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

A-13

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

A-13

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
44<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Thursday 2 April 2026

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

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

Jeudi 2 avril 2026

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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 AGENCIES

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 2 April 2026

Jeudi 2 avril 2026

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Good morning. It's a beautiful day out there—December day. Welcome to, as I call it, the friendliest, feistiest, funnest standing committee at Queen's Park.

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will now come to order.

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

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We have a bit of a lighter agenda than last week, I'll say. We have the adoption of a subcommittee report, which is the first item of business.

We have a subcommittee report dated Thursday, March 26, 2026. Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, March 26, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated March 20, 2026.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Any discussion on that? Are the members ready to vote? All in favour? Opposed? That carries.

### INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

#### MR. BARRY RAISON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and third party: Barry Raison, intended appointee as vice-chair, Ontario Parole Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We have two intended appointees today, as per usual. Our first intended appointee will be online and the second one will be in person.

Today, at the beginning, we have Barry Raison. Barry is nominated as vice-chair of the Ontario Parole Board. He will be appearing virtually, as I mentioned, and Barry—wherever you are, because I don't see you yet—should I continue?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I'm here.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** There you are. Hello. Good morning.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Good morning.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Nice to see you.

You may make an initial statement to share your story, and each side has 10 minutes to ask you questions. Whatever time you take will be deducted from the government side—they're fine with that, so don't feel you have to rush—and then there will be 10 minutes from the official opposition and 10 minutes from the third party.

The floor is yours. Welcome, Barry.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour to appear before members of the standing committee to present my background and my qualifications for my prospective appointment as part-time vice-chair of the Ontario Parole Board. I apologize for appearing by video, but I have previously scheduled parole board hearings—also by video—immediately following this appearance and that made it impractical for me to appear before you in person today.

I was appointed to the Ontario Parole Board in 2020, and I believe I brought with me a blend of personal and professional experience to equip me very well for this important work.

I am a lifelong resident of Leeds and Grenville counties. I grew up in difficult circumstances, relative poverty, and I lost both of my parents when I was 15 years old, so I learned some lessons about making choices, and those lessons that I learned back then are still with me. I believe I approach my job on the parole board with the empathy and humility that I learned back then. I understand the factors that lead people to make bad decisions and I understand that could happen to any one of us.

Most of my career was spent as a journalist, and that's where I learned critical thinking and developed an ability to assess, to analyze and to organize material in a way that is an asset when preparing for and conducting hearings and, most particularly, when writing and editing parole board decisions.

After leaving journalism in 2009, I spent 10 years in public policy, primarily focusing on justice and public safety. I understand the legislative framework and the context to ensure decisions are relevant and well-grounded in the law. A hearing can be highly emotional but, ultimately, every decision comes down to applying the legal criteria as outlined in section 102 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act in assessing risk based on legislative criteria. I understand that role very well.

During more than five and a half years on the board, I have conducted—I'm not sure how many, but it's in the

hundreds, and I may have topped 1,000 by now, I don't know, but it's a lot.

Additionally, I have increasingly been given more responsibility, including serving on the team that handles disclosure requests and on the administration team, which deals with a variety of tasks, including reviewing requests by unsuccessful parole applicants for a review of the decision denying them parole—in a sense, it's like an appellate court.

I have been tasked with mentoring members and in the past few years I've been part of the small group that onboards new appointees. I have presented sessions on decision-writing, handling of sensitive information and decision-making in the parole board context, as well as facilitating case studies with newly appointed members.

I've also been assigned the role of helping to improve decision-writing and I regularly audit decisions to reduce errors and improve writing of other board members. In one way, I get a little picky sometimes; I'm sort of the resident grammar nerd.

I was selected to represent the parole board as part of the decision-writing excellence program, recently launched by Tribunals Ontario.

I'd like to say a few words about my workplace—not everything I just said fits into that. The Ontario Parole Board has a critically important role in protecting public safety in Ontario. We deal regularly with highly complex files and sensitive material, we conduct very difficult hearings and we deliver clearly presented, well-argued decisions—and we do it on time. We don't have a backlog. We have a five-day standard when we have to have a written decision delivered after the hearing, within five business days, and my understanding is we meet that standard 99% of the time.

In my view, it is really a team without parallel. It's a very supportive work environment. We treat the applicants before us with dignity and with respect and we are always mindful of our public safety mandate.

I am before you today to tell you that I am honoured to be considered for a leadership position with this group. The last five and a half years have been among the most rewarding of my professional career, and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to make an opening statement and to appear before the committee. I welcome your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much for your presentation, Barry.

We will go to the government side and, just so you know, you have four minutes and 53 seconds. MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I want to start initially by thanking Mr. Raison for your dedication. I also want to thank you for really sharing a little bit of your story. You obviously have an extensive background. Could you provide a little more depth on your experiences and how that has prepared you for what you're possibly going to be appointed to?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** So, in other words, qualifications that equip me for this work? Is that what you're seeking?

