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Assembly  
of Ontario



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

A-21

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

A-21

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

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

Thursday 18 June 2026

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

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

Jeudi 18 juin 2026

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Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon  
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Présidente : Mary-Margaret McMahon  
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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# CONTENTS

Thursday 18 June 2026

Committee business .....	A-213
Subcommittee report .....	A-215
Intended appointments.....	A-217
Mr. Rob Francis .....	A-217



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 18 June 2026

Jeudi 18 juin 2026

*The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.*

### COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. It will now come to order.

Before we move to the adoption of the subcommittee report, I would like to read the ruling from the Speaker received yesterday, if everyone is amenable to that.

“On June 11, 2026, I received a report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies arising out of the committee’s proceedings that same day. The committee reported its decision to appeal a ruling of the committee Chair on a matter of order. As the House currently stands adjourned until October 27, 2026, the report was delivered to me and filed with the Clerk pursuant to standing order 123(c).

“In its report, the committee outlined the matter of order, and the subsequent Chair’s ruling, so I will offer only a brief summary here. On June 3, 2026, the day after the House adjourned, the subcommittee on committee business met and decided the following:

““That pursuant to standing order 110(f)(13), the committee meet to consider intended appointments not yet considered, which have been selected for review at the following times:

“—Thursday, June 4, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, June 11, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, June 18, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, July 2, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, July 9, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, July 30, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, August 6, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, August 13, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, August 20, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, September 10, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, September 17, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, September 24, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, October 8, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and;

“—Thursday, October 15, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m.’

“This decision was made by the subcommittee in accordance with standing order 110(f)(13), which provides as follows:

““During any adjournment of the House that exceeds one week, the committee shall meet on such day or days as may be determined by the subcommittee, but in any event not more than three times per month.’

“On June 4, the committee convened for its first meeting in accordance with this decision. During the meeting, MPP Smith (Thornhill), on a point of order, expressed her view that the full committee has the authority to amend or overturn the decision of the subcommittee, and later moved the following motion:

““That the Standing Committee on Government Agencies rescind the decision of the subcommittee on committee business to schedule further meetings during the current adjournment of the House; and

““That the Clerk of the Committee be directed to cancel all remaining notices of meetings arising from that decision.’

“The Chair expressed uncertainty about the orderliness of the motion and heard submissions from members before reserving her decision. On June 11, the Chair ruled the motion to be out of order, after which the committee voted to appeal the ruling to the Speaker. Following my review of the committee report, the standing orders, precedents and relevant authorities, I provide my decision as follows.

“I will begin with an overview of the processes by which the committee’s reviews of intended appointments are scheduled, which are outlined under standing order 110(f). This is necessary because, as the Chair explained in her ruling, the subcommittee plays a unique role.

“To summarize the various roles:

“—the House authorizes the committee to meet on certain days at certain times during scheduled House meeting weeks (in this Parliament, pursuant to the order of the House dated April 17, 2025).

“—The subcommittee determines the days on which the committee will meet during House adjournments of

longer than one week, up to a maximum of three times per month (pursuant to standing order 110(f)(13));

“—The individual members of the subcommittee select intended appointees for review (pursuant to standing order 110(f)(3));

“—The subcommittee reports the selections to the full committee along with the time allotted for consideration, and the committee determines the dates on which reviews will be scheduled (pursuant to standing order 110(f)(4)).

“By long-standing practice, the time allotted to reviews has been standardized at 30 minutes per review. Additionally, the responsibility for setting the dates for the reviews has been delegated to the Clerk for the practical reason that intended appointees are not always available at a particular time. Nevertheless, the committee is entitled by the standing order to receive the subcommittee’s reports and upon this receipt, determine the days on which the selected reviews will be conducted.

“In her submission, the member for Thornhill pointed to the reports of the subcommittee regarding selections for review, and the committee’s adoption of those reports, as evidence of the committee’s general authority over the decisions of the subcommittee. In response, the Chair flagged a difference in the language between paragraph 4 of the standing order, which provides for a subcommittee report to the full committee on the intended appointees selected for review, and paragraph 13, which does not include an equivalent provision. I find that this is an important distinction, which settles this particular question.

“The member for Thornhill also argued as follows (at pages A-197 and A-198 of the committee Hansard):

“While the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies has specific administrative responsibilities under standing order 110(f), that does not change the fundamental relationship between the subcommittee and the committee. The subcommittee remains a subordinate body ...

