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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

A-15

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-15

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 23 April 2026

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
44^e législature

Jeudi 23 avril 2026

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 23 April 2026

Jeudi 23 avril 2026

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar): Good morning, everyone. In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I nominate Brian Riddell as Acting Chair today.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar): MPP Riddell, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Brian Riddell: I do.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Kattar): Are there any further nominations? Okay.

There being no further nominations, I declare nominations closed and MPP Riddell elected as Acting Chair of the committee.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. MITCHELL BLASS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Mitchell Blass, intended appointee as member, Council of the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario.

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

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

We will begin the review of intended appointees. Our first intended appointee today is Mitchell Blass, nominated as a member of the Council of the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario.

You can make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this will be questions from the members of the committee. With the questions, we will start with the government, followed by the official opposition, then the third party. Ten minutes will be allotted to each recognized party. Any time you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

Sir, you can start.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Thank you very much. Good morning, Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Mitchell Blass. I bring over 30 years of professional experience across government, client advocacy and regulated industries, with a career built on problem-

solving, decision-making and serving the public interest. Much of my work has involved navigating complex systems on behalf of others.

In my role as a licensed life insurance broker and account executive, I advised organizations on the benefit structures that directly impact their employees' well-being. That required not only technical knowledge but also strong commitment to fairness, transparency and acting in the best interests of the clients, especially when resolving sensitive issues related to claims, eligibility and coverage disputes.

Earlier in my career with the government of Ontario, including in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, I developed a deep appreciation of how public systems operate and the importance of accountability in protecting citizens. I worked closely with the ministries, elected officials and constituents to address concerns, often balancing competing interests while ensuring that decisions were grounded in policy, evidence and public responsibility.

Across all my roles, a consistent theme has been advocacy with integrity. Whether representing clients, constituents or organizations, I've had to listen carefully, assess situations objectively and work towards outcomes that are fair, reasonable and defensible.

In addition, my board and volunteer experience has strengthened my governance perspective. As chair of the Canadian Friends of Laniado Hospital and through my work with community organizations like the Believe to Achieve organization supporting vulnerable populations, I have been involved in oversight, strategic direction and ensuring that organizational decisions align with mission and ethical standards.

I recently completed a two-day course on the fundamental governance for public and non-profit organizations through the Schulich School of Business. While my background is not clinical, I bring a complementary perspective, one grounded in governance, policy, stakeholder advocacy and ethical decision-making.

I understand the importance of regulatory bodies like the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario in protecting the public, upholding standards and ensuring fairness in the process. I am particularly interested in contributing to a process that is thorough, impartial and respectful of both the public and the professionals it serves. I approach complex issues with curiosity, discipline and a commitment to getting it right.

Thank you again for your time. I look forward to our discussion.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll start the questions with the government. You have 10 minutes. I recognize MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Just before we begin, I wanted to take the opportunity to clarify an important point regarding appointments to this college. In a past conversation, there was a discussion about the requirement for bilingualism for appointees, and just to be clear, in doing the research, there's no requirement that every individual appointed here be bilingual. The legislative expectation is that the college as a body must be capable of providing services in both official languages, but it's ensured through some members of the college—not all but some—possessing necessary bilingual capacity. So in other words, the requirement is for the collective composition of the college and not to every individual appointee. So appointments are made with a view to maintaining the overall ability of the college to fulfill its obligations under the law, including service delivery in both English and French.

Thank you, Chair, and I'll pass it to MPP Jordan.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Jordan.

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Blass, for coming in today. I appreciate it.

I see you have a lot of experience in the life insurance sector, which is another role that requires registration with a regulating and oversight body. I wonder if you can just expand—and you did go into a lot in your presentation—on what you hope to bring to the board with that professional background.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: As a life-licensed broker, my role in the brokerage was group benefits, and part of the group benefits would be paramedical practitioners. So I had a lot of experience working with both insurance companies as well as with our clients on developing programs to assist the employees with gaining different paramedical practitioner access.

After we experienced COVID, the insurance industry realized that there was a need for psychological assistance within their paramedical practitioner programs. The amount of money that was focused towards different paramedical practitioners depended on what kind of services they provided, and it appeared that there was not enough given towards psychologists for the employees to go and utilize their services. So they started actually increasing that amount so that more of the employees were able to utilize that, because what would happen is people would look at the amount of money that they were given versus the amount of money that it would cost to go to a psychologist. They saw that psychologists charge a lot more than most other paramedical practitioners, and so they wouldn't go because they feared that they could only go to maybe two or three sessions and that was it, and that wouldn't help for the long term. So the insurance industry decided that they needed to increase that amount specifically for psychologists.

So those were some of the things that I noticed. That was a big need, and it was helpful that it allowed the employees to actually get the help they needed in that field.

So that was one of the things where, through my experience, I noticed that there is a great need for access to psychologists.

Mr. John Jordan: Thank you, sir.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize the MPP Firin.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Thank you, Mr. Blass, for putting your name forward. I'm just going to piggyback off of MPP's Jordan's question. Can you share an example of a situation during your previous role in the provision of group benefits insurance that would translate to valuable experience for governance of the board?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: In my role as a broker and working with clients, that was more on an individual basis, not necessarily as a member of a board. But in terms of my volunteer experience, whether it's with the Canadian Friends of Laniado Hospital or whether it's the Believe to Achieve organization, I have gained a lot of experience in working as a member of a board and dealing with long-term strategic decisions as well as financial decisions and weighing programs and the need versus how much money we were able to raise fundraising—which was yet one of the other things I would do, is fundraise, because all of these charitable organizations run on money that they raise through their fundraising efforts.

0910

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): One minute remaining. I recognize MPP Pinsonneault.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I'll make this quick. Thank you for being here today. What is your familiarity with mental health services that are provided by the province?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I know that that's a focus that the province is working on through the associate minister, and I know that there's a lot more being done through the province to help provide mental health services. I know that there was a private member's bill that was passed that turned into help for people with dementia, which is important to me because my dad actually suffered from dementia before he passed, and I spent time—I would work during the day and then at night I would relieve my mother—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you for your comments.

We'll now go to the NDP for 10 minutes. I recognize MPP Gilmour.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Welcome, and thank you so much for putting your name before us and for coming to us today. I wanted to just check in on a couple of questions that we typically ask, and then we'll move more deeply into the pieces.

My first question to you today is: Are you a member of any political party, and can you confirm your history of donations to Ontario PC Party riding associations or related campaigns for us?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Yes. I have been a member of both the provincial PC Party as well as the federal Conservative Party, and I have made donations—not big amounts, usually small—I guess it all depends; that's relative on what you think small is. But over the years I have donated to the Ontario PC Party.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I wondered. Thank you for that. I do know that it's up in the thousands, though. Small donations do add up.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Over the years.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Yes.

Now, how did this appointment come to your attention? I'd like to know: Did any elected officials, a political staffer or party representatives encourage you at all to apply to this?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: After my father's passing, I wanted to do more, to give more. I'm involved in some charitable organizations, but I wanted to leave a legacy and do something. So I started looking through the Public Appointments Secretariat website to see what was available and open. I did apply to a couple through the Ministry of Health, and I was not a successful candidate for any of those. But I guess my résumé ended up in front of somebody from the minister's office, who then contacted me and said, "We have this; we think you might be good for it."

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Was this an individual that you had known from before or worked with?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: No.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Okay. You've held roles in ministers' offices before, and constituency offices. Which offices did you work for and in what capacity, and over what period, please?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Let's see—from 1995 to 2001, I worked for Al Palladini. I started off as his driver and office manager and worked my way through to issues manager and then policy. That was when he was the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. And then, after his passing, I then moved over to work for Frank Klees in his constituency office as the constituency assistant. And then I worked for Tony Clement in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and I worked as the caucus relations adviser, helping—

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Great.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: And then, a number of years later, I worked for Peter Shurman in his constituency office.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Do you still have a personal working relationship with people in any of those offices?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Not in those offices. I still talk to Peter Shurman regularly, keeping up on how he's doing.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'd like to just talk a little bit more in terms of qualifications and preparedness, if we can. Do you hold any degree, credential or formal training in psychology, applied behavioural analysis, health regulations or administrative law?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: No.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Okay. Before you applied, what familiarity did you have with entry-to-practice requirements, professional discipline or quality assurance at the health regulator?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I guess a part would be from my experience working with the Minister of Health way back when. I mean, it's a long time ago; I don't want to say, but it's over 20 years. But that gave me a little bit of experience in that, and then, of course, through my work with the

insurance and just what I had to go through to become a life-licensed broker, and that regulatory system.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: In terms of the governing legislation, the Psychology and Applied Behaviour Analysis Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act and the college's bylaws, I'm wondering, truthfully, if you've reviewed any of these legislations and which parts you have studied most closely.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I started with the minutes from previous meetings to familiarize myself with the issues that they tend to deal with on a regular basis. I know a little bit about the acts but definitely will have to do more investigation into exactly—I do understand reading legislative acts. With my time at Queen's Park, I definitely got a flavour of being able to go through all that stuff. Especially when you're dealing with a minister's office and you move from one ministry to another, you have to very rapidly learn a whole new ministry and what they do and how they're governed.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. Now, one of the things that a council member may have to do when serving on the committee is you'll have to make very serious decisions, obviously. There's registration, there's the discipline piece, there's the complaints piece. So I'm wondering, in the life insurance world or in the world in the PC Party, what experience do you have making impartial, evidence-based decisions effecting other people's professional standings?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: In terms of making decisions based on other people's professional standings, I don't have that.

I do have that in terms of making decisions that affect one of the companies I used to work for, and that was when I was working for a company called Reptilia. They were looking at a project to bring a whole bunch of crocodiles from South Africa to Costa Rica. They sent me and a bunch of professors down there who were environmental professors for three weeks to investigate and work with the government of Costa Rica to look at whether it was something that was viable for a business opportunity. After reviewing everything and being there, I realized it was not—and the economic issues of the day; it was 2009. I basically came back and I told my boss, "We're not going to do it. We can't."

0920

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. I want to know, in terms of acting independently, can you commit, if confirmed, that you will act independently of any political relationship or expectations?

And then, the second is, if the answer is yes there, how would you respond if a former political colleague contacted you about a matter that is before the college?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I believe I can, primarily because of all my years of experience and working in other areas. I have learned that you have to be independent of your decision-making process in order to come to right conclusions that benefit everybody. And so, yes, if I got a call from somebody who wanted to, I guess, lobby me to make a decision a certain way, that will not affect the outcome—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): One minute remaining.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: —if my research concludes that that's not the way we should go.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Ontario is newly regulating behaviour analysts. And families in the autism world and others have raised serious concerns about the poor quality, some of the exploitive aspects of the services. What do you see as the council's most urgent public protection responsibilities during this time of transition?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Well, definitely, it is important—while dealing with the professionals in the field, the goal is to be there to protect the people, protect the public, protect the most vulnerable in our society, because if we can't protect them, then we should get out of the way.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. Based on what you've said today, your background, your familiarity—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you for your comments.

We will now go to the third party. I recognize MPP Smyth.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Mr. Blass, for wanting to take part in the Council of the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario. There is a really strong concern from the Canadian and Ontario Psychological Associations about the attempt to broaden the definition of a psychologist to “therapist,” and without the same education or training. Are you aware of this?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I'm not specifically aware of this specific issue.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Well, to compensate, those with master's degrees needed four years of work experience. And the board you're applying to is removing the work experience criteria, against all advice from the psychological associations. In my riding of Toronto—St. Paul's, I have met with many psychologists who are very, very concerned about this.

Given your background and history, which has been well established by questions from my colleague, when applying for this position, did anyone in the government or the PC Party how you needed to vote on this issue?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: No.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Given your background, do you have any independent opinions on this topic, or are you just going to do what you understand is wanted by your colleagues that you've known throughout your work history in the government?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: What I will do is what I always do when confronted with issues that need a decision, and that is look at all the facts and then make a decision based on the information that I get from all areas. I don't just look at one area.

Again, it's the same thing, if you go back to what I did with Reptilia. If I would have done what my boss wanted, we would have had a crocodile farm in Costa Rica. And he would have lost a lot of money, because it wouldn't have worked. But that's what he wanted. So instead, I gave him my honest opinion based on reviewing all the facts, speaking to all the people and coming up with a conclusion that actually saved the company a lot of money.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right. I just want to go back in time a little bit. Our research shows consistent financial contributions to both the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario—as you mentioned—and the Conservative Party of Canada since 2005, totalling \$8,500. Given this council is an independent public interest regulator, how are you going to ensure registrants, the public and fellow members know that the future decisions you make are genuinely free from any political alignment?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: The donations that I've made were because I was active in the political party, because I feel it's important to be active and I feel it's important that everybody in the public should know how the government, the opposition or any party stands on issues. They should be active in that decision-making and they should be active in voting. I feel very strongly that participation is the only way to be able to understand what's going on around you and around the world, so to me, that was just part of being part of that system.

But my decision-making process has always been based on what I think is right.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you.

You've worked across several ministries, as you said: health, economic development, transportation, in roles ranging from issues manager to policy adviser. Which of those experiences do you think is most directly transferable to what you're seeking now, to oversee a regulatory body, and why?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Well, definitely as a policy adviser in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, we definitely worked on policy to help small business and help bring in and attract trade and investment, and so developing policy along those lines definitely is something that would help with understanding the regulatory system and understanding what needs to be done in order to provide the best possible outcomes for people in Ontario.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: As you talked about also, from 2009 to 2010 you were a registered lobbyist of the provincial and federal levels for Reptilia and the Toronto Zoo.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Yes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: And lobbying advances the client's interests, while regulation protects the public, facing them on opposite sides of the public interest.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Absolutely.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: So how is your perspective changed now, and what does that mean in practice?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Okay, so, just so you know: The reasons why I registered as a lobbyist were two things. One was to help the company in terms of what they wanted to do on a federal level with expanding, but while I was at Reptilia and doing that, one of our board members—who actually happened to be the acting director or acting CEO of the Toronto Zoo—approached me to ask me for help, because they wanted to bring in the pandas. And so, I was able to get—well, at that point in time it was basically a letter in front of the Prime Minister's hands, so that he could sign the letter to the President of China in order to ask to have the pandas come.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Was that Ling Ling and—what were their names? I don't remember that. It was a big deal, pandas coming here.

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Well, it worked out well for the Toronto Zoo.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Yes.

There's no set term limit for this position. I was just wondering: In your view, what do you think is an appropriate length of time for service for a public member before some fresh perspectives come in—fresh perspectives outweighing continuity? What is your own intended commitment to this board?

Mr. Mitchell Blass: I would say five years would probably be enough to understand and move the college forward and at the same time learn from those who are already there. I would say five years would probably be a good term limit.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I guess I have time for one more question?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): You have two minutes and 42 seconds.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. Why not, then?

So given that this appointment is made by the provincial government—and I know we're going over this a lot, because this is a trend that we've seen with this government, with this committee—this is a party you've had a long documented history of supporting, so what would you say to a member of the public who questions whether this appointment, your appointment, is truly arm's-length?

0930

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Well, the way the system is set up, I went through the Public Appointments Secretariat, submitted my résumé on it and then looked at opportunities that might arise where I can contribute. At no time have I spoken to anybody about advancing my résumé for any specific appointment. So I went through the process, as any person in Ontario can, and was rejected on a number of occasions, just as anybody could be. So I would say I probably had a pretty typical experience.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: All right, Mr. Blais. Thank you—

Mr. Mitchell Blass: Blass, sorry.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Sorry, Blass—we have a Blais in government here, so, you know. But it is Blass, clearly.

I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): You had 1.6 seconds remaining, so we'll move on.

Thank you very much, sir, for your time today. You're invited to stay or leave at your choice.

MS. KAMINI KAMDAR

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Kamini Kamdar, intended appointee as member, Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): We will now move to review the second intended appointee, Kamini Kamdar, who is nominated as a member of the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

You may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from the members of the committee. Questioning will start with the govern-

ment, followed by the official opposition, then the third party. Ten minutes will be allocated to each recognized party. Any time you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

You have the floor.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Hi. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the role of council appointee for the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators here in Ontario.

My name is Kamini, and I am an early childhood educator and researcher with nearly two decades of experience in the education sector. I began my teaching career in 2007 and have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to teach in kindergarten for the duration of my teaching career, which has spanned 18 years. During that time, I've had the privilege of working with young children, families and early childhood educators in a wide range of communities representing diverse cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. These experiences have shaped my understanding of early learning as deeply relational, responsive and grounded in the lived realities of the communities that we serve.

In 2017, I completed my master's in education at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. There, I engaged with global approaches to early childhood education, including studying Te Whāriki, which is New Zealand's early childhood education curriculum. This was important to me, because we know that global curricula and early childhood frameworks inspire provincial and national frameworks here in Canada, and they're also a part of broader global conversations about children, family and early learning.

My time in New Zealand led me to pursue doctoral studies at the faculty of education at York University. There, my research focuses on early childhood education policy frameworks and the experiences of early childhood educators teaching in early learning programs here in Ontario. As part of my doctoral work, I've had the opportunity to interview ECEs from across the province, asking them about their experiences in the field, the challenges they encounter and their recommendations for strengthening early childhood education. These conversations have provided me with a deeply grounded understanding of the sector and one that is informed not only by policy but by the voices and lived experiences of educators themselves.

A central focus of my work is also supporting newcomer families in early learning settings. Through both my teaching and research, I have seen the importance of creating environments that are welcoming, inclusive and responsive to diverse identities, languages and experiences. I am particularly interested in how we can better bridge research and practice so that educators feel supported in their day-to-day work and so that policy decisions are informed by what is actually happening in classrooms and communities.

In addition to my work in Ontario, I've also worked and collaborated with provincial ministries of education, including the Ministry of Education and Child Care in British Columbia. There, my work involved supporting practising

early childhood educators in terms of, I would say, culturally responsive teaching and engaging with newcomer families.

Now, I currently teach at post-secondary teacher education programs where I support early childhood educators who are transitioning into teaching roles. This allows me to remain closely connected to both the early years sector and the broader education system, and also to understand the pathways, opportunities and challenges that educators face across roles and contexts.

Through all of these experiences, I recognize that early childhood education operates within complex systems of policy, regulation and public accountability. I understand the important role of the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators in upholding professional standards, supporting ethical and competent practice and protecting public interest.

I'm deeply committed to contributing to the important work of early childhood educators across Ontario and I see this role as an opportunity to contribute my experience and learning to governance and policy in ways that support the profession while remaining grounded in the realities of practice.

Across all aspects of my work—as an educator, researcher and teacher educator—I bring both classroom experience and research insight, and I see these as deeply interconnected. It is this combined perspective that I would bring to the council in service of strengthening the profession and supporting high-quality early learning across Ontario.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you for your presentation.

We will start with questions from the government. You have five minutes and 25 seconds remaining. I recognize MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Similar to the previous note, just for the same college, there's no requirement that every individual appointed to the college be bilingual. The legislative expectation is that the college as a body must be capable of providing services in both official languages. The appointments are made with a view to maintaining overall ability of the college to fulfill its obligations under the law, including service delivery in both English and French, so the requirement for bilingualism applies collectively to the composition of the college, not individually to every appointee.

With that, I will start with MPP Sabawy.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Sabawy.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Ms. Kamini, for your interest to serve the public and be [*inaudible*].

Members of the council come from a wide range of professional and regional backgrounds. How do you approach collaboration with individuals who bring different experiences and perspectives to the table?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: In group collaborative practices and decision-making, I approach decision-making with a strong emphasis on listening, respect and clarity of purpose. I really believe that it's important for different per-

spectives to be heard and also the value of multiple viewpoints, resulting from differences in lived realities and experience. All of those viewpoints are important in a discussion that is well rounded and decisions that are also well rounded and that take into account all of the different perspectives, realities, lived experiences of the people that meet them.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Do you think your experience as—I think you said educator to the kids in the role of early childhood education would help you in this analysis or understanding of the views of those individuals?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: My role in teacher education? Yes, because in the teacher education programs that I teach in currently, the students are early childhood educators that are now shifting to becoming educators, like teachers. And so this is a really interesting sort of experience and interaction for me, because I can also, through, let's say, not just the school setting—but, again, to really hear things like what made them decide to transition from being an early childhood educator to teaching, what were some of the factors in that. And also what are some of the supports for, let's say—not new ways of learning but what are the things that they need to know before they get into the field in another front-line position, in a sense. So yes, I do, in short.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Perfect. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Pinsonneault.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you for being here today. You really do have an impressive résumé.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Thank you.

0940

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: I want to carry on with the questioning we were just on. You've had a wide range of professional experiences throughout your career. Could you please share how these experiences would help with this position at the College of Early Childhood Educators?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. I will say education is, for me—my career in education, I consider a career of service. It's something that I'm very passionate about, which has led me to sort of go on an adventure in the education sector.

I was a classroom teacher—specifically in early learning settings, so kindergarten—for 18 years, and I recently just left the classroom, in September 2025, so this is a long career of being a front-line educator, where I worked with families and children in a variety of communities, and also seeing the Ontario early years policy landscape shift over that time. And then, during that time, I had the opportunity to also explore early learning—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): One minute remaining.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: —frameworks in global contexts. So I think it's a combination of the practical piece and also the research-based piece that I bring to the council.

Mr. Steve Pinsonneault: Thank you for that.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): I recognize MPP Firin.

MPP Mohamed Firin: Thank you for putting your name forward. I do have a daughter now who is in junior

kindergarten, so I know how challenging it is, especially working with young kids.

My question is: Is there something unique about your perspective or experience that you bring to this role?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure, yes. Through my doctoral studies, I really found a passion for connecting research and scholarship to front-line work. I noticed that in early years education especially, there's a gap between university and classrooms. And so my unique perspective is being a classroom educator alongside a researcher, so I understand—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Riddell): Thank you for your comments.

We will now go for 10 minutes to the NDP. I recognize MPP Gilmour.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Welcome, and thank you, Ms. Kamdar, for putting your name forward. It's good to have you here.

A couple of standard questions off the top, before we dive into the specifics of this college and your qualifications: Are you currently a member of a political party, and can you confirm a history of donations to a political party, riding associations or other related campaigns?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. Not a member, and no donations.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Okay. Thank you.

And I'd love to know a little bit about how this appointment came to your attention: if it was through an individual, or how did you come to putting your name forward?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. I stumbled across the Ontario public appointees website on a late-night Google search, essentially. I was googling the council, and it was just all these different thoughts—one tab, one click to another, and it opened up a whole world of civic service for me. I did not know that there were ways that we could engage civically through appointments. So I browsed the website, and again, it opened up a whole other world of civic engagement.

And so, I looked into education. I saw two: one, I think, was for an advisory committee for special education—which is not my area of expertise—and then I saw the council for early childhood educators, which is my expertise. So I decided to make a profile, and here I am.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I cannot tell you how refreshing it is to have that answer.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Oh, thanks.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It is not our typical answer and it's wonderful.

It certainly is an important college and council to be part of, and we really do need the expertise on it. I'm grateful to see names like yours coming forward. We've had in the past individuals who have come before us who didn't even know what an ECE was and were nonetheless voted into those spaces. So you clearly come with a very different set of experiences, expertise, wisdom.

I am just wondering about what experience you would have in terms of adjudicating professional conduct and competency of early childhood educators.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure—sorry; expand a little?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: So in terms of—there's discipline. There's those kinds of things that might happen. Do you have any experience in that realm, around adjudicating the professional conduct of any bodies?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: I don't have experience in adjudicating any standards of practice. What I can say is, basically, through my own work, I have a sort of ethics training. I understand what an ethical process entails. I also know, from being a practicing educator, we have standards that we need to adhere to.

So I understand the moving pieces. I think what I would say is that I would really just focus on the actual standards of practice and explore those issues from an ethical perspective.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. It's clear, again, with the PhD training and all the rest, and that space that you occupy—seeing ECEs who are moving on to become teachers—that you've got a bit of a sense of the space that ECEs are in.

One of the things that is a major challenge is retention. We're seeing the ECEs leave within three years on average. There are lots of factors for that. I wondered if you could speak to the factors that you know about and how that might inform how you might help the college with retention.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. There are a bunch of things that I'm aware of. I know that that's not all factors. But through, again, working in schools and also just seeing, in the kindergarten program, for example, OCTs—we work alongside DECEs. Planning time is an issue, where ECEs really are not given enough planning time to plan for those activities or learning.

There's obviously talk of wages. I think, also, maybe accreditation—there are so many moving pieces—because we have complex migration where sometimes the accreditation might be sort of in a lag.

Again, I would think about planning time, wages, access to professional development supports.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Amazing. That's great. Thank you very much for that.

I don't know if you're aware of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care's anti-racism working group reports. They've recommended that CECE mandate training around anti-racism. I'm wondering, as a member of the council of the college, what would you see out there in terms of whether that recommendation is one that you would take up, one that you would understand? How would you manage a request like that?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. I feel that it's absolutely necessary to have anti-racist training, or even newcomer-engagement training, let's say, within the practice mandate of College of Early Childhood Educators. We know that our demographic landscapes are changing. At the same time, we also know that professional development in early years—there isn't enough of it. Early childhood educators are not offered the same kind of professional development as, let's say, teachers.

Also, in teacher training programs, there aren't courses. Maybe you'll have one course on anti-racist education. So there really isn't any learning that's happening that's sort

of meaningful to be able to give ECEs footing for when they work in front-line positions. I would absolutely recommend that.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. I think you just touched on a piece there a moment ago around the professional development piece. We also know that both the provincial school boards and the daycares are struggling right now to find enough qualified ECEs to fill the positions. This has been going on for years now.

I'm wondering about the steps you think we could take to solve that staffing crisis in child care and in our schools.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. I have some ideas or thoughts. I was actually reading an article the other day out of the United States, and it was talking about how they saw retention increase when wages increased for ECE workers. This was a study that was done, and they found that the retention rates actually stayed the same once wages were increased. I think this is an interesting thing to think about.

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Also, again, professional development helps early childhood educators and educators feel like professionals. If you're in a field where, after you graduate, you're left on your own, if there isn't really any sort of professional development, food for thought, helping you grow your own practice, it's really easy to feel like you're stuck in a rut.

So I think those two pieces, and then also, again, the planning time, because governments see early childhood education as a site of investment for future workers in the future economy. So we need to give ECEs the planning time to create those activities that we are investing in for a better future in a sense—for the children, for the economy, for society. So I think there's a few pieces that we could look at, in a sense.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Quickly then, one of the things is your New Zealand and global experience. What do you think you bring that might be unique to that that we might benefit from here in Ontario?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Just another way of looking at things. What prompted me to go to New Zealand was because I was siloed in my own classroom and I felt like I only knew what I knew. We know that global learning frameworks speak with each other. Te Whāriki, New Zealand's curriculum, is mentioned in the Ontario curriculum document as a source of inspiration; it's the same with BC. So it's really getting an idea of what is happening on a global level and how we can take the best parts from it or be inspired by it to improve our own policy, essentially.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, MPP Gilmour. And thank you to MPP Riddell for chairing for me. I'm back.

MPP Smyth, you have 10 minutes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you very much for being here today and answering our questions and shedding some light on your background and what you hope to bring to the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

My colleague was just asking about New Zealand, and that was one of my first questions. What was it you called the program that they use in New Zealand?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Te Whāriki.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. And you said there's something mentioned in our curriculum that notes this curriculum—what you learned in your master's in education at Auckland—is in curriculum for education. Was it ECE specifically?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Yes, it was.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Is there something in there that you see as missing in our ECE curriculum? What is one thing you could say we could learn from your education there and make it transferable?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. The FDK and our early years policy—the changes in it with the FDK program and moving from academic to play-based has really been such a great and needed change in our view and understanding of ECE.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: So that's what it is, the move from academic to play-based.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: It's more—Te Whāriki talks a lot about responsive relationships, so relationships between families and educators and communities and really a holistic view of early learning. We do a good job; our learning framework does recognize families as partners in education alongside children. Te Whāriki is a little less academic-based and it leans into children's sense of belonging, safety, regulation and then, again, reciprocal relationships. So maybe just these pieces alongside our academic view of kindergarten to also promote and place a little more importance on the community and family relationship piece.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: It's interesting. There are so many things we can learn when we study abroad which give us a whole other context, which is fantastic with your experience, having taught for all those years. And you taught kindergarten for, what, 18 years?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Yes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I want to ask, what do you feel about the importance we place on the ECE?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. We know that ECEs are important. I think what we forget is that there's a lot of invisible and emotional labour in teaching and especially ECE. I think there's a view, almost, that patience and caring comes naturally, but we also have to remember that this is a labour and it's an invisible labour, in a sense.

I think that we value ECEs. I'm not sure that we really understand the demands and the tolls of the job and what it really does require to be present with children day in and day out and tend to their needs when they're so young, especially in ECE. And on top of that, planning these activities and chart their learning and liaise with families—this is a lot. It's a very important role and a big role, and I think that gets lost sometimes in our understanding.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I gather that there is a recurring tension in early childhood regulation—the question of scope, what registered ECEs are trained and permitted to do versus what is expected of them in practice. Given your background in curriculum teaching and instructional

design, how do you think the gap is between what practitioners are prepared for and what the job actually demands?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: That's a good question. I think there's a piece of it where nothing could—obviously, a teacher training program or an ECE program can prepare you, and then there's the preparation and then there's actually experiencing it on the front line.

I think one of the things, I would say, that is relevant to our time now is just that our demographics are changing. The families that we serve and work with are very different than 20 years ago. Global migration is very complex. There are so many different factors. I think the training piece would also—we have a really good handle on the academics; we have a really good handle on literacy and numeracy. We really need to learn how to support newcomer families, diverse families, what does anti-racist practice look like—kind of shift to learning that matches our current realities, in a sense.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you. Your recent work with the BCcampus—Nelson, BC: Is that where it was?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: I did a little bit of work with Nelson, so I have experienced education on the private sector side. I also worked with—it was Simon Fraser and BCcampus out in BC, and that was a joint project with the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. And also University of New Brunswick as well?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Yes, teaching the faculty there.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay, so correct me: It appears focused on instructional design in post-secondary education rather than early childhood. But what I wanted to ask was, what connects that experience to the mandate of what you're doing with the college—what you're likely going to be appointed to be doing—regulating early childhood educators?

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. In my role at the University of New Brunswick, for example, I teach courses in the faculty of education. I've taught curriculum and evaluation in early years. I'm actually just teaching right now interpreting play for curriculum. These courses are specifically planned for early childhood educators, to give them the tools to be able to then serve front-line families in a very real-time way, let's say.

My work with the Ministry of Education in BC was a similar professional development series for practising early childhood educators in BC with similar topics—again, just really supporting professional development or learning in a way that fits real-time realities of the position.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. And you worked within a school board as the teacher; you understand being on the receiving end of policy and professional standards. How do you think that experience is going to shape how you're going to approach your role now as someone now overlooking the same systems from that regulatory perspective then?

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Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Sure. It's almost second nature. I taught in a classroom just up until a few months ago. When I think of policy, I really understand it as not just a document, but it's something that informs living practice,

so it's really keeping it in mind and thinking about how it will play out. What are the factors that would impact its implementation? What does it look like in real life? It's bringing those questions, I think, to policy discussions, in a sense.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you very much. Thank you for putting yourself forward.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Thanks.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, MPP Smyth, and thank you very much, Kamini. Sorry I wasn't here at the beginning—I was in the House—but I am sure you gave a great presentation. I'll hear all about it afterwards.

You are now finished. You can remain in the room as we deliberate the appointments, or you can go about your merry way.

Ms. Kamini Kamdar: Okay. Thank you so much.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now consider the intended appointment of Mitchell Blass. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Dowie.

Happy birthday, MPP Dowie, by the way.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): It's quite a big birthday today.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Absolutely.

Chair, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Mitchell Blass, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Psychologists and Behaviour Analysts of Ontario.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I would like a recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Dowie, Firin, Jordan, Pinsonneault, Riddell, Sabawy.

Nays

Gilmour, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That carries. Congratulations to Mitchell Blass for your appointment.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Kamini Kamdar. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Kamini Kamdar, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Dowie, Firin, Gilmour, Jordan, Pinsonneault, Riddell, Sabawy, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That carries unanimously. Thank you very much for that. Congratulations to Kamini Kamdar on your new appointment.

Next up is the certificate extension. The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the March 27, 2026, certificate is set to expire April 26, 2026. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I heard a no.

MPP Gilmour, did you have a point of order?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm just concerned about this continued practice of not extending the certificates. We've seen over and over again a pattern of individuals coming before us that don't have experience but do have political connections. In order to ensure that these are merit-based appointees and appointments, I think it's very important that we have that opportunity to interview.

My concern is that when individuals know that if they wait out 30 days—if they cannot appear before us within 30 days; if they know that they just wait out a few weeks, this government will ensure that those appointees are passed

through—we will see more and more individuals choosing that route instead of coming before us, like the two individuals who I'm very grateful for that they came before us today.

So my concern is this pattern—and I would like to suggest that the government rethink that, because we all want to see candidates coming before us that have their merit tested and that we know are really qualified. Otherwise, our entire province could be full of councils, boards and tribunals that lack the experience. Tribunal Watch has already pointed to that, and they're quite concerned that we are actually seeing major issues and a degradation of those tribunals because of appointees without experience being appointed.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for your comments, MPP Gilmour.

Seeing no further comments, this concludes business for today, and this committee now stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1005.

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