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Standing Committee on Government Agencies

Intended appointments

Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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1st Session
44th Parliament
Thursday 30 July 2026

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Jeudi 30 juillet 2026

Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 30 July 2026

Jeudi 30 juillet 2026

The committee met at 0902 in room 151.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Good morning, everyone. It's a beautiful day out there, and we will get you out there as fast as we can, but welcome to our wonderful, friendliest—as we say, the friendliest committee here as Queen's Park, the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. We'll now come to order.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We'll start with the adoption of subcommittee reports. We have a subcommittee report dated Thursday, July 23, 2026. Can I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, July 23, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated July 17, 2026.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I guess it's a little bit from last week, because I raised it last week, about us only having five people, and 12 people turned down coming to the committee. This week again we only have five people, although one is applying for two jobs. But when I look at this number of certificates, we had 17 certificates, the last time we sat, which was two or three weeks ago. Now we've had 31 opportunities for certificates, and we end up having only, really, five out of that 31 coming to this committee. When I dug in deeper, I noticed that 10 of those 31 are PC donors that gave \$19,200—in that area. So I'm just wondering—maybe it would be a good idea to explain how the process works for people still turning us down to come to this committee. Did people say they're not available? Out of the 31, I would think we could get six people and not have to interview the same person twice. It doesn't make a lot of sense to me. Maybe somebody could explain the process. I think it would work out well for me.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): If you notice—and I think this is at the back, too—the list of selection choices by all of you here—Ms. Ashton, who is going to present to us twice today, was selected twice.

MPP Wayne Gates: Selected twice by—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): It's the third party.

MPP Wayne Gates: So the third party selected her to come twice?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Yes, because she's applying for two different committees.

MPP Wayne Gates: No, I understand that.

I guess what I'm trying to get to is that we had 31 people who we could have drawn from, and we end up interviewing—even though we're interviewing the same person twice—we end up with five out of the 31. The reason why I'm asking this is because it always seems to happen when we're not sitting that a lot of the certificates—no disrespect to my colleagues—are PC donors who are donating a fair amount of money to the PC Party, and we don't get a chance to ask any questions to them.

I just think that, if the committee is going to function properly and we have only six opportunities out of 31, we should interview six people. That's my thing, because the individual that was chosen by the third party—and I'll have to have that discussion with them—is for a tribunal. They are different, but it's basically very similar jobs, I guess I'll say to be fair to it—very similar jobs. I just think that, if we're only getting so many opportunities here, and out of 31, we end up with five again, I have a problem with that. I want the committee to function properly. I want to have the opportunity to interview people and do my job. That's what it's about. I appreciate the time.

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

Are the members ready to vote? MPP Smyth.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I just wanted to add to what my colleague was saying that we asked for seven of the intended appointees to attend. You see the number that we have.

But in particular, I'm pretty disturbed by the fact that one who we asked to appear before this committee, Blair McCreadie, being appointed to the LCBO—given his history as the former president of the Ontario PC Party, his long record of donations to the party and its candidates, and the fact that he received a King's Counsel designation after this government revived the patronage practice, it's entirely reasonable that the committee members should have a chance to ask him questions. Only with this government do you get a job interview, you're asked to attend the interview, you refuse to attend the interview, but you still get the job. That is unacceptable.

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

Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That carries.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. NATASHA PAPPIN

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Natasha Pappin, intended appointee as member, Ontario Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now go on to our review of the intended appointees. We have some who are in person and then some who are online. We have two in person and four online.

We have Natasha Pappin, our first intended appointee, who is nominated as a member of the Ontario Review Board. She will be appearing virtually, as I mentioned.

Welcome, Natasha. We're happy to have you here.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Thank you for having me.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you for your willingness to serve on a board to help Ontario be a better province than it is. You have time to share your story and your background with us, and then each party will ask you questions. They have 10 minutes each. The amount of time you take to do your presentation will be deducted from the government side, and they are fine with that, so don't worry.