“... a member of the standing committee ought to be able to move a motion at a duly constituted meeting to rescind the subcommittee’s decision to schedule future meetings during the current adjournment and to direct that the remaining notices of meetings be cancelled ...

“... An interpretation that prevents the full committee from reviewing the decision of its subcommittee would elevate the subcommittee to an authority greater than the committee itself, without clear language in the standing orders.’

“In reviewing this argument, I have considered the relationship between committees and subcommittees, both in respect of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies in particular, and more broadly.

“The member for Thornhill is correct in her assertion that, generally speaking, subcommittees are subordinate to committees. Standing orders 126(a) and 127 both provide that a subcommittee be appointed from the membership of the full committee and empowered to report to the committee. This is the foundation of the relationship between the two bodies.

“However, the relationship between the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and its subcommittee is also governed by the provisions of standing order 110(f) in addition to standing orders 126(a) and 127. As the member for Ottawa–Vanier highlighted in her submission on June 4, standing order 110(f)(13) does not provide a separate role for the committee in approving or rejecting the decision of the subcommittee.

“In considering the implications of these provisions, I reviewed the standing orders in search of other similar delegations of authority. I will draw members’ attention to standing order 63(c), which provides:

“The estimates of the ministries and offices shall be considered in the order in which they were selected. The subcommittee on committee business of each committee may, by unanimous agreement, alter the order of consideration.’

#### 0910

“In the case of the estimates, the selections are made in full committee by members who represent the recognized parties (rather than by committee vote), and the resulting order of consideration is amended by unanimous agreement of the subcommittee. Similarly to the current question about the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, it is the subcommittees rather than the standing committees that are empowered to make the decision to change the order of consideration. On this matter, the subcommittee is granted an authority that the full committee itself does not possess.

“I have also found the following additional examples of direct delegation of authority by the House to particular subcommittees:

“—On May 12, 2020 (at page 662 of the Journals), the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs was ordered by the House to conduct a study. The order of reference provided that, ‘the subcommittee on committee business shall determine the method of proceeding on the study,’ as well as empowered the subcommittee to, at its discretion, extend the timelines for certain elements of the committee’s work. The Chair made the following statement to the committee during its meeting on June 4, 2020 (at page F-1323 of the committee’s Hansard):

“‘the order of the House ... gives the subcommittee the authority to determine how to proceed with the study. We will not need to vote on this report, but I will read it into the record to make sure all members are aware of the contents.’

“—On December 19, 1991 (at page 409 of the Journals), the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly was ordered to conduct a study, and as part of the order of reference, the subcommittee was, among other things, granted ‘ultimate decision-making power with respect to the calling of witnesses and any other procedural aspects of the proceedings and all matters arising relevant to the execution of the terms of references of the committee’.

“In both of these cases, the subcommittee was delegated a specific role by the House, and in neither case was the opportunity for committee review of these decisions explicitly provided for. Does this mean that in adopting these standing orders and other orders the House intended for the subcommittees to have the final decision-making

power on these matters? Or, as the member for Thornhill proposed, are we to assume that, in all cases, the committees have an inherent right to overturn any decision of their subcommittees?

“In my view, the answer to these questions lies not only in the relationship between subcommittees and full committees, but also in committees’ relationship to the House. Committees are subordinate to the House, established to conduct business as referred and ordered by the House, and to exercise certain powers as delegated by the House. The House also granted to the committees, by way of standing orders 126 and 127, the authority to appoint subcommittees on committee business, and to in turn delegate to them decision-making responsibilities about committee business. When this work is delegated by the committees, the committees retain the authority to adopt, vary, or reject the subcommittees’ decisions. It is a different matter when the House directly orders the delegation of a certain responsibility to a subcommittee. In these cases, the authority of the subcommittee is derived not from a delegation of committee authority, but from the House, either by direct order of the House or by standing order, which is a permanent order of the House. This is supported by House of Commons Procedure and Practice, at paragraph 20.106 of the fourth edition:

“Orders of reference and instructions issued by the House to parliamentary committees provide a framework for their proceedings... As they are created by the House, committees have no power to amend or suspend the application of orders of reference or standing orders.”