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Well, it's wide. What I'm interested in is a wide range of professional experiences.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Right, right. Well, I do believe that my lived experience has a role to play in preparing me for this job because I do understand the choices that people make that get them into trouble. I grew up in an area that was not very prosperous, not a lot of opportunities, not much of a social infrastructure. You had your family and neighbours, but there weren't a lot of resources, and a lot of people made the wrong choices; some of us made the right ones. I could have been one of those on the other side, but I wasn't.

Second, my professional background I think meshes almost exactly with what we do at the parole board. I was a journalist for a long time—more than 20 years; more than 25 years, in fact. So that involves gathering information, interviewing people—so the interview skills I learned certainly help me conduct a parole board hearing. You learn what's important. When you interview somebody, you have to determine what is relevant and you have to assess credibility. I think that is really important when you're conducting a parole hearing, because the questions are not always answered with candour, perhaps, I might say. I think a lot of people do, but we have to know when they're not, and I think I'm pretty good at detecting when I'm being strung along. Also, just the writing is huge, because I learned how to structure material and how to present it in a logical, organized, easy-to-understand manner. I think those skills are so helpful, especially because we are dealing with unrepresented applicants most of the time. You want them to understand it.

**0910**

The other piece in terms of my professional background is, I was a policy adviser dealing with the exact legislation, sometimes, that we deal with every day. I was in the room when the Corrections and Conditional Release Act amendments were studied, debated and adopted. Among those was the addition of a section that made clear that the protection of society is a paramount consideration of all applicants for parole.

And so, I have the context. I think I came to the position well-qualified.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you so much for that.

I'm going to pass the time over.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Bailey.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Welcome, Mr. Raison. It's good to see you here today. I think you've helped explain, at least for me, a lot about the parole board. It's in the news a lot, and I don't think a lot of people, myself included, understand the role. Because I don't have long now, anyway, could you further expand—

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** One minute. Wow. You can do a lot in a minute.

I'll maybe get you to just further expand. I know you're here because of your past experience—and, obviously, your ability, or you wouldn't have been proposed. But for someone new that is trying to join, to put their name in to

be on the parole board, what skills and abilities should they have?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** They need to be able to work quickly. They need to wade through somewhat difficult material. They need to be able to write well.

They need to have some nerve. The hearing room is virtual now, but it can be intimidating, depending on the offender in front of you, so they need to have a bit of a thick skin.

They need to be able to be dispassionate. You can be empathetic, but you need to understand the four corners of the legislation. They're emotional stories you hear, and you have to be really neutral in terms of just applying the facts. So it's a logical mind, critical thinking, to assess credibility.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Okay, thank you.  
I think my time is up.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Yes, it is.

Over to the official opposition: MPP Gilmour.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you, Mr. Raison. It's wonderful to have you before us. Thank you for appearing virtually and carrying on the work you are doing later today.

Some of the standard questions that we typically ask, I'm going to start with for us today. One is, are you a member of any political party?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I am not.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Have you ever donated to a political party?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I have made political donations, but they're primarily not to the party. They've been primarily to a riding association and to a candidate. I don't know if I've actually donated to the party. Quite frankly, I don't like the phone calls.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Fair enough, fair enough. Even I get those.

Have you ever donated to the federal party?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Again, I don't believe I've ever given a donation to the Conservative Party of Canada, but I have donated to my local EDA and my local candidate.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Great. So the local candidates in Thousand Islands, Ottawa West-Nepean, Leeds-Grenville—those sorts of places?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Ottawa West-Nepean was, I believe, a nomination, not a general election. That was a nomination. The other ones have been to my riding association and to their own election campaigns of my MPP and MP.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I appreciate the clarity.

Have you ever made any political donations subsequent to receiving a political appointment?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I have, and we're entitled to do that under the rules for specially restricted public servants. I don't believe I have made any in the last two years. I think 2024 was probably the last time I donated, but I have.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** That's right. Ontario agencies and appointments require government appointees to act professionally. You've shown a tremendous amount of that as you spoke today—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry. A point of order from MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** If we could just keep the questioning in line with the qualifications of the candidate—I think we were going in that direction.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** We certainly are, MPP Smith. We have talked about this many, many times. This has been part of the standard practice. When you interrupt, it does eat up a little more time, so perhaps we can dispense with that piece.

Back to you, Mr. Raison: We were just talking about the professionalism, the ethical standards and, really, the need to avoid both the very real but also the appearance of a conflict of interest. I think perhaps we could agree this is more important in a quasi-judicial tribunal situation like the parole board. I'm wondering if you think that donating after you've been receiving appointments in any way undermines confidence in your impartial adjudication?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I don't think that it does. I don't know how it would. The subject matter is—we're dealing with people who are in jail applying for parole, and so it's not like we're dealing with applicants for a liquor licence or something like that or who might have a stake in something else. I don't see a conflict.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Sure. Thank you.