The floor is yours. Welcome.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Thank you so much for having me. I do appreciate the opportunity to appear virtually, as I am appearing from Ottawa. I am very much interested in a position with the Ontario Review Board, and so I'm happy to discuss that further with you this morning.

Originally, I'm from the Maritimes. I attended university and I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of New Brunswick. I majored in psychology and sociology there. I then moved to Ontario and completed my law degree here in Ottawa at the University of Ottawa. I was called to the bar in Ontario in 2008. Upon completing my articles, it was kind of a natural gravitation for me to begin practising family law. I've always been interested in litigation, and I was living and working in a small community that had a strong need for family lawyers. As a result of that, I was very quickly thrown in, and I gained significant litigation, negotiation and general, overall practice experience.

0910

Early in my career, I was recruited to join the local duty counsel roster. This is implemented by Legal Aid Ontario. As duty counsel, I was appearing in both Family Court and in criminal court on a regular basis. I would assist unrepresented individuals. In Family Court, it's usually at the initial stages of the file; in criminal court, it's usually at the bail stage, and then again at the plea and sentencing stage if a party remains unrepresented and does not proceed to trial. Common to both roles is the need to be able to quickly analyze the file, to know the law, to apply the law to the facts, to follow the court process and to advocate for the unrepresented individual.

I later moved on to adding in some per diem crown attorney work. Doing this, I was prosecuting offences under the Highway Traffic Act and I was acting for the crown at bail court and at sentencing hearings. This gave me an oppor-

tunity to see a criminal file from the opposite side, and at that point I was pursuing the interests of the public.

As my career progressed, my family practice expanded to the point where I was practising family law exclusively. My files now range from less-complex matters that can be resolved through negotiation, sometimes mediation, to higher-conflict files that require the oversight of the court.

More recently, I've joined the Office of the Children's Lawyer, so I now also represent children in family law cases, which is a very different perspective and one that I think has certainly improved how I practise family law, from the perspective of the parent.

My experience has been broad, and it has given me, often, the opportunity to understand both sides of a file. It has highlighted for me the need to be able to consider and to balance the interests of all parties involved in a case. I have a strong respect for the court and for the legal system, and a commitment towards fostering a respectful and inclusive environment that recognizes the rights of all parties under the law.

I think my experience is such that it would be useful with the position that I'm applying for on the Ontario Review Board. I have extensive experience with legal writing; that's the bulk of the family law practice: It's writing and preparing documents and briefs and factums. That really brings the need to know the law, apply the law to the facts and be able to succinctly write that.

I'm happy to answer any questions that you might have.

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

We will go to the government side: six minutes, 10 seconds, MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank you for coming in today, albeit from Ottawa. We appreciate the effort.

You talked a lot about your experience—extensive experience—both public and private, working with the OCL. I actually have quite a bit of experience in that area, and I understand the work that you did. Could you talk about how these qualifications would lead to a better and more responsive adjudicator for this role?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I think in all roles that I have undertaken, the need to be a compassionate individual is important, so I bring that to the table. I'm happy to be a strong advocate, but I also am able to recognize that the people that I'm assisting are people, and they are often going through the hardest stages of their lives. That requires you to treat that very delicately, while also being able to manage a file effectively and to recognize that my role is to be their lawyer—not necessarily to blindly follow their instructions, but to guide them, and to guide them in the law and to guide them on likely outcomes in their case and to be able to effectively advocate for the best outcome that they can potentially achieve.

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you for the presentation. I guess greetings from eastern Ontario—even though I'm in Toronto right now—I represent a riding a little bit east of Ottawa. I would like to ask you the following question:

Can you share an example of a situation during one of your previous roles where you had to balance and consider a number of priorities to actually reach decisions?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: So, in my role, I'm not necessarily reaching decisions. I am taking a position on a file and advocating for the client and pushing their interests forward. I suppose reaching decisions on a file in both family and criminal would be very, very similar. You assess the file, you assess the facts, you assess the evidence, you understand the law and you advise your client with respect to the likely outcome of their file at every stage of the proceedings.

