surgeons is that they oversee some really complex issues, like sedation safety, infection control and professional misconduct. How do you see yourself making informed judgments without clinical experience?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Well, my role—I definitely cannot make the clinical assessments. For that, I have to rely on the colleagues that sit on council to really bring all that information forward. But to really sit back and assimilate and use that public-focused lens—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry, Adal. Could you speak a little louder? Sorry. Thank you.

Ms. Adal Simeone: —to really be able to assimilate the information that my colleagues who have clinical practice bring forward and understand what that means in terms of safety and infection control. Are they licensed? Ask the questions around: When was the licensing? Have they followed proper legislative procedures? Have they been on disciplinary? And really look at the circumstances that led to that, but also the background that the college brings forward in terms of licensing their individuals. What other types of incidents may or may not have happened, but more so, what is in the background? They have properly trained people. What brought them there?

So bringing my unbiased approach to it, bringing the approach that it's about the person and the suffering or the ability that we have to prevent these types of situations from happening is really where I sit and say, "Could this have been preventable? And if it was preventable, why did it happen?" and really focus on the college, making sure that they have the rigour in place to ensure safety for the public.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You mentioned in your opening remarks that you believed in principled, evidence-based—an understandable direction when you're on this board, should you be appointed. You also mentioned that you're not there to bring your expertise but to bring the

public's perspective. What do you see as the public's perspective? When it comes to dentistry, how would you want to represent the public? What are the areas? You can talk about affordability, accessibility, quality of care.

Ms. Adal Simeone: Definitely the affordability, definitely the accessibility. There are programs that are currently in place to assist for affordability, but is that enough? Is that fair, and is it being applied fairly to the public?

It is the ability to access within different areas. Do we have a well-rounded group of practitioners that are accessible to people, or do we need to look at bringing that in? As well, just looking at the ability to have individuals feel prepared and safe when they're there. If infection does take place, is there someone there to really ask the questions around how we avoid this from happening? Are we properly licensed? So, really, those areas there are the areas that I would focus on.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You talked about doing research when it comes to looking at boards. You were online, thinking you wanted to serve in a different way, develop your career focus or expand. When you were looking at the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, what did you see as red flags that are happening there? What did you find in your research? And what would you see as something that you'd want to, as early as you could, impact, implement? Any red flags of concern?

Ms. Adal Simeone: What stood out for me is that the challenge of the graduating students that probably don't have enough practice before opening a practice or before being able to serve the public could increase concerns within the public.

I also understand that perhaps the college hasn't kept up so much with the learning and development. If the education system is still teaching from an old-school book rather than the new technology and the new development of learning for dentists, that could potentially be a concern. I did notice that.

So, looking for challenging ways to be able to really bring that to the forefront and move it into a generation where people can have the best ability to serve the public, the best ability to represent their communities and have safe care.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You also talked a lot about transparency in your opening remarks. When it comes to that, what measures do you think are needed to increase transparency within the dental profession and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons?

Ms. Adal Simeone: Definitely, when you have a site that a dentist is on disciplinary or they're on review, you can see that. I think what's more important is being able to speak to some of the highlights of how it's being adjudicated or how it was adjudicated and being transparent about the college taking steps to make betterment within their practice, within their college, within their practitioners.

I think we talk a lot about or we see a lot about the disciplinary and what it is, but we don't see enough of the outcome or what the college is prepared to do from a bigger perspective rather than an individual perspective.

Communicating that and trying to be more transparent really gives the communities and the citizens of Ontario a safe measure to say, "There's something being done. I'm not afraid to move forward within this process."

Also, it gives them the ability to say, "The government is looking out for us. There are steps I can take. My voice can be heard, and it will be applied equally across the board in a non-prejudiced type of way." So I think that can become more visible if put that onto the website. People do their research—this is the younger generation, and they all love to do their research. If it's not them, someone's doing it for them. If it's accessible and available, then everyone can see that transparency.

0930

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You talked about ethics. You talked about accountability and trust. Do you believe that regulatory bodies should remain independent from the government of the day? And if so, how would you demonstrate that independence?

Ms. Adal Simeone: That's a great question. I do believe they should remain independent, because legislation is there to be applied and we do have to follow the legislation which is the current of the day. But I do think that being independent and applying that in a way that I'm not marred, I'm not being swayed one way or another, to the specific situations that we are dealing with within the college is much more important. I have to remove that noise and really focus on applying that legislation effectively to the circumstances that we're dealing with in terms of the college and representing the council effectively that way.