I know that in the past you've worked with Senator Bob Runciman for a number of years. He was known to champion law and order during his time in the Senate, and I'm thinking now to the ways in which we know that our own decisions can be influenced by subjective factors: where we've lived, what we've been through—you spoke about your own childhood. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about, in what ways your own subjectivity, your own biases have been shaped by the places that you've been working in the past?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I'm pretty independent-minded, and I never minded telling a boss, even when they're in a power position, my own opinion on things.

I believe in the principles governing conditional release. My former boss and I probably wouldn't agree on this, to tell you the truth, but I believe if a person qualifies for parole, if they meet the statutory criteria and if we believe they're a good candidate, it feels good to let somebody out on parole, to tell you the truth.

I would say that what that past experience did was equip me with an understanding of the legislative context. I learned a lot, because we frequently would have Parole Board of Canada chairmen before our committee, for example, so we learned a lot about the whole process. That was federal; this is provincial. I know it's a bit different, but we're governed by the same law, the same criteria for parole.

So I don't think it's influenced me on a yes or a no on an application, but I think it was a tremendous asset working in that environment for the time that I did in learning how the system works, how it's supposed to work. I also spent some time learning where more things were needed, and I'm not going to get into that because that strays over into a policy area that we don't involve

ourselves with. But I really don't believe it influenced me in terms of up or down. I believe in the principles of parole. I believe in conditional release.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I wanted to go a little bit further again, thinking about the personal lived experiences. You spoke about right choices, wrong choices as a child and opportunities that were there and not there. Do you think that all those who appear before you have simply been there because of wrong choices of their own making?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** There are a lot of factors. I'm not a sociologist, and I don't play one when I'm on the parole board. But mental health is huge. Addiction is huge. I would say that those two factors—either in combination or one or the other—are a part of a vast majority of the cases that come before us.

People can slide into addiction because they were over-prescribed. It's not all on choices. And sometimes people just make a mistake at a given time. If it's a serious enough mistake, they're going to be in jail.

And then there are some people who, I would say, are more immersed in a criminal mindset and they're doing it for profit, which often results in the victimization of other people. But mental health and addiction are huge, and I don't know that they're choices. You don't make a choice to have a mental illness.

0920

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you for that. I do appreciate that very, very much.

I wanted to maybe move into that a little bit in that we're seeing at the moment in the province of Ontario 85,000 people in homelessness. That's 25% up from 2021. There's a prediction that with the government not building deeply affordable housing and housing starts being soft every year, we're going to go to 300,000 people homeless by 2035.

I'm just thinking about parole. We know that homelessness can be tied and linked to recidivism. I'm wondering what you think the plan should be for supporting individuals who find themselves homeless upon receiving parole.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** We really confine ourselves to the facts before us. We don't get involved in hypotheticals, and I'm reluctant to do that. But there are foundations of a good parole plan that lead to successful parole. The first box to check—and I don't believe in checking boxes necessarily, but the first box that needs to be checked is a stable home with responsible supervision. We don't get involved in social advocacy, but a home is the foundation of a successful parole—a stable home and programming.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** That's a one-minute warning.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I'm also just curious, on this last piece. Studies show disparities in parole outcomes based on racial identities: Indigenous and Black Canadians less likely to be released in their first year of eligibility—some of this is federal and provincial. Of course, we know they're overrepresented at every level.

I'm imagining you're not in the category of an Indigenous or Black or racialized individual. How do you work to prevent that discrimination in this context, given your own identity?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** It's an excellent question. We assess the risk based on the facts before us, but we do have certain things that we take into consideration. When it comes to Indigenous applicants, we do have a requirement. Parole boards have a requirement to consider Gladue factors—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry, time is up. I'm sorry to cut you off mid-sentence. Thank you so much.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Okay, but I hope somebody else asks that question. I'd like to address it.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Smith—Smyth.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Chair, I'll take Smith and Smyth—interchangeable.

Please, sir, carry on with your answer to my colleague.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Okay. It is an excellent question. I don't have a good answer, but I'll give you the answer that I have. As a member of the parole board, we are there to assess risk based on the facts before us. But as a private citizen and a compassionate human being, I understand the question and the basis of it. When it comes to Indigenous applicants, we do have a requirement to consider Gladue factors. We need to look at systemic disadvantages and discrimination that may have led to their involvement in the criminal justice system, and we need to see if there's a reasonable alternative to incarceration, just like a court. Federal court has ruled that the Supreme Court decision in Gladue regarding sentencing also applies in the parole context, so we have to apply those Gladue factors for Indigenous applicants. We have quite a few Indigenous applicants too.