So in terms of making a decision, I suppose it would be the outcome after applying the law to the facts that you would advise the client of. But at all times, the client is the one making the decision. The client is the one instructing me. My job is really to advise along the way and help the client come to the decision that would likely lead them to their best outcome.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Ms. Natasha—it's a very impressive, wide range of experience and expertise in different areas. As you know, the specific board's objective is public safety. How do you plan to contribute to the board's objective in ensuring public safety?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: My job is to receive the evidence that is provided, and I understand that can come from a broad range of sources—so medical reports, testimony, the information about the prior incidents that brought the accused into the system in the first place—and to then apply the law to the facts that are presented. And so, I guess the expertise that I bring is the ability to know and understand the law, to be able to review previous case law, to take from that case law key elements and then to use that to inform a decision that accords with the directives set out in the legislation.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Chair, how much time is left?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Good question: one minute, 31 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you.

Ms. Pappin, thank you so much for being here. My question for you is, how you would describe the qualifications that you bring to the role and how they address the challenges that Ontarians face with this area of service?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: My qualifications really focus on litigation, so I have a strong litigation background. I have a background in criminal law as well as family law, so both of those roles have made me very familiar with reviewing evidence and being able to apply the law to the facts and evidence that I'm presented with.

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

Ms. Natasha Pappin: In terms of how that is going to come forward with respect to the challenges being faced by the board, I think, one of the challenges that the board would face and should face is scrutiny of all their decisions. And so, being able to bring to the table and to the

panel my history and experience of applying the law to the facts, I think, will help direct the conversation, will help focus the conversation so that we're all remembering what our job is, which is to apply the tests and apply the law in the circumstances of that particular case.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the official opposition: MPP Gates, you have the floor.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thanks for coming here. Pappin is not a very common name. Are you any relation to a hockey player that played with the Chicago Blackhawks for a number of years?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: So, I'm not; it's my married name. I think that there is some distant history on my husband's side of the family to that individual, yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: I kind of chuckled when I saw the name; it's not that familiar.

The other thing—staying with hockey—I see you're a U18 convenor. Are you still doing that?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I am, yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: So you certainly know how to mediate, then, with parents, with scheduling.

0920

Ms. Natasha Pappin: That's correct. I am the U18 hockey convenor. I've been the hockey convenor since my son was in U11, so I followed him through each age category. In more recent years, I've assumed the role of vice-president of support services, which comes with the risk and safety profile. So I have a lot of experience mediating disputes that arise, and that can come from parents, that can be between players, or complaints in general. I am the complaints department, so I do have a lot of experience navigating that.

MPP Wayne Gates: The complaints department—that's interesting, in minor hockey.

I see you've done a lot of family law.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I have.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm very interested in family law, and I'm going to ask you a question. In family law, you were talking about—you're going to look at the review board. Do you believe that the mediation process is working? And do you believe that joint physical custody is one way to get rid of that conflict in family law?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Those are very different questions. With respect to the mediation process, I do support the mediation process. I think it has a role, and I think that there are files that can be very effectively managed through mediation. I think that many of my family files in particular—and I'm sure other lawyers would speak similarly—have an element of emotion to them that can be supported in mediation in a way that it can't be in the courtroom. The courtroom has a strict application of the rules, the law, and there's not really a lot of room to move within that application, whereas mediation allows the people to be heard, it allows them to talk about very specific concerns.

For me, I see the most benefit when parenting issues are mediated, because a parent can have a very specific concern that the court is not necessarily going to be in a position to have the jurisdiction to govern. But when that

is explored thoroughly in mediation, everyone can understand where that concern is coming from. We can think outside the box. We can come up with a solution that keeps everyone happy—or everyone can also be unhappy as a result of mediation, but we've reached common ground, we can understand where the concern is coming from and we can look for solutions.