“Additionally, as was noted by the member for Ottawa–Vanier in her submission, standing order 110(f)(13) provides that the committee shall meet as determined by the subcommittee. When interpreting the rules of the House, the word ‘shall’ is understood to have a different effect than the words ‘may’ or ‘be authorized to’. When the standing orders or other orders of the House provide that, for example, a committee ‘shall’ conduct and complete a study at a particular time, this is understood to be a mandatory instruction rather than a granting of permission. On the other hand, when the House provides, for example, that a committee ‘is authorized to meet’ at a certain time, this is typically understood to be a granting of permission that may or may not be exercised.

“Finally, the Chair stated in her ruling that she was unable to find a record of any instance in which the full committee voted to alter or overturn a decision of the subcommittee made pursuant to standing order 110(f)(13). This is my finding as well. In nearly 30 years of practice and over a large number of meetings held during adjournment periods, responsibility for determining meetings dates has been consistent with the standing order, or otherwise ordered by the House.

“For all of the above reasons, I find that the Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies was correct in her ruling that the motion moved by the member for Thornhill was out of order and I confirm that decision.

“I will note as well that the schedule determined by the subcommittee on June 3 does not have to be the final decision on the committee’s meetings for the adjournment

period. The subcommittee is entitled to revise the decision it made under standing order 110(f)(13). If members of the committee have thoughts about how to better arrange the schedule for the adjournment period, they are welcome to approach the subcommittee members with their proposals. In reviewing the precedents, I found that in previous Parliaments, it was not uncommon for the Standing Committee on Government Agencies to meet monthly for a few hours at a time to consider intended appointments. Perhaps there is a schedule that would suit the members of the committee better, and I encourage them to work together to find a solution that will be satisfactory to everyone.”

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now go forward with the adoption of subcommittee reports.

Our next item is the adoption of the subcommittee report from Thursday, June 11, 2026. Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move adoption of the subcommittee report on the intended appointments dated Thursday, June 11, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated June 5, 2026.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Smith has moved adoption. Any discussion? MPP Gilmour.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** We’ve been surprised over the last few weeks, and so I’m not sure where we’re going to take this vote.

Last week, the move to adopt the agenda didn’t come from the governing party. In fact, they voted against it, which effectively shut down the meeting. It’s my hope that today this move, this change is indicating that the government will in fact go forward with the meetings, because I think that the people of Ontario have put their trust in us to ensure that the appointees are reviewed. We got elected to do a job. We are paid well—I’ve never been paid so well in all my life. I intend to live up to what everyone in Ontario is asking of me.

What was so disappointing about the last few weeks was, after we saw a government buying private luxury jets for their Premier, we saw this committee trying not to meet for five months.

Madam Chair, as you know, the importance of this committee, in terms of making sure that boards, tribunals run well—each one of us is here to do a job. That is what we are paid to do. And if you are a Chair, as you well know, or a Vice-Chair, as the member from Sarnia–Lambton is, you are paid additionally to steward this committee.

The practice that was being suggested last week by the government was to only meet during the sitting days; that would have been 13 times. This government would have been voting to pay their colleague \$1,000 for just over an hour’s work—\$1,000 for an hour’s work. So I do hope that this committee, these government members, will reconsider that.

In my riding, there are individuals working full-time and at the end of the month they’re still in overdraft. There are members in my riding, and I’m sure in your members’—

certainly in York South–Weston—who, in the gig economy, are looking at food banks to keep their costs.

We are paid to do a job. We should be here to do that job.

I encourage the government members to look to their conscience on this and to stop with the shenanigans and get to work for Ontario.

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

**MPP Wayne Gates:** First of all, I just want to say that I'm certainly glad that the Speaker of the House has ruled in favour of the subcommittee, because the subcommittee really didn't do anything wrong here. The subcommittee made a decision based on what we felt as a subcommittee—that this particular committee needs to meet. I gave some examples over the course of the last number of years, because I've sat on this committee for a lot longer than most people who are here—I think maybe MPP Bailey might have sat on it long. Our role was to make sure that whoever is being appointed to agencies and boards were qualified.