We don't have a similar obligation when it comes to other racialized individuals that appear before us. But I will say that I don't keep statistics personally to see if I'm releasing fewer applicants from certain groups. I think that would be a mistake for me to do that, because ultimately, my job—and my colleague's; we work in panels of two—is considering the case that is in front of us. Before granting parole, we need to determine if the applicant will not pose an undue risk, and we need to determine that they have a plan that will assist them to reintegrate as a law-abiding citizen. The board's paramount consideration is public safety in all cases.

There's certain tension between the different—what your colleague was asking about between ameliorating certain conditions, but we grant parole based on our criteria. We stay within the four corners of the legislation; we don't go beyond that—well, except with the Gladue factors. That's part of our mandate, too, with Indigenous applicants.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Okay. Thank you for answering that question.

I just want to go back a little bit to what my colleagues were talking about earlier about donation records, which

have a purpose here. Provincially, a total of \$4,156 was donated to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and since being appointed in October 2020, you donated \$1,800 to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

After a nice career in journalism, you've spent much of your career working for Conservative politicians. So how do you demonstrate independence in your role now, which does require that impartial decision-making on parole? And especially, if I might point out the journalism background—I'm sure you've heard all the stories lately in the news about parole, about being tough on crime, certainly a mantra we're hearing from this government. How do you reconcile independence in your role with those kinds of pressures?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I don't have any pressure that way.

I'd like to correct you: I have not given that money to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario; I've given it to Leeds-Grenville.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Right, with the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario for Leeds-Grenville, yes, in relation to the general election.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Yes. I've never given to the provincial party per se. It was to my local EDA.

I've never had any pressure. We're independent adjudicators. We don't even get pressure from our associate chair. They're very conscious of our independence.

You're sitting two to a panel. You have to agree on a conclusion. I don't know the political background of people I'm sitting with, and I don't think it really comes into play, to tell you the truth. I think their professional background has more of a bearing, whether they were a retired crown attorney, a judge or a police officer or whether they were a journalist like me.

I never, ever considered that background noise—and I know it's present, right? I wouldn't want to hear about an applicant that I granted parole committing more offences and that being in the news, but that's more out of my concern for public safety than any kind of political situation. Ultimately, we're guided by our concern to protect the people of Ontario, not to protect the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I just wanted to ask you about a decision—granted, this is the Parole Board of Canada—where Darren Scott Ray, a man convicted of raping and murdering a 14-year-old boy in 1987, was granted a 72-hour pass earlier this month to visit a community-based residential facility in Oshawa. There was so much concern in the community about this kind of parole decision. Again, I understand it's the Parole Board of Canada. When you hear a decision like that and you see public outcry about it, how does that influence the work you do, and what does it make you feel when you hear about those kinds of decisions?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I don't know the facts of that decision. I don't know what guardrails were put in place. I don't know if it's right or if it's wrong. We go by the criteria put in front of us. Somebody can be the best candidate in the world, and they can mess up when they get out, right? But we don't have a lot of breaches. We

really don't have that many breaches in Ontario, because we're careful to make sure, number one, that the person has the right plan, that we believe that plan has enough protective factors that will keep them on the rails.

I don't really get caught up in that noise. You can't be afraid in this job. You can't be afraid to grant parole, and you can't be afraid to deny it based on the guy sitting in front of you. You really have to use your best judgment. I don't get caught up in that noise at all, and I never have. I've never felt any pressure from above either or from the public. I don't let most people know I'm on the parole board, to tell you the truth.

**0930**

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So how would you approach making a difficult decision like that, then, that has real impacts—real impacts—on individuals and public safety?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Again, you read everything in front of you. You look at what their past behaviour is because the nature of the gravity of an offence is a factor because the risk of reoffending is so high. You look at whether they've complied with conditions in the past before, and if they haven't, that's a huge red flag. You look at the protective factors that they put in place. Some people will never be a good candidate for parole because you can't conclude the risk is manageable. Ultimately, public safety is our paramount consideration.

I don't know the facts in that case, so I can't really—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I understand. You make some very difficult decisions and, in this case, it was highly controversial—

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I know, I know. I'm not going to suggest, "Oh, that Parole Board of Canada member screwed up," because I don't know if they did and if—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I'm not asking you to do that either—

**Mr. Barry Raison:** They might have done everything right, and the person still reoffended.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What does success look like to you, then, in your role?

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Because my role goes beyond just sitting in hearings, I believe in my role as a mentor and as a writing coach, so to speak, success looks like—I've had some people who, I've seen their writing really improve as a result of some of the things we pointed out. That makes the whole board more professional, if we improve other members' work.