With respect to joint physical custody of the children, I think that the research is very clear that if it is appropriate and in the best interests of the children, it is important for them to have strong relationships with both parents. The paramount consideration in Family Court is the best interest of the children. Do I think that joint 50-50—which we call parenting time now—is necessarily always in the best interests of the children? I don't. I see a lot of high-conflict files, and I think that there are very significant circumstances that would mean that is not in the best interests of the children. I think that that has to have the opportunity to be explored.

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate your answer.

Do you have experience working with people with complex mental health issues, especially in a legal setting?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Family law and criminal law often overlap, and—certainly not mental health considerations like we would be dealing with at the Ontario Review Board level, but a lot of the individuals who I both represent and oppose come to the table with mental health challenges that need to be navigated. They present additional challenges for family files, certainly.

But also, when you understand what's at play, it can allow you to, again, think of solutions. That's sometimes where mediation can be very helpful, because some of these struggles, particularly anxiety, can cause someone to really struggle to get to a resolution in their file, whereas if they have the opportunity to talk that through with someone who can very easily manage the conversation, they get the chance to be heard and that really goes a long way.

MPP Wayne Gates: Given the authority granted to the Ontario Review Board, what steps would you take to ensure that every person appearing before you has the confidence that their case is being decided independently and impartially?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I'm a very good listener—

MPP Wayne Gates: You're a good talker, too—just saying.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I'm not sure what to make of that.

I am a very good listener—I think I bring that to the table.

One of the things that I find is an important aspect of my role as a family lawyer is understanding the story. So you'll have an individual call you, and they want information, they want advice. My first step is, "We have to have a meeting. I need to know the background." It's not relevant why the marriage or relationship ended, but to understand why it ended can really help you understand the next step that is going to be needed in a family file.

So I guess my strength is to hear: hear the background; hear what's bringing this individual before me at any given time. I think that that will speak for itself in how these people who are coming before the board do feel that they

are being heard and have the chance to be heard and adjudicated fairly.

MPP Wayne Gates: How would you handle a situation where two medical experts disagree on a patient's condition or mental state?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: In family law, we often have competing experts. I guess, in my particular experience, I'm generally favouring one of those experts.

But on the board, it would be my job to apply the law. And if one of those experts, if their position is not in accordance with the law—I think the important thing is, we have to know, does this individual present a significant risk, and can that risk be mitigated? That's the information that we always have to go back and look at. And if that risk is a potential in the future—if six pre-conditions happen—then I think that that is something that we have to then refocus on and come back to the drawing board in terms of, "Is that a risk that can be medicated?" and "How do we manage that in the least onerous way to the accused?"

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

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I have not.

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

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I have not.

MPP Wayne Gates: What role should expert testimony play in making a determination about someone's fitness to stand trial or be criminally responsible?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I think the experts play a strong role. These are the individuals who are educated and experienced in coming to these determinations. But I think that that's one factor. And just like in every other aspect of the law, it's one factor that gets considered. You have to look at the picture as a whole.

MPP Wayne Gates: First, I want to thank you for doing duty law. I think that plays an important part of our court system where, as you know, usually people that come for duty don't have the money to get a lawyer. They need some advice; they need it quickly. So I want to thank you for doing that. There are not a lot of lawyers that do that. It's greatly appreciated, I know, by people that sometimes can't afford a lawyer—I mean, I don't know about lawyers in Toronto, but even in Niagara now, they're like \$500 an hour—and sometimes they need advice. I just wanted to say I'm really glad that you decided, during your career, to do that. It's a role that's needed to be played in our society, and so just thanks for doing that.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Forty-three seconds.

MPP Wayne Gates: What is one thing the Ontario Review Board can do better to serve the public?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I think that the Ontario Review Board does very important work. I'm not sure that it's something that the review board would do, but I think, in general, increased resources would go a long way towards serving the public. The ability to meet the needs of everyone are often restricted by resources and availability of community supports. Having more opportunities that are

open to use for these individuals and to help implement the conditions that the board would want to impose would go a long way towards opening more doors in terms of decisions—

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

Over to the third party: MPP Smyth.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Natasha, for being here today. We really appreciate you making the time.