0920

I'm not going to talk about the pay. I got elected as an MPP in Niagara. I love sitting on this particular committee; I have for a number of years. But I've also seen, over the course of the years, some of the people who were appointed to boards, one, didn't have the qualifications—we knew that—but they were nothing more than failed candidates in some of our ridings. And when somebody says, "Well, how do you know that?"—well, I ran five times, and I've been elected five times. It's my fifth term that I've been elected to, and every single candidate that I beat got appointed to a board or to an agency. The one that everybody probably knows about, and certainly my colleagues on the other side also know about, is, Bob Gale got appointed to the Niagara Parks Commission. It's a very important job down in Niagara—stewardship of the Niagara parks. And then they moved him from there and they made him the chair of the Niagara region. So he left the parks, then they appointed him to the chair of the region, and that was a disaster. They wanted to amalgamate Niagara. He was the one who was the driving force around amalgamating Niagara, making Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie part of Niagara Falls. It made no sense, and the residents of Niagara got really upset. He wasn't qualified to do that.

What I'm saying is, the subcommittee did nothing wrong here and, quite frankly, the subcommittee has been kind of raked through the coals over our decision. It was a decision that was right. It was right for the citizens of the province of Ontario. It was right for the accountability of this particular committee. I want to say to my colleagues who are on the subcommittee, we made the right decision. There have been two, three weeks now of maybe questioning whether we had that right.

Chair, you hit it right on the nail—the big word that is in the language when it comes is "shall," to "may." "May," in the bargaining terms that I've done for my entire life in collective agreements, is a weasel word. "Shall" is very clear. When it says, "you shall"—that is the important lan-

guage in making the ruling. And I'm sure that's what the Speaker took into consideration as well.

Hopefully, we can move forward from here and we can work together for the betterment of the province of Ontario, the betterment of the citizens of Ontario.

But equally important to every one of us is our credibility. Our credibility is on the line when we don't meet. I don't agree with shutting the Legislature down for five months. I think it's ridiculous. To shut the committee down for five months is equally in bad taste, by the Conservatives.

I want to say to the Chair, I think you made the right decision, obviously. I think the Speaker has made the right decision. Let's get on with doing our work on what we're elected to do and what we were appointed to do, to the best of our ability.

Thank you for allowing me to say a few words.

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I want to say how pleased I am that the Speaker upheld your ruling, Chair, and that it was a great learning experience for many of us about the power of the subcommittee of this committee.

I think that, time and time again, we were discouraged to see appointees come through who might not have been qualified for their positions—and feeling helpless, in many ways, to have impact.

But now at least with this final ruling, we have the opportunity to question as many appointees as we possibly can and shed light on the people who are being appointed to some of the most critical boards and agencies in this province. I am so happy that that transparency is going to happen.

I also want our colleagues to know that, absolutely, we want to work with them and find a way to make this a schedule that works for everybody throughout the recess. I think that's really important, and that we move forward in a really positive manner and do what's best for the people of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** We're here at the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, and the purpose of this committee is to review government appointments to government agencies and tribunals. These appointments often pay hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the people take on roles where they're in charge of dispensing billions of dollars or of making life-changing decisions for the people of Ontario. It includes the Human Rights Tribunal, the Building Code Commission, the police service boards, college and university boards. The work that this committee does is very important because it makes it transparent who is being appointed, and it's an opportunity for opposition members and government members to ask questions of the appointees.

What we've found in this committee over the last few years is that the government is appointing people not because they have particular expertise or knowledge in the area that they're being appointed to, but because they are donors to

the Conservative Party or members of the Conservative Party or sometimes failed candidates for the Conservative Party. And some of the appointments are going to people who are unqualified for the positions that they're taking on. This is really, really frightening.

The government has the majority in this committee, but they don't have the majority on the subcommittee. So the subcommittee set an agenda for the summer: to meet through the summer so that this committee would be able to review the appointments that are happening over the next five months, when the government has recessed the Legislature. The government—the Conservative members here—did everything they could to try to stop the committee from meeting, so that these appointments would go ahead without an opportunity to actually ask the people who are being appointed to these government agencies any questions. And now the Speaker has ruled that in fact the agenda set by the subcommittee for this committee to meet over the summer, for the opposition and government members to actually ask questions of the appointees, is legit, that this should go forward.

I'm happy about the Speaker's ruling because it makes the government somewhat more transparent. We're here making decisions that will affect every Ontarian eventually. These are vital, vital decisions. In a democracy, it's not just that we vote every four years—we actually have to have transparent government in between. And the work of this committee, reviewing appointments, is a part of that transparency. So I'm glad the Speaker came back with that decision.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** If we could move on to the applicant, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour of the subcommittee report being adopted? Opposed? That carries.

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

### MR. ROB FRANCIS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Rob Francis, intended appointee as member, Ontario Honours Advisory Council, citizenship division.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We are finally at the most exciting part of our committee. The first intended appointee is Rob Francis.

Rob, if you would like to come up to the front—to the friendliest committee at Queen's Park, believe it or not. We are thrilled to have you here.

Rob is nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council, citizenship division.

Rob, we would love to hear your story. Your time will be deducted from the government's time, and that's fine—they're okay with that—but otherwise, everyone has 10 minutes to question you afterwards.

The floor is yours. Thank you for being willing to serve.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, members of the standing committee. Thanks for the

opportunity to sit before you here today. My name is Rob Francis. I am honoured to be considered for appointment to the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

I've spent my career serving Canadians in a variety of capacities. I served for over 20 years in the Royal Canadian Navy, retiring at the rank of lieutenant commander. During my military career, I led sailors and officers in operational environments, including deployment to the Persian Gulf. Later, I served as a professor at the Royal Military College of Canada, where I taught leadership, organizational behaviour and military ethics.

Of particular note to this process, I earned my master of applied science in industrial organizational psychology, specializing in the science of selection. I applied this education directly in a variety of roles within the military, including leading selection assessment centres for various military roles.

Following my military service, I held executive leadership roles in health care, in the private sector and through my work as a consultant. Today, I'm an entrepreneur and the president of the Canadian Leadership Co., where my team of veterans work with organizations across Canada to strengthen leadership, character and organizational effectiveness.

### 0930

I give back to my community through the volunteer work I do with a number of veteran organizations, including the Treble Victor Group and the Vimy Foundation, where I sit on the volunteer board. I also sit on the board of the Human Resources Professionals Association.

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to work with individuals who demonstrate extraordinary service, courage, compassion and commitment to others. One of the lessons I learned throughout my career is that exceptional citizenship often occurs quietly. Many of Ontario's most deserving citizens do not seek recognition for themselves; they simply choose to serve their communities, help others and make a difference. The work of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council is important, because it helps ensure that these individuals are recognized and celebrated. Honours and awards not only acknowledge individual achievement, but also reinforce the values that strengthen our province: service, integrity, leadership, compassion, and dedication to community.

If appointed, I would approach this role with independence, fairness and respect for the council's mandate. I would carefully review nominations on their merits, remain open to diverse perspectives, and seek to ensure that recipients reflect the breadth and diversity of excellence that exists across Ontario.

My experience evaluating leadership, character and contributions in the military, academia and the private sector has given me a strong appreciation for the many ways individuals contribute to society. I believe this perspective would allow me to make a meaningful contribution to the council's work. I view this appointment as an opportunity to continue a lifetime commitment to public service and to help recognize those Ontarians whose contributions inspire others and strengthen our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Rob, for that presentation. We really appreciate it.

Over to the government side for six minutes, 41 seconds: MPP Racinsky.

**Mr. Joseph Racinsky:** First of all, thank you for your service to our country. I want to start with that. It's very much appreciated.

I have had the privilege of going to some of the annual ceremony reviews of some of the cadets, over the last few weeks, that have been going on back in my riding. It has been wonderful to attend. I've been able to serve as a reviewing officer and to see the cadet squadrons and corps and also the partnership with our Legions and all those communities. It was a really special time.

After serving two decades in the military, you have continued to be a strong advocate for the military community. Why is that work important to you?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** The work is most important to me because I want our veterans to succeed, post their military career. Foundational to this is that they've given so much to their country during their time of service that we should set them up for success post-military service as well. I think that's a duty that we have as a country. I don't think we're always doing it really well, and there's also a component of it which is that transition from the military life to outside the military is very, very difficult. I experienced that myself, even though I thought I was well set up for it. So, even in an organic sense, where I can give back to my veteran community to help others succeed, I want to do that.

**Mr. Joseph Racinsky:** Thank you for that.

The other question I had was, for this board position you're being appointed to, do you know what the reimbursement is, how much you'll be making—if you are successful in being appointed?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** My understanding is that there's no remuneration.

**Mr. Joseph Racinsky:** That's my understanding as well. Thank you for that.

You seem like an extremely highly qualified individual, and I'm not sure what the bluster from the opposition was, about the big bucks you're going to be making.

Thank you for appearing today and answering my questions.

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you, Mr. Francis, for your service to our province, to our country. I think your nomination and your interest in serving on this council will be a great benefit to everyone.

The council's work involves evaluating nominations with fairness and sound judgment.

Can you provide an example of how you have worked collaboratively in a decision-making environment, particularly where perspectives differ?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** In the first 10 years of my military career, I was a naval warfare officer, at sea, doing oper-

ations. In the second 10 years, I was a personnel selection officer in the military, and that was where the degree came into play. and qualification for being a selection officer. I participated in a number of assessment centres in the military, where we would assess candidates for suitability for a particular role. One in particular that I was the chair of was selecting people to be a conduct-after-capture instructor. We put our folks through some intense training to go abroad, and we need to make sure they're trained very well, so choosing the instructors is a very critical role. Chairing that board—we had a number of diverse perspectives to choose those candidates using the criteria, and it was my job to make the final decision, taking into account all those perspectives and then hopefully choosing the right folks to go forward. That's one example.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you very much.

I will pass my time to my colleagues.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Welcome, Mr. Francis. I think your résumé, your education and your military service speaks for itself.

The committee you're going to be on and lead will look at people for these civilian honours, very important roles. Do you think your experience in the military and/or in the private sector will prepare you for that?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I do. I think that's something unique about my background, the variety of environments that I've worked in—certainly, the military and my time in the private sector and the charitable board I sit on now, with the Vimy Foundation, and just serving in my community. So I think I've got a breadth of experience from a number of different perspectives, not just the military, and I think that well qualifies me to sit on this committee.

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

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Rob, I want to thank you for your service first.

During your 20 years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces, you've held several leadership roles. What experiences do you believe best prepared you for evaluating leadership, service and citizenship in others?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I think it's the times in the Persian Gulf, in the theatre of war, as we consider it. That was 2001 and 2002, when Canada supported the mission in Afghanistan, when we began that. Certainly, there were a lot of tense times during that time. I was a lot younger then, but I led a small team of about 10 folks. So, from a leadership perspective, my role was critical—but also evaluating others in order to do their jobs, and having to make some hard decisions with life-and-death consequences, potentially, if you make the wrong decisions. I think there's a lot of gravity to those moments.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you for your service. You have vast experience in both domestic and international operations.

These are challenging situations. These are challenging times.

How would your approach to leadership be focused in a challenging situation?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** It depends on the amount of time that we have to make decisions. So, yes, there's a lot of context to making the decisions. In the context of what I'm being nominated for, the way I would approach that is to slow things down and really to understand, hear all the voices that are at the table and be able to synthesize those. And then focusing on the mandate—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much. Sorry to cut you off.

Over to the official opposition: MPP Gates.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Good morning, Mr. Francis. How are you?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I'm doing well, thank you.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I want to start by recognizing your military service and your professional background.

My dad served in World War II from 1939 to 1945. We're lucky he came home, or I wouldn't be here.

What I want to say is thank you for what you do. You clearly have a distinguished résumé.

My questions are really about fit, conflict and public confidence in the particular appointments. It was interesting when you said you just do your job. You're evaluating people; you just do your job. I've been trying to get the Conservatives to do that for the last three weeks, so it kind of fits in to where I'm thinking.

Do you agree that appointments to public honours bodies should be independent from political or insider networks?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I do, yes. I think they need to be independent. I've actually been listening to MPP Glover's comments, and a lot of them resonated—from what you were saying around having that independence. It's critical to democracy, I believe, yes.

0940

**MPP Wayne Gates:** My next question we ask for everybody who comes through the committee—at least, we do; not everybody does, but we do.

Have you ever donated to Premier Ford?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I've donated to the PC Party.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** You've never donated to Premier Ford's campaign?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I'm not aware that I did do that, no. I know in 2018, I made a couple of donations to the PC Party.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** So you've donated to the PC Party?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes, I did do that.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** And have you donated to the PC riding associations?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I don't know. I may have. There were two donations I made in 2018; I'm not exactly sure what they were for—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry. MPP Smith, on a point of order.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Yes, Madam Chair—if we could keep the questions aligned with the qualifications of the applicant, please.

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

MPP Gates.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** We've heard that before—that complaint—but I think it's very important so that people understand. I'm not going to lie about that.

As I was trying to look you up to get a little background, I saw there is an about.me page where you went by “Robbie.” Is that accurate?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes. Robbie is my official name.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I find, in the Elections Ontario records, they show PC donation records under “Robert Francis” and “Robbie Francis”—I imagine you are both and the same, even though you're only one person.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** No, I'm not. I'm not Robert.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** So you're not Robert; you go by Robbie?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I'm Robbie. If you look at my driver's licence, it will say Robbie. My parents just cut the—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I have a licence plate that says Gatesy too. I'm very vain myself, so I have one of those licence plates.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Once again—if we could keep the questioning to the qualifications of the applicant.

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

MPP Gates.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** The reason I ask that is because when I tried to look you up, it said that you had donated the maximum amount to the PC Party. So is that part accurate?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I don't know what the maximum is, but I recall at the time making sure that I wasn't overstepping any bounds.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** In 2018, were you an executive at Medcan or, later, ReGen Scientific at all? Were you involved with that company?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes, I was.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I believe you should know advocates who challenge these clinics—so that company that you're working for. And I'm saying that we believe it's illegal to charge patients for access to family doctors, because it was creating a two-tier health system.

With your donations in 2018—Premier Ford was being very clear during his election campaign that he believes in a two-tier or private, for-profit health care system. Were you aware of that when you were donating to them?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** No, I was not.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Point of order: If we could stay on the subject to the individual's qualifications, please—

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Sabawy, MPP Smith has the floor. Thanks.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you. Point of order—if we could keep the questions to his qualifications, please.

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

MPP Gates, just a reminder to keep your questions to the qualifications specifically—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that because—listen, I appreciate the individual.

I appreciate the service that you've done in the military: Risking your life, whether you're a police officer, or firefighter or whatever, I think is incredible.

But what I want to establish, because this is the problem that I find with the committee, is that we want people who are coming here not because they donate to the PC Party, not because they donate to a failed candidate—I think all that's not wrong.

I believe that anybody who's volunteering—and in your particular case, as my colleague mentioned, you're not getting paid to do this. You're doing this because, obviously—you probably have in your heart that you want to do the right thing, and you've probably seen a lot of your colleagues who probably deserve some kind of recognition. I don't know any volunteer who says, "I'm going to go be chair of the United Way, but I want to get recognized for it." They do it out of the kindness of their heart; I think everybody who volunteers does.

Quite frankly, the reason why we're the greatest country in the world is because of the number of people who volunteer, not only from a young age, but almost until they're in the grave. I think that's good.

But I want to establish that when you come to the committee and you're donating to a particular party, and the company you work for is a for-profit, that sends a red flag up to me—no disrespect to you at all.

I believe that we should have a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system. I think it's fair and reasonable for me to tell you how I feel, as a committee member. You don't have to agree with me, but that's how I feel.

So that's where the line of questioning came from. And I do appreciate you answering, "Yes, I work for that company," and "Yes, that's what they did," "Yes, that's what Premier Ford wanted to do in 2018"—

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I don't agree with those last two comments.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I agree.

I'm going to turn this over to my colleague, because he has asked for a few minutes to ask you a couple of questions. Is that okay with you?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I'm sure it is.

Anyway, go ahead, Chris.

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

**Mr. Chris Glover:** First of all, I want to thank you for your service. It's really quite remarkable.

I want to pick up on a couple of things that you mentioned.

You mentioned that you're part of the Vimy Foundation. I have two great-grandfathers and a great-uncle who served at Vimy. My great-grandfather suffered injuries that eventually led to his death. Can you tell me about the Vimy Foundation?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Thanks for that question.

Vimy Foundation is a charity, and its mission is to promote Canada's military history with our youth, primarily around the Battle of Vimy Ridge, but that extends to World War I and World War II. I really believe in the cause of the Vimy Foundation. I was asked to join—with some of the work I was doing in other veteran organizations. So, yes, I've been promoting our military history with our youth.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** The other thing I'd like to say—just to qualify the debate that's going on here—is, I'm glad we're getting the opportunity to ask you questions. This committee should be asking everybody who is appointed to these government agencies questions, and I appreciate that you also support that decision.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I do.

**Mr. Chris Glover:** Thank you. Those are all my questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Over to the third party: MPP Smyth.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you for being here today.

I have a son who just finished some service with the Canadian Armed Forces, so—

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Oh, great. How is he doing?

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** He's doing well. He's out of the Armed Forces now, and it's an interesting transition, for sure.

I know how critically important your work has been and how skilled you are, so I really, really appreciate that.

You're going to be making some big decisions, considering nominations and recommendations for the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Paramedic Bravery, and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. What are some critical elements you're going to look for when you're considering people for these medals? Is there a particular character, something you're looking for, when you're trying to think of how to award these important medals?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I thought about this before I showed up today. In distinguishing those medals that you spoke about, compared to, say, the Order of Ontario which, I believe, is very achievement-oriented—and those awards that you mentioned are service-oriented. So "service" is the term that I cling to when I think about it, and, certainly, the impact that these folks would make to Ontario and trying to assess—I'm assuming there are going to be criteria with which I would assess these candidates. But just thinking about it under my own steam, I would say that it's the service that is provided back, and then selfless service—again, I'm not sure if that's going to be part of the criteria, but doing it in such a way where it's obvious to me that they're doing it for the betterment of their communities and not doing it for some personal gain, perhaps, that they might have. That's the lens I would look at it with.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** In your experience, what have you seen is the role of women in the Armed Forces and being considered for these kinds of medals?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Women, obviously, play an equal and vital role within our military—and some of these other

medals—so I, frankly, haven't thought about women and men differently, as far as the role that they might play for these medals. They should be as equally qualified, as equally able to be nominated. So, frankly, it's not really something I distinguished in my mind until you just asked me that question.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How did you find out about this council and apply to be a volunteer on it?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** About six months ago, I was asked to sit on a panel with Minister McGregor's office. It was a round-table discussion. So it was with my role in the Vimy Foundation—asked to come and represent the views of the Vimy Foundation. It was there that it was mentioned that there were some opportunities for these types of roles—which I inquired with his staff.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Minister McGregor?

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes. Minister McGregor.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** For the record, I know there was some discussion about your political donations. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it looks like there were donations dating back to 2014, with a total of \$12,170 donated to the PC Party.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** That doesn't sound accurate to me. I don't recall anything in 2014.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** We have “Robert,” “Rob,” “Robbie,” but—

**Mr. Rob Francis:** I'm not Robert, no.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Right. But there is just the acknowledgement that that has been your political party of choice.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** Yes.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** When we're talking about volunteering on this kind of committee, what is important to you, with these kinds of medals for people? Do you see it as a great incentive for people to go into military service or to go into public service—such as paramedics, firefighters, young volunteers? Do you think there's a way that you can be in this position and incentivize people to move forward into public service? We know it's a difficult time when it comes to the military. Not all people are made to work as paramedics or firefighters—or volunteer, even.

**Mr. Rob Francis:** How I think about that is that people go into these acts of service or organizations not looking for the medals at all. Certainly, I didn't join for that. So I

think I tie that back to my comment about selfless service. Although, I do also believe strongly that we should recognize people who have done incredible things for our society and our community. I also don't think we do a really good job of that, on the whole, in Canada.

If I can digress for a moment, there's the Victoria Cross debate, and I'm not sure how public that might be, but in my circles—no Canadian has been awarded the Victoria Cross since World War II. We have a number of people who did incredible acts during Afghanistan, who, I believe, should be awarded—not just because of that individual and what they did, but for Canada as a whole.

I think we need to recognize people who've done extraordinary things. Coming back to your question, I think that really can inspire people to join such organizations, as well—when they see other people being recognized for giving back and doing extraordinary acts of service. I think that inspires people.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Well, you've done some pretty extraordinary acts of service. So thank you very, very much—and for volunteering your time for this committee.

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

First of all, I want to thank you for your presentation. Now, Rob, you can sit back and relax and observe the concurrence, or you can go outside and enjoy the sunshine and find out later. We really appreciate you coming in and your offer to help build a better Ontario with us.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Rob Francis, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council, citizenship division.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by MPP Smith. Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That carries.

Congratulations, Mr. Francis. You'll have a skip in your step today.

That concludes our business for today. This committee now stands adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 0954.*





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