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

**Mr. Barry Raison:** As an individual adjudicator, when I'm sitting in hearings, I feel very satisfied when I write, "Here's what I want a person to come away with. I want them to come away from a hearing believing they've been treated with dignity and respect, they've been treated fairly—procedurally and otherwise—and that when they get the parole decision, they understand it and it has an impact. They know what it means; it's not a bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo." If I can meet those objectives after a day full of parole hearings, I feel pretty good about it.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you very much, Mr. Raison.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Barry, for coming in today. Thank you for your willingness to serve. It's appreciated.

I think you can stay on the line. We're going to interview a second candidate for a different role, and then we will debate the appointments. It's up to you.

**Mr. Barry Raison:** I have a hearing to attend to, but I just want to thank all members of the committee. I appreciate the work you do and I support it. Thank you, and good luck.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you. Have a good day. Thanks, Barry.

#### MS. KRISTINA KLEIN

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and third party: Kristina Klein, intended appointee as member, Landlord and Tenant Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Now we are welcoming Kristina Klein to the Amethyst Room, which is a beautiful room, newly renovated.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Good morning.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Kristina is being nominated as a member of the Landlord and Tenant Board.

You just got your dress rehearsal to see that you get to make a presentation and then there are rounds of questioning. You can take as much time as you would like. The government is okay with that, and they will follow up on the leftover time.

You have the floor. Welcome, Kristina.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That will be very difficult to follow, I must say.

Good morning, members of the standing committee. Thank you for the invitation to be here before you. It is an honour to be considered for this appointment.

I'm excited at the potential of joining the Landlord and Tenant Board and serving as a full-time member. My hope is that from this review, you will find my qualifications sufficient to carry out the Landlord and Tenant Board's core mandate of providing fair, effective and timely adjudications.

My parents are immigrants to Canada, and I am originally from London, Ontario. Since then, I've lived in many cities, from North Bay, Ontario, to Kelowna, BC. Adjusting and integrating with diverse groups along the way has provided valuable experience and a profound appreciation for the challenges people face adapting to new cultures, financial hardships, family dynamics and everything in between.

I'm driven by a deep commitment to public service shaped by a lifelong dedication to volunteering, supporting others and continuous personal growth.

I've been licensed as a paralegal, in good standing with the Law Society of Ontario, since 2009. I started out wanting to provide services where it would help vulner-

able people. I chose accident benefits and personal injury. I founded my own firm for the accident benefits portion then later also joined a law firm to support lawyers in personal injury matters.

In addition, during that time, I taught in the paralegal program at CTS college in Barrie. This experience honed my skills for dealing with diverse groups of people, mainly in high emotional stake matters; handling high-volume, time-sensitive caseloads; and moving groups forward while managing conflict. This work was rewarding but quite demanding. Due to a serious and ongoing illness with a family member, a point in time came when I needed to step back from self-employment.

In January 2021, I accepted a position with a local property management company as their in-house paralegal. This is my introduction to the world of landlords and tenants and a gateway for my passion working in this area. These past five years, I've immersed myself in the Landlord and Tenant Board processes and related legislation.

Equally as important, I've observed and learned about the obstacles many tenants face in finding and maintaining stable housing. At the same time, many landlords face difficulties—sometimes with devastating outcomes—protecting their assets. These issues continually strengthen my commitment to accessible, fair, effective, compassionate and timely delivery of service.

My personal strengths and beliefs are to hear and consider all sides equally and apply the relevant rules fairly. As an advocate, this ability is strictly limited. I am excellently equipped and fully prepared to deliver consistent, fair, respectful service to all Ontarians who come before the Landlord and Tenant Board, including and especially self-represented parties. I'm comfortable and skilled at independently managing groups through processes such as hearings in addition to drafting well-reasoned and transparent decisions.

I'm confident my background, values and developed skills directly support the Landlord and Tenant Board's mandate and overall mission of Tribunals Ontario. I believe that I would make meaningful contribution to the board by serving with fairness, integrity and professionalism.

Thank you again for this opportunity to be here today, for your time and your consideration.

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

Now we will go to the government side. You have six minutes, six seconds—I was going to say “Uncle Bob”—MPP Bailey.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'm everybody's uncle.

Anyway, thanks, Ms. Klein, for coming here today, appearing before us and giving some outline on your career, your background, where you were raised, where you lived.

Can you tell us a little bit about some volunteer organizations you belong to, how they will have an impact if you're appointed and how you could see that helping in rulings on the jurisdiction?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I have volunteered for several different types of organizations, and I believe all of them would never negatively affect or have consideration in being approved as a member. They have honed a lot of skills, and they've created so much appreciation for what people need to go through. You don't know by looking at them—some of the organizations I volunteer for not necessarily directly.

For the women's shelter, I have offered pro bono for women in accidents or that need that kind of help. In so doing, I have been privileged to go in their doors to see what's happening and to see the children playing.

My children and I volunteer for animal shelters. We foster dogs.

There's an organization in Barrie—I'm from Barrie—called Senior Wish. That was something new. It was very creative. Seniors often are not really thought of in the context of the mainstream as having difficulties in, potentially, the housing market.

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All of that together has given me that. None of that, I believe, would be a conflict for this role, but it has definitely been a benefit to volunteer for these organizations.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much, Kristina, for your interest in serving. I would like to ask a question.

You know that the Landlord and Tenant Board is one of the busiest boards we have because of all the circumstances: housing market circumstances, economic circumstances and the COVID and post-COVID times. Can you tell us some of the situations where you managed big loads of cases?

I understand you're a paralegal, so you most probably were on the other side of the fence. You have customers who have some housing issues. Now coming to the board's side, can you tell us a little bit about how you can handle that load of work and deliver in time?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Yes. My career has been based on heavy workloads, high volume and extremely time-limit-driven work for the accident benefits in particular, for advocacy. With the Landlord and Tenant Board, from the perspective that I've worked in it, all of the timelines need to be, of course, met.

I have not been a member, but from the member's perspective, what I would bring to that is all the experience with the organization, with the tools that you need to work with: the calendars—everything—including the priorities that will be handed down by superiors. There will be certain things that will need to have priority over others, and we need to manage all of those kinds of things.

Those all together—my experience and my background—have well prepared me for that kind of heavy load, for the time-limit-driven work and also how to shift. Because different policies come down, different rules come down, and working through the backlog, that creates, I'm sure—and I'm thinking—different priorities at differ-

ent times. Once it comes down, you make those a priority and then you work, basically, from that end forward.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Firin.

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Thank you, Kristina, for putting your name forward.

A question for you: What do you believe it takes to be an effective member on the Landlord and Tenant Board?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I have not been a member, so I don't know personally. But what I have observed is, the members who are fair and efficient know how to cut out the noise. They know how to direct the parties to really bring out what the issues are and bring them out clearly. You must support whatever you're saying—that sort of thing. You have to find the facts. To be that effective member is to bring all of that as quickly as possible, especially dealing with, potentially, a represented party and an unrepresented party.

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

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Part of that is to bring everyone to the same level as best you can, get the facts out, create the decisions—or, actually, before creating the decisions, you would apply the legislation and do all of those things. Sometimes you wouldn't make that decision right away, but you would make it as soon as possible after having gone through the process.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thirty-three seconds. MPP Racinsky.

**Mr. Joseph Racinsky:** Thank you, Ms. Klein, for coming.

Just very quickly, you talked about your professional career. How do those experiences help prepare you for the work of being on the Landlord and Tenant Board?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Again, the type of work I've done, particularly in the past five years, has been complete immersion in the Landlord and Tenant Board. So I'm 100% familiar with the legislation, the Residential Tenancies Act, all of the regulations, the powers and procedures act and the processes as well. All of the different types of—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much. I'm sorry I have to cut you off. I'm usually not that rude.

MPP Gates, I believe, has the floor from the official opposition.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Thanks for being here this morning. I appreciate it.

We ask these questions all the time for reasons, so I'm going to ask the same questions that my colleague raised with the last person that was here.

Do you belong to a political party?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** No.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Have you ever belonged to a political party?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** No.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Have you ever donated to a political party?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** No.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Have you ever given any money, federally or provincially, to a political party?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** No.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Do you like political parties?

*Laughter.*

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I just figured I'd throw that out there.

You're a paralegal, and I've worked with a lot of paralegals when I was on city council in Niagara Falls. I'd like to thank you for the job that you do. Some of the reason, obviously, is that some people can't afford a lawyer. Paralegals play such an important part of the system. I think you see as a paralegal a lot of the paralegals are being used for exactly these issues, particularly around rent.

I've been involved for the last little while with my daughter, who is looking for a place to live. I'm absolutely shocked that you can't find a place in Niagara—never mind Toronto, because it's over \$3,000. But even in a place like Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, to get a two-bedroom apartment or a place to live is almost \$2,500.

Some of the problem, I believe, which happen to end up with conflict between landlords and renters is the moment they move in, they're going to have trouble paying their rent. That, in my eyes, was caused by taking rent control off new builds, and that's forced the rents to go up. So I think until we fix the rent problem and charging people that can't afford to rent in the first place, you're always going to have conflict between the landlords and renters. I think there are some cases that are out there that are extreme, but in most of the cases, people want to pay the rent. They want to pay it on time, and they just can't.

I think the government has an obligation to put real rent control back on new builds to get us out of the mess that we have.