I just wanted to follow up on a question that my colleague asked you. According to the Ontario Review Board's website, the number of accused subject to the jurisdiction of the board has been increasing at a rate of about 10% per year. So you're talking to accessibility, right? And that issue you see as a problem.

0930

Now, we know that the government struggled with getting French-language accessibility in other boards. Do you speak French, and are you committed to improving any French-language skills to help in any kind of backlog that we see with this board?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: In my very young years—elementary school—I did attend a French school, so I do have dated experience speaking French. French comprehension is stronger than my French communication. It's something I would certainly be willing to develop if that would help fill a need, but it's been a long time.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Those rudimentary skills—you can sometimes understand, but speaking is different. But it's nice to hear that you'd be committed to working on that if that were needed.

I guess I wanted to start with the scope of the review board. It operates under a really specific statutory mandate, and that is balancing public safety with the treatment and reintegration of individuals found not criminally responsible or unfit to stand trial. So how do you see what we respect as a great, extensive family law and duty counsel background really informing the decisions that you would be making on this board?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: In all aspects of practising law, you go back to the drawing board. You go to the legislation; you follow the legislation; you review previous decisions and see how the legislation has been applied, and that's how you're directed to make legal decisions. That's kind of the same way I would be operating, certainly, as the legal member on the panel: going back to the drawing board and refocusing and remembering that this is the mandate, and we have to focus on what we have been directed to do via the legislation and via the courts and remember to apply that legislation and that previous case law.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Zeroing in on the public safety aspect: A big responsibility of yours would be assessing the public safety risk during the hearings. Again, with your experience as duty counsel and roster lawyer with Legal Aid, what key indicators or structural issues would you see that you would rely on in evaluating just whether an individual is ready for community supervision or a conditional discharge?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I think this would be a lot like bail court. When you go to bail court, typically it's as a duty counsel lawyer, in my experience, and duty counsel is often the first legal representation of an individual who comes into custody. The job is to assess whether this individual can be released into the community. And that release has to be on the less onerous release conditions that can be implemented and ensure that the accused is going to comply with the law, and the safety of the public will be maintained. So I think that that experience has been important in my life and it's important for me to go back to those basics.

Often, we see very violent offences and offenders that come before the board. The instinct of the public would be that they should not be released into society, and there can be fear brought about. But when we look at what our job is, the job is to assess, and we're going to have expert evidence in terms of whether this individual is ready. And then the job is to assess—if they are ready to be released and not going to be subject to a further detention order—what conditions we can put in place. How can we mitigate risk? And those conditions—obviously, they can't be a blanket “every condition under the sun.” It has to be very specific to this individual and it has to be applicable to the risk. And I think that my experience in bail court, on both sides, would prepare me for making those determinations.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right. There are some really high stakes and emotional dynamics when you're looking at and advocating for some vulnerable people. And you've done that in the past, obviously, in your work, but you have to in this case also be evaluating really complex psychiatric and medical evidence that's presented during these proceedings. So do you feel that you've had enough experience to help you navigate through these kinds of decisions that can get a lot of attention, that are pretty complex and do have the high stakes?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I do. I think that I do have this experience. As a very junior lawyer, I was appearing in bail court, and I've had the opportunity to assist on very complex matters even at that stage. You're advocating for the accused, but you do still balance a number of competing interests. So, even as representation for the accused, I have the accused's family—sometimes what they want doesn't actually align with what should happen for an accused. I've been in bail court where I've had an accused's family member not think that their person should be released, and they think it's the job of the court to help, to support, to provide treatment—any of those things—and that doesn't align with what's in the interests of the accused. When you look at the circumstances—and sometimes it takes a little bit more investigation, but remember that I'm in a situation there where I'm advocating for the accused. So it takes a little bit more investigation and a little bit more hard work and sometimes a few more court appearances while we work to put together a plan that can rely on, perhaps, other community supports.