I think that's really more important, that independence that I bring. Also, within the membership of the council, you'll hear—the practitioners, the clinical practitioners, will have a lot more knowledge and try to be able to convince. I still think that I have to bring in a collaborative approach, but a very independent focus to how I represent the public.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. Thank you so much for answering my questions.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Adal. That was fantastic, and we will see you in person another day. That is it for you today. We're going to go on to our next candidate.

Ms. Adal Simeone: Wonderful. Thank you, all.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Before I mention the next applicant, I would like to welcome the U of T Munk One students here. They're very smart cookies; they only, I think, take 25 in their year. So we better mind our Ps and Qs and look out for our seats in the future. Thank you for coming.

MS. SUSAN SCHUTTA

Review of intended appointment, selected by the official opposition and third party: Susan Schutta, intended appointee as member, Social Benefits Tribunal.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We'll now move to the second intended appointee. It's Susan

Schutta, who is nominated as a member of the Social Benefits Tribunal. Susan will also be, as you can see, appearing virtually.

Susan, welcome very much to the friendliest standing committee at Queen's Park. You would know that even more in person, but next time, we'll see you. First, we will start with your presentation. We're happy and eager to hear from you. And then there will be one round of questions from each party. We will start with the government members, and their 10 minutes will be—your time speaking will be deducted from them, which is fine. They're okay with that. Then the official opposition and the third party will have 10 minutes each.

All right. You have the floor. Thank you so much.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Thank you for accommodating me virtually. I appreciate it, and I think you'll appreciate it even more, as I'm just on the recovery from the flu, so I think that I would not have wanted to be there in person anyway.

Thank you very much for inviting me to discuss my qualifications to be a part-time member of the Social Benefits Tribunal of Ontario. My name is Susan Schutta, and my pronouns are she and her. I'll deliver my remarks in both French and English today, as I intend to work as a bilingual adjudicator, should I be appointed.

J'ai travaillé pendant plus que 30 ans en tant que professionnelle des affaires corporatives, et plus récemment en tant que directrice des affaires corporatives pour un régulateur national des marchés des capitaux. En plus de ma vie professionnelle, j'ai élevé deux enfants et soutenu un parent âgé. Je me suis maintenant retirée du travail à temps plein et j'ai le temps de redonner à cette province qui a été si bonne pour moi et ma famille.

Je crois que mes compétences et mon expérience sont en accord avec la vision des Tribunaux décisionnels Ontario : d'assurer pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes l'accès équitable à la justice en temps opportun.

Throughout my career, I have worked in fast-paced environments where I was required to gain a clear understanding of complex issues in a timely manner and to make decisions based on that understanding.

For example, for much of my career, I would mediate complex concerns raised by the public. Public interaction and dispute resolution were key facets of my role. I would need to gather information to cut to the core of an issue so that I could reach a conclusion that would focus on the relevant facts. I would speak with customers to understand their concerns and would document these decisions or discussions clearly and succinctly. I would explain the process we would follow to review their concerns in a manner that was practical, accessible and understandable to all concerned, and would commit to developing a fair resolution in a short period of time.

Skills I would draw upon in such situations included agile thinking; objective interview skills with concerned parties; the ability to summarize complex issues concisely, both verbally and in writing; and, ultimately, decision-making. These are skills I am confident will serve me well,

should I be appointed as a part-time adjudicator for the Social Benefits Tribunal.

As a corporate affairs executive, I was also responsible for government relations. This involved understanding the regulations and interpreting legislation governing the sectors in which I worked, and, in some cases, how to effect change when needed. For example, in my work with the Canadian Public Accountability Board, Canada's national regulator of auditors of publicly traded companies, I was part of a team that worked to secure changes to rules relating to CPAB's regulatory disclosures. This process included public consultations and, ultimately, securing amendments to the Ontario CPAB Act through the Ontario Legislature.

I am a very strong writer and verbal communicator in both French and English. I have extensive experience organizing information and preparing written materials, ranging from detailed written briefing notes, speeches, technical materials and others. I am a fast writer, quick to organize my thoughts, and I write in a manner that is accessible to a wide range of audiences. I have served as a corporate spokesperson for numerous organizations. As such, I have extensive training in clear communication. I also trained others on how to communicate clearly.

My volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity and the local food bank have allowed me to develop a sensitivity and understanding of some of the issues and challenges facing various members of our community, including new immigrants, seniors, those who are underhoused, those who live in poverty and those who face mental illness.

My commitment to serving the public and the public interest is part of who I am, and it's why I am seeking this position.

Je crois que le Tribunal de l'aide sociale reçoit chaque année plus que 8 000 demandes. Je crois qu'il est important que ces dossiers soient traités promptement. Je souhaite contribuer à ce processus.

Je serai honorée d'avoir l'opportunité de travailler comme membre à temps partiel du Tribunal de l'aide sociale. J'assumerai ce rôle avec l'énergie et l'intégrité afin d'offrir aux Ontariens et Ontariennes des services justes, impartiaux et respectueux.

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss my qualifications. I look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Susan. That was terrific. Thank you.

We will now go over to the government side. You have four minutes and 43 seconds. Oh, gosh: MPP—that's in my notes—MPP Triantafilopoulos.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Chair. That's a great effort.

Good morning, Ms. Schutta. We really appreciate your putting your name and your candidacy forward to serve on such an important committee and tribunal.

You've had a very wide range of professional experiences in your career, both in the private sector and in the not-for-profit organizations. You've also mentioned your proficiency in French, which obviously is a big asset for your role on the tribunal. Could you please share how they

have prepared you to be able to do the work with the Social Benefits Tribunal?

0940

Ms. Susan Schutta: Thank you very much for your question. I think I'd like to provide an example of how we would interact with the public in my professional roles. What would often happen is, a member of the public would come to the organization that I worked with, and it's happened in a variety of different organizations, and they would have a concern. This concern would be escalated to me as it had not been resolved at different points of contact.

When it arrived to me, these were people who were not represented by legal counsel; these were members of the public. If someone came forward with a lawyer, they would be directed to our legal counsel. The point I'm making here is that I'm used to dealing with people who are self-represented. Their concerns would be complex, often, and not easy to resolve, otherwise they would not have been escalated to me.

In that role, I therefore needed to be well-trained in dealing with dispute resolution, with interview skills. A number of people whose concerns were escalated to me were challenged from a mental health perspective. I would work with them to understand what their issue was and explain to them the process that we would follow to resolve the issue. We would then follow that process.

This process would invariably involve a fair bit of discussion with the individual, interview skills. It would involve me ensuring that I understood, so feeding back the information to the individual. It would involve writing clearly and succinctly a decision that was made, based on the facts that I had found.

Through the training that I received regarding dispute resolution etc., it's always evident that it's important to be impartial, it's important to be fair, objective in this process. All of these skills, I think, are relevant and transferable to my role, if I were to be appointed to the Social Benefits Tribunal.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, MPP Triantafilopoulos.

MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank you for the time you're taking to appear and give us some idea, so that we can help your appointment to help the public.

Some of the appearances for parties appearing in front of the committee don't always have the legal representation or the legal knowledge. So they will face some challenges in preparing for those appearances. How will you work with them to ensure they have a fair hearing, even if they can't understand the procedural minutes?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): In 56 seconds.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Okay. I thank you very much for that question. I think it's a very important one.

I think, as I mentioned in my previous answer, I am used to working with people who are self-represented, who have difficulties, sometimes, articulating what their

concerns are. So it behooves me to understand those concerns. You have to make an effort to make sure that you understand them, that you are clear.

I know the tribunal has robust training; I know I will be able to rely on that to help me deal with individuals. But I also think I bring a fair bit of experience dealing with people who may potentially have difficulty articulating their issues but still need to experience fair treatment by the tribunal.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Great—three seconds left. Thank you very much.

Over to the official opposition: 10 minutes with MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I can relate to your flu. I got a little throat problem going right now, and I know the Conservative Party is very, very happy about that. Anyway, good morning, and welcome here.

I'm going to ask you questions that I ask everybody. I've been very clear with this committee that I want to make sure it's people that are qualified who get the jobs. So I'm just going to ask you: Have you ever donated to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: So it would be accurate, what I have, that in 2024, you donated to the PC riding association of Etobicoke-Lakeshore?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes, that's where I live. I'm in that riding.

MPP Wayne Gates: What's that?

Ms. Susan Schutta: I live in that riding. That's where I contributed, yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: Okay. My other question would be: Have you ever donated to the federal Conservative Party of Canada?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: And would you have an idea of how much money you would have donated?

Ms. Susan Schutta: I don't know for sure. Are you talking about in my lifetime or in the last year?

MPP Wayne Gates: Since, probably, 2009. That's the latest I have—as far as I go back.

Ms. Susan Schutta: No. I don't know what that number would be.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'll help you: It's about \$5,000.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Laura Smith: Point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Point of order: MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. If we could focus on the qualifications of the applicant at this time so we can better understand who she is in her professional capacity, that would be appreciated.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, MPP Smith. I think we've been down this road before. These are questions that have been asked since the beginning of time, basically. People can form their opinions and vote accordingly. Thank you.

MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes. I certainly think they're fair. I think they're reasonable. I think they're necessary, quite frankly. We see what's happening with the Skills Development Fund. We want to make sure that people are coming here for the right reason, not because you are buddies. I've already explained this, and I'll explain it every time I come: I'm going to ask these questions because I think they are fair, and I think the public deserves to know.

According to your résumé, you previously worked as vice-president of corporate affairs for Revera Living from March 17 until January 22. Is that accurate?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: And it says that you—

Ms. Susan Schutta: If you said January 2022.

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes. That's what I meant to say. If I didn't say that, I apologize. My eyes are bad, as well as my throat, obviously.

It says, in your résumé, you led issue and crisis reputation management through COVID-19. Is that also accurate?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: And according to an op-ed published in the Toronto Star—and because it's the Toronto Star, we know it's the truth—on October 21, we have learned that for-profit long-term-care homes had the worst records of disease and death, followed by non-profit homes—and the best record: publicly owned municipal homes.

I believe that you would probably agree with that, or you would know that as well. Is that accurate?

Ms. Susan Schutta: I'm struggling to understand the relevance to this process.

MPP Wayne Gates: You'll find out as I go through this. It's a pretty long question.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Okay.

MPP Wayne Gates: The best records are publicly owned municipal homes. Revera, as a for-profit chain, had one of the worst records in Canada with so far as 800 deaths in its long-term-care and retirement homes.

So, as you being the person that dealt with crisis reputation management and issues, how do you explain that? Why did that happen? Maybe you could explain what happened in that place, seeing you're a part of that organization.

Ms. Susan Schutta: You know, what I expected to speak to today were my qualifications for the Social Benefits Tribunal. I mean, I can speak briefly to events in the pandemic which were, frankly, emotionally draining and extremely trying. My mother lived in a retirement residence when—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry, Susan.

Point of order: MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Once again, Madam Chair, I'm going to point out that the questions should be relevant to this applicant's qualifications.

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, I believe it is. I'll tell you why: During her—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): If I could say—

MPP Wayne Gates: Oh. I'm sorry, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Smith, you're correct. The question should be relevant to this candidate's potential appointment to the Social Benefits Tribunal. So, if we can just be mindful of that.

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate that. But the candidate also talked about her role with seniors and how seniors were living in poverty, and there are a lot of seniors that were dying in this particular place. So I thought it was very relevant because it's on her résumé. I mean, I have some questions about her résumé. But anyway, I guess the point is that a lot of people died while you were working there, and it's awful.

You also said, during your opening comments—before I get to other questions—on seniors: You worked at the local food bank, and you saw a lot of seniors there; seniors who were living in poverty. Long-term care homes, there's mostly seniors. They've expanded that a bit to take in brain injury in some of the younger people that are in these.

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I can tell you that my next couple of questions are going to be on just how much people are being paid for OW. OW is \$733 a month for basic needs and shelter. A lot of them are seniors that end up going to food banks. A single person on ODSP, which is an individual who's proven to live with a disability that stops them from being able to work—that could be a workplace injury; we see that a lot with WSIB—they get a maximum of \$1,408 a month.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Okay, once again, sorry—

MPP Wayne Gates: Do you feel that is an appropriate amount?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry, just once again. MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: Once again, if we could get to the questioning of the applicant and her relevance to the job position.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you, MPP Smith.

MPP Gates, if you can rephrase the question to really assure us of the relevance, that would be terrific. Thank you.

MPP Wayne Gates: I think it's very relevant, actually.

A single person on ODSP—you talked about this when you talked about seniors, poverty. You worked at food banks, so you obviously believe that people should have food, whether you're a senior, a young person. We have students here. I'm sure some of those students are going to food banks today. That's what's going on in Ontario.

A single person on ODSP, which is an individual proven to live with a disability—that's what ODSP is about—that stops them from being able to work, which is unfortunate, can get a maximum of \$1,408 a month. Do you feel that is an appropriate amount? I think it's a very fair, reasonable question. You're going to be making decisions for those individuals.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes. My understanding is that my role as an adjudicator on the Social Benefits Tribunal will be to interpret the legislation and to make decisions based on the information and facts that are presented to the tribunal. I think that I'm prepared, based on my professional experience, to effect that role.

Do I have compassion for people living below the poverty line? I absolutely, 100% do.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): One minute warning.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you very much.

In 2022, 16.8% of people with disabilities aged 15 and older lived in poverty, representing 1.5 million people in our country—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Smith. Sorry.

Ms. Laura Smith: Point of order, Madam Chair: Once again, if we could—

MPP Wayne Gates: These are relevant—

Ms. Laura Smith: —keep the questioning to—

MPP Wayne Gates: Let me ask the questions; it is important. These are seniors. These are young people living in poverty.

Ms. Laura Smith: Questions should be relevant to the applicant.

MPP Wayne Gates: Do you not care about people living in poverty?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Okay. Thank you, MPP Smith—

MPP Wayne Gates: Are you kidding me?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will—

MPP Wayne Gates: You should be ashamed of yourself.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Let's listen to MPP Gates. This pertains to Ontario disability support, so let's just hear the question and then—

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm just going to say, hopefully, when you get there, you will advocate to make sure that people living on OW and ODSP can get an amount of money that they can live on. Nobody in this province, the richest province in this country, should live in poverty.

I think you agree with that, or you wouldn't be going to food banks. You wouldn't be saying that it's terrible what seniors are going through. It's unfortunate that the other party might not have the same compassion that I may have and you may have.

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate it.

Ms. Susan Schutta: Thank you for your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, MPP Gates.

Now we will go on to your final 10 minutes of questions, Susan, and that is from the third party. MPP Smyth.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Hello, Ms. Schutta. Thank you for being here today.

You can't not be aware of what we're facing today with the affordability crisis. The Social Benefits Tribunal is primarily hearing appeals from individuals with disabilities, those with low incomes. I think that the decisions

coming from this tribunal will have a really profound impact on the financial well-being of people, the survival of some of Ontario's most vulnerable residents.

MPP Gates is getting at the point that in these times, we know there is a record number of people visiting food banks. You're seeing that yourself. I've seen it in my riding of Toronto–St. Paul's. It's astonishing and it's so upsetting.

I spoke with Neil Hetherington about this, who runs the Daily Bread Food Bank. I asked him, if we can find a solution, wouldn't that be wonderful? But his solution: double ODSP. That would solve a lot of problems for people living on the margins. You're going to be facing these people in your decisions routinely. How are you going to reconcile that truth with what you see and what your mandate is?

Ms. Susan Schutta: I absolutely agree that we find ourselves in a situation where there's an affordability crisis. I think every party and almost every Canadian can appreciate the changes that we've seen in our country over the last number of years.

I want to take a moment to thank the members who sit around the table, because I know, regardless of what party you are part of—through my experience as a volunteer, I have seen people from every walk of life but also politicians of every stripe—there's a common desire to do the right thing. We might disagree; there's a broad view of what the right thing is. So, I want to thank all of you for investing your time and your lives in this pursuit.

Should I be appointed as a Social Benefits Tribunal part-time adjudicator, I do appreciate that the stories that are put forward will be difficult to hear in some situations. As part of the merit-based interview process that I undertook to find myself here today, I had to write a decision. It's part of the process of determining whether or not you could be an effective adjudicator. As I reviewed the materials that were put before me, I appreciated the challenges that adjudicators face. As an adjudicator, you do have to interpret the legislation and the act, and you have to operate within the parameters that exist. I'm not going to say that that will be easy, but that is the role of the adjudicator, and I believe that I'm equipped to do that.

The other thing I will say is, there's an old saying: "What I want to hear is a yes, the next-best answer is no, but the worst answer is maybe." My point around that is fast, not having people sit and wait for decisions—and I think that tribunals, in recent times, have really done their best to expedite decisions and move the decisions forward more quickly. For people to have to wait to have an answer from the tribunal is not something that we should be encouraging, and I think that's exactly where we are today. From my understanding, there's a big push to get decisions made more quickly so people can get on with their lives.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right. Yes, timely decisions are appreciated, I'm sure. These are people's lives that you're talking about, and you were talking about working within the parameters of the legislation. Is there anything troubling in the legislation that you might have to adjudicate around, that you think needs to be changed?

Ms. Susan Schutta: When I looked at the role of this tribunal, one of the things that struck me was—there were a couple of things. And I'm going to be honest: They're mostly process-related. It was making sure things are done in a timely manner, and then the second one was dealing with people who are self-represented. I think you really have to take the time to understand the concerns that are being raised, and sometimes they might not be raised in a manner that is completely as organized as one might hope, so knowing how to ask the right questions etc. and getting to the answer.

Those are things, when I looked at this opportunity, I thought, "This is where I would like to effect change." I would like to be able to try to offer these people who are on—no one wants to be on social assistance; people find themselves on it. So, for me to be able to make that experience as painless as possible would be one of my goals.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Are there any learnings that you had from Revera—and I would call it a disaster of COVID—that you are going to bring with you in this role at the Social Benefits Tribunal?

Ms. Susan Schutta: What I've learned in my career is it's easier from the outside than from the inside to operate in a crisis. I'm not going to speak specifically to Revera, but what I will say is I've had the opportunity to work through several significant crises.

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I was the head of communications at Nortel when it was going through its bankruptcy proceedings—and of course, the crisis at Revera, which was dealing with a virus that nobody understood, getting a lot of different advice from a lot of different people, many of them health authorities in different provinces. So, it was a very confusing time. I would say that the miracle of the vaccines transformed our lives. I think that's what I would say.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. Are you concerned at all that the process by which you've been appointed might be viewed as—I'm trying to put this in a way that's not going to get a point of order—influenced by the current government's goals and the stated goals for social assistance reform or any of that? We see a prioritization with cost-cutting over fair access to benefits etc.

How do you see yourself navigating around that and navigating around any influence from the party that has gotten you to this position?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Well, first of all, I do think that it was a merit-based process. I submitted an application. I waited and didn't know if I'd be interviewed. I got an interview. I had to go through an interview process. I had to submit a writing sample. I then also had to go through what I think was a fairly detailed conflict-of-interest process.

Honestly, I can say I don't know members of the Progressive Conservative Party. I donate to my local riding association. The person I donated money to didn't get elected; she's not even there. So I'm not sure who's going to influence me, but—

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Am I right—your husband was a former MP?

Ms. Susan Schutta: Yes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: A Conservative MP.

Ms. Susan Schutta: He was a member of the Conservative Party, the member of Parliament for Etobicoke–Lake-shore from 2011 to 2015—so, 10 years ago.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Sorry to interrupt. Just carry on.

Ms. Susan Schutta: No, that's fine.

I think I'm clear on what the role is. But I also know that there's quite extensive training that is provided to members of the tribunals. So, I expect that that training will serve me well as I take on the responsibilities to be a fair and objective adjudicator.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. Thank you so much, Susan.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Oh, okay. Thanks. I was just going to do the one minute warning, but you're done early.

Thank you very much, Susan, for coming in, answering all our questions and sharing your story with us. If you'd like to leave, you can leave. You're done.

Ms. Susan Schutta: I'm done? Well, thank you very much for inviting me to the meeting today.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Adal Simeone, nominated as member of the Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Adal Simeone, nominated as member of the Council of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Any discussion? Sorry—MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Recorded vote.

Are the members ready to vote?

Ayes

Begum, Denault, Dowie, Firin, Gates, Sabawy, Laura Smith, Smyth, Triantafilopoulos.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): All those opposed—obviously not. That carries.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Susan Schutta, nominated as member of the Social Benefits Tribunal.

MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Susan Schutta, nominated as member of the Social Benefits Tribunal.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Any discussion? MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Your voice is getting better, I feel.

Are the members ready to vote?

Ayes

Denault, Dowie, Firin, Sabawy, Laura Smith, Triantafilopoulos.

Nays

Gates, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That carries.

We have one more thing to deal with, sorry. You don't get away this quickly. The last item of business is the extension of a certificate.

The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the October 24, 2025, certificate is set to expire on November 23, 2025. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days?

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): I hear yes and no. Thank you.

MPP Wayne Gates: Doesn't it go by who says it first?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): I know—or the person with the sorest throat.

All right. Unfortunately, that is not extended.

Thank you, everyone, for attending today's meeting. Thank you to staff for all they do.

This committee stands adjourned until next week, same time, same station, November 27. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1006.

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