But anyway, I just wanted to say that, because it's very frustrating trying to help a loved one knowing that the minute they move in they're going to have trouble paying their rent. It's not because they don't want to pay. It's not because they want to have a conflict. It's just that they need a place to live, and it's going to be a challenge. Paralegals play an important part of that, and I just want to say thank you for the job you've done over these years. It's so important.

The Landlord and Tenant Board still has tens of thousands of active cases. Do you believe this level of backlog is acceptable, and if not, who do you hold responsible for letting it get this bad?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I don't know who is responsible, what got us exactly to this position. I do know that the backlog, from my perspective working in the Landlord and Tenant Board to date, since COVID has actually gotten quite a bit better. It seems to be improving step by step as we go. I am not a member. I do not know the internal issues currently. It would be my perspective from working outside.

As I said, especially certain types of applications are getting much quicker, which is actually that non-payment-of-rent application. Other applications also—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Sorry, sorry.

There have been serious concerns raised about the shift to virtual hearings being confusing and less accessible. Do you believe that the digital-first model is helping or hurting access to justice, and would you support a return to more in-person hearings?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I again don't know if it's hurting or helping. I do know that there are options for people that may have dire circumstances or are really not able to do this. There are applications currently for them to be able to do so. Again, I'm not a member. I don't know how that's dealt with internally—currently, I don't know that—but from my end, I do know there are potential options for that.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Bill 60—I'm sure you're familiar with it—shortened the appeal timelines, increased government control over review of decisions. Are you concerned that this reduces oversight and weakens access to justice?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Again, in a member position—I wouldn't know how to answer that. From my perspective, what I've seen, even though the timelines have changed, the board still accepts things outside of timelines, depending on circumstances.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that.

Very similar—it's a follow-up to that question: Tenant advocates have warned that these changes could lead to faster evictions and increased homelessness. We all know the homeless that we have here, the encampments that we have here in Ontario—how would you ensure your decisions don't simply make it faster for evictions while properly considering fairness and tenants' protection?

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**Ms. Kristina Klein:** That's how it would happen: properly considering all parties, considering what the current policies are and applying them. Legislation and regulations have their letter of the law, but there's also a spirit behind it which you need to understand as an adjudicator, as a representative, everything.

So it would be within the guidelines, I'm sure, again, my answer would be—once onboarded as a member, I'd have a more fulsome answer. From this perspective, it would be to be open-minded, fair-minded, to allow all parties to speak, to make sure that unrepresented parties really do understand what's happening and, to the best of your ability—that is not always completely possible to the ideal level, but to the best that it is in those circumstances—bring the parties to the same level, get the facts out and apply these things with an impartial mind.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Did anyone approach you to apply?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** No. No, this has been one of my—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** What made you say, "This is a passion that I have; this is something that I'd like to do"?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Yes. This is exactly why I applied. I have been in this for five years. I have been an advocate for over 16 years. I have watched the members, and I want to be part of this in that capacity—no longer an advocate but, really, in the capacity of a member.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Given the backlog crisis and the controversial legislation changes, what specific reforms

will you personally push for to ensure the system becomes both faster and fairer for both parties?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Not being a member currently, I don't know what the specifics are. But if approved as a member, I would be implementing everything that I am taught to implement as a member.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Were you nervous coming here today?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Very. Oh, my goodness, yes.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Now you're finding out that this side that you're looking at right now makes you really relaxed?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Yes. Thank you.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Good. Just wanted to make sure of that.

I want to say thanks for coming here today. I'm sure that you'll get appointed, but please be fair. Make sure that everybody gets a fair hearing. If you can, when you're speaking, really get out there and push to make sure we have real rent control so people can actually afford their rent in this province.

Thank you for coming here today. I appreciate it.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Thank you.

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

Over to MPP Smyth.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you, Ms. Klein, for being here today. I wanted to ask you—so, you worked as a paralegal for quite some time, and also you worked with a property management corporation as a paralegal. I guess you've seen all the sides.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I have.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Can you tell me what you think is the most prevalent issue right now within the Landlord and Tenant Board, or that you've even seen working on the property management side or advocating for tenants?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** From my perspective, as an advocate, the most pressing issue, overreaching—there are many. One is them is dealing with unrepresented parties. That is—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So imbalance in the system—fairness and access etc.?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Yes. Even though there are paralegals in the system, they still cost. And for someone who is struggling to pay rent, they're still not going to be able to necessarily pay for a representative. So coming to the board, which is designed that people can navigate without a representative, they still need that attention. They need to ensure that there's fairness there.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So what would you do, if likely appointed to this board, to impact that? How could you help make change to that effect?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Whatever the onboarding allows or doesn't allow, within those parameters is what I would work within, and to the extent that they allow that is what I would be able to—and would very much value—doing.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I just wanted to ask you something specific about above-guideline rent increases. Are you familiar with what those are?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I am, very, yes.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Okay. And you worked for a property management company—what's your thought on the status of these kinds of increases and their impacts on tenants?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Again, as a member—I don't know how that would play with a member, from my perspective as an advocate. It is difficult; it is always difficult because you're already raising rents the guideline amount, per year, and then you're trying to add more. So whether it is numerically a lot more or a little bit more—emotionally, psychologically, it's more, and they're already stretched most of the time. Even if they're not, the argument that comes back is, "Well, why? I'm already paying you rent for this asset that you have." As a member, I don't know how to answer that, but from my perspective—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Are you concerned about fairness?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** When those are before the board?