I think what's important is being able to, obviously, review the medical evidence and to hear what is being told to us, but then also to start to think about how these risks

can be mitigated and what community supports are available—and are those supports enough? I think when you look at it from that perspective, my experience doing that is significant, and it will help me balance this position as well.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right. Thank you for that answer.

You are going to be doing this on a part-time basis. We talked about the workload with the ORB; they've got 2,000 proceedings a year at least anyway, and it seems to be increasing. If I'm right, you're going to maintain your independent legal practice through this. So how do you think you're going to be able to manage your schedule with the demands? There's a lot at stake with the work that you're going to be doing on the board, and then you've got your other work as well. So how do you feel about the demands on your schedule and the ability to have the right prep time required for the complex hearings at the board?

Ms. Natasha Pappin: I've been a sole practitioner almost throughout my entire career. What I enjoy and appreciate about that is the flexibility it gives me. When I say I'm a sole practitioner—I don't have staff. I am entirely on my own. I do all of my own documents, all of my own administration.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Wow.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Doing that allows me to govern my practice. I take the files that I want to take.

But what I've learned since departing from criminal law and becoming more heavily focused on family law is that I miss doing something different. I liked the diversity in my practice. In the past, I've managed certainly a family file load—I maintain private files—while doing duty counsel. I maintain private files while prosecuting for the crown. Right now, I'm doing OCL and maintaining my own private files.

So balancing roles is something that I'm very familiar with doing.

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

Ms. Natasha Pappin: The flexibility of my practice allows me to scale back as I need to, so that's something that I'm very thankful that I've had the fortunate opportunity to structure my practice this way.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. Terrific, Natasha. Thank you so much for answering my questions. I appreciate it.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Natasha, for your time today. If you actually have some free time and you want to stay online, we do have a bunch more people to interview, and then we will be making our decisions—or you can just go about your day and you will find out later on.

Ms. Natasha Pappin: Okay. Thank you.

MR. PATRICK MURPHY

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party and official opposition party: Patrick Murphy, intended appointee as member, Ontario Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now, we will go look at the second intended appointee, who is here in person. That is Patrick Murphy, if you would like to come to the front after you get some delicious Toronto tap water.

0940

MPP Wayne Gates: Best water in the province.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Delicious, clean, safe.

Welcome, Patrick.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Patrick Murphy is nominated as member of the Ontario Review Board, and we are happy to have him here in person. That's always a treat.

Patrick, I'll give you the lay of the land. You will have the floor to share your story and tell us about yourself and your experience. Then, each side will have 10 minutes of questioning, but whatever time you take for your presentation will be removed from the government side's time, and they are fine with that—look at their happy faces; very happy with that.

The floor is yours. Welcome.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Good morning, everyone. As you know, my name is Patrick Murphy. I'm a lawyer at Donnelly and Murphy in Goderich, although I currently live in Thornbury. I practised for 30 years in Goderich. I lived on a farm just outside of Goderich. I semi-retired six years ago—just before the pandemic—and moved to Thornbury, where I now live. I still work part-time at Donnelly and Murphy. My practice is restricted now to estate administration, litigation and guardianship applications.

My history has been dealing with a lot of mental health issues. I studied at the University of Toronto and Queen's University. I'm a certified mediator, and I was designated a specialist in civil litigation by the Law Society of Ontario. I've been honoured to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board for a number of years as a legal member, but my interest in mental health law predated that by virtue of my work in estates, guardianship applications and things of that nature—there were a lot of mental health and capacity issues.

I've been fortunate to sit as a deputy judge at Small Claims Court. I was appointed by the local senior regional justice and confirmed by the Attorney General.