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** When they're happening, period, the above-guideline rent increases—do you think there's fairness being applied to the increases?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** It's current policy that they are allowed those applications, so fairness—I wouldn't be comfortable commenting on it. I don't know.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I noticed you said something about getting the sides: You've got to hear fairly from each side. I think you said something about cutting through the noise to bring out what the issues are, ASAP. What do you mean by the "noise"?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Exactly. What I mean by the "noise" is several things. One of the things is emotion: "They hurt my feelings." That's something we can't deal with in this format, where we are, this venue.

Another thing, potentially, is the unrepresented party. The noise is not necessarily cutting out but it's recognizing that this person doesn't understand what you're asking. The representative knows. They know the lingo, they know this, but the unrepresented person—some of the noise might be bringing up their understanding. Plain language, explain it, take the time—again, to the extent that you can bring the parties to, as much as you can, an equivalent understanding of what's happening, how things need to progress, what you need to do in order to present your side, those kinds of things.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I think I have just one last question for you. How would you handle a case where you see there is a real power imbalance between the parties?

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** I have an excellent example of how I have handled it as an advocate. Is that all right?

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Great. Yes, please.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** As a member, again, it would be within the prescribed parameters that I would be allowed to.

Recently, I was before the board with an application for a non-payment of rent, representing the landlord. My case

was solid, and without evidence to the contrary—there was none—it would have been a straightforward matter for the board to decide in favour of the landlord. However, once before the member, it became clear that the tenant suffered from significant mental health challenges. I was not aware of this before the hearing.

Although I was advocating for the landlord, and I'm skilled at advocating for one side, I also take very seriously fairness and accessible justice. I requested that the member adjourn the matter just to allow the tenant to have some time to seek some support, with a little bit of—I asked—prompting just to explain what does support mean: Maybe, perhaps, where you can go. The member couldn't give that kind of information, but the member agreed to adjourn the matter.

After the initial hearing, I reached out to the tenant by email, offering suggestions, links: “These are legal aid; this is, potentially, where you might be able to receive some funding,” that kind of thing. I reached out to the local legal aid clinic, because through my work—I have never met these people in person, but online, during the hearings, of course, they will assist some tenants, and then I'll speak with them back and forth. I reached out to the tenant's local legal aid and asked that, “If he seeks help, this is a more urgent matter. Please let me know. I will provide you whatever it is you need.”

I reached out to the Canadian Mental Health Association to ask, in general terms, if in this type of situation, is there anything we can do to help to support the tenant? Unfortunately, by the time we were at the next hearing, they weren't able to secure anything, but it's very important, I find.

Advocating for the landlord, which is what my job was, is important, and I will do that job and there's no compromising that job. But helping the other person with fair access to justice is not compromising that job. It's actually doing your job better because, to be honest with you, you're cutting out appeals. There's no wiggle room there. Everything that should have been done as a human being was done.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you for that example; it was great. And thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Kristina. That draws your presentation and the questioning to an end. Thank you for your desire to serve. It's very much admired.

We will now take it to the committee. You can stay if you would like, as we discuss appointments, or you can enjoy the winter weather. Thank you so much.

**Ms. Kristina Klein:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now consider the intended appointment of Barry Raison. Can I have a motion? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Barry Raison, nominated as vice-chair of the Ontario Parole Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by MPP Smith. Any discussion? MPP Gates.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Recorded vote.

#### Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Firin, Racinsky, Sabawy, Laura Smith.

#### Nays

Gates, Gilmour, Smyth.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** That carries. Congratulations to Barry.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Kristina Klein. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Kristina Klein, nominated as member of the Landlord and Tenant Board.

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

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Recorded vote, please.

#### Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Firin, Gates, Gilmour, Racinsky, Sabawy, Laura Smith, Smyth.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Unanimous, so that carries. Congratulations to Kristina Klein.

The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the March 13, 2026, certificate is set to expire on April 12, 2026. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I hear a no.

So that concludes our business today—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Is there any debate on that?

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** I'm sorry, there's not any debate on that.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Debate on the—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Yes, on that—no.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** So they're just doing what they continue to do, and we can't say anything about it?

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Not at this juncture.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** That's fine. Listen, I'm used to it.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** That concludes our business for today. The committee now stands adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1003.*



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