A number of years ago, I was fortunate enough to sit on the Ontario Review Board. That's about two decades ago, and I always wanted to get back to the board, but practice is busy. So when I semi-retired, I looked for an opportunity to get back onto the ORB, and in January, the Ontario Bar Association—they send out monthly emails to their members identifying appointments to the judiciary and to government that may be of interest to their members, and in January the Ontario Review Board was looking for legal members, so I applied.

I have a lot of adjudicative experience, both sitting on the Consent and Capacity Board and as a deputy judge at Small Claims Court. Although my time on the ORB was a number of years ago, I'm still familiar with the mandate

and the process. At the time, I was aware and completed written reasons in all of the matters that were before me, which was a big difference from the Consent and Capacity Board, where reasons are required only on request of the parties. So time management was critical, and now I have a lot more of that and I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to come back to sit on the Ontario Review Board.

I want to thank you all for seeing me this morning.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for sharing that, Patrick. I feel like we're going to have to chat afterwards, because I grew up in Collingwood, right next door to you.

We'll hand it over to the government side now, and they have six minutes and 57 seconds. Who would like to start off? MPP Bailey, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you for coming in today—very interesting presentation, between your CV and your spoken presentation.

Because of your great background in adjudication and the legal system, what do you think you will bring to the role that will add even greater significance to the board?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: I think probably the most important aspect of being an adjudicator is an ability to listen. We all have busy lives—we're all reading papers; we're making presentations—and as advocates, we're advocating for a party. But the adjudicator is in a special role of listening to the evidence.

With respect to the board, the evidence is presented on behalf of the crown by way of a psychiatrist. The accused can testify. They have counsel. And so the ability to distill the information that you receive and then to listen to the new information—I think my experience as a member of the Consent and Capacity Board and as a deputy judge, in addition to being a mediator—I've spent the last 10 years of my practice mediating cases. The ability to listen, I think, has been the most important part of that job, and I think I can bring that to the board.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Thank you very much, Mr. Murphy. It's very impressive to hear that long history of contributions and involvement in different aspects of the judicial system and law application.

I'll stick to the same question I asked the member who presented before: How do you plan to contribute to the board objective in ensuring public safety, which is, as I have said, this main objective of any case that will get to you? Especially since you served in that committee before—you have an idea about that.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes. That's a good question.

The mandate is protection of the public over all; that's the paramount mandate. And as a member of a panel, I won't be making these decisions by myself. I'll be a member of either a three- or five-member panel. There's going to be a recommendation made by the crown attorney as to whether there should be a detention order, a conditional discharge or an absolute discharge. With respect to the conditional discharge, there will be recommendations regarding conditions.

So the panel member's job is to review those, listen to the evidence and satisfy ourselves that the public can be protected by way of the recommendations. That's our job. I've done that before. It's very similar in the Consent and Capacity Board, because there are tests under the Mental Health Act for involuntary status. While "protection of the public" is not one of them, "harm to others" is, and so we take that as "protection of the public," and we make decisions based on that. We do it by listening to the evidence and making a decision as a group. I think I can do that. I've done it before. I'm currently doing it on the Consent and Capacity Board.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: This will follow my first question as well: How well aware are you of mental health care and mental health law in Ontario?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: I'm fairly familiar with it. I've been sitting on the Consent and Capacity Board since 2013—sorry, 2016; 2013 was the end of my previous appointment. So I've been on the CCB for 17 years. We deal with the Mental Health Act, the Health Care Consent Act, Substitute Decisions Act and a number of other ancillary pieces of legislation. So I'm very familiar with it.

With respect to the Ontario Review Board: We're governed by part XX of the Criminal Code. When matters come before us, there is an NCR finding already. Capacity comes into the context only in the sense that we're told whether an accused is capable or incapable with respect to medication, property, personal care—that sort of thing. We don't review those decisions. Our job is to do the reviews and listen to recommendations by the crown, listen to arguments from the defence and make a decision in the protection of the public.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Perfect. I'll just move to the second half of that, which is: How updated are you with the latest developments in health care and the delivery of care in this sector?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Delivery of care in respect of psychiatric mental health illnesses? My experience is related only to adjudicating the matters that come before me, so with the Consent and Capacity Board, it's either an involuntary status, a finding of incapacity, a community treatment order. I'm not as familiar with—I know that there are issues with bed availability wait times. Sometimes people who are brought into the emergency department on a form 1 or a form 2 under the Mental Health Act are often housed in areas that are not as therapeutic as they could be for a period of time until beds open up. I'm aware of that; I'm not involved in that part in any way.

0950

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My next question will be, can you share one example of a situation during one of your previous roles where you had to balance and consider a number of priorities to reach a decision?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes. There's a criteria under the Mental Health Act to keep somebody in the hospital against their will, and it's called "serious physical impairment of the patient." And often, we see these

people—they're in the hospital, they're clearly mentally ill, they have a mental health diagnosis. But there's no cogent evidence that they are deteriorating physically. They don't have any diseases. They're living on the street, but a lot of people live on the street.

And so, we are tasked with deciding whether the doctor is keeping them in the hospital because it's best for them, or whether there's a serious likelihood that they'll suffer some serious physical impairment. And often, we have to release those people because the hospital is not a hotel—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much—sorry to interrupt. That concludes the questions from the government side.

We're over to the official opposition. MPP Gates, you have the floor.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thanks, Mr. Murphy, for coming. I do appreciate the people who take the time to come to the committee, particularly in person. That doesn't mean I'm going to be any softer on you than I am on other people, but as we're seeing with this committee, a lot of people just say no. We're seeing that today with the LCBO and some of the other appointments. I do respect the fact that you're here. I do respect the fact that I can ask you tough questions. Hopefully you can appreciate that, but I had to get that out.

The other thing is, I saw you drinking the water from Queen's Park. It's public, and you know it's safe—always remember that.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Absolutely.

MPP Wayne Gates: One way to keep our water safe to drink is to make sure it stays public.

So I'm going to get into questions that I think are very important from your past record. Have you ever been a member of a political party or donated to a political party?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes. At different times, I've been a member of both the Liberal and the Progressive Conservative Parties, and I've donated to both local candidates in my riding in Huron-Bruce and in my riding in Simcoe-Grey.

MPP Wayne Gates: Would you remember how much you donated to the PC Party prior to your appointment to this position? And who it was to, I guess?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: It was to Brian Saunderson, who is my local MPP, and it was \$500.

MPP Wayne Gates: How much?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: It was \$500.

MPP Wayne Gates: Just so you know, I did extensive research on you last night at about 2 o'clock in the morning so I could have some questions for you this morning. But I have you donating \$2,000 to the PC Party since 2023.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: That could be.

MPP Wayne Gates: Would that be accurate?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes. I've gone to a number of fundraisers since 2023. There were dinners; I think they were \$500 each.

MPP Wayne Gates: So that would be fair to say, that it's accurate?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Oh, that's accurate, yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: It could be more, but that's fair—at least \$2,000, right?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: Okay. I appreciate that.

Do you think donations to the government's party, along with 30%—think about this. That's why I had that little speech earlier—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Point of order—MPP Smith, with a point of order.

Ms. Laura Smith: If we could keep the questions to the applicant's credentials and what's on his résumé, please, in perspective to the appointment.

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

MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you.

Do you think your donation to the government's party, along with 30% of the appointees going through this committee this week, have anything to do with your appointment here?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: I don't think so. I mean, I've been appointed as a deputy judge of the Small Claims Court. That was on a recommendation of the local senior justice in the southwest region. It was approved by the Attorney General. I was appointed to the Consent and Capacity Board in 2003, again in 2016.

I'm hoping to be appointed to the Ontario Review Board in 2026. I'd like to think it's because I have something to offer, and I don't have any insight into whether it has anything to do with it.

MPP Wayne Gates: So nobody from the PC Party approached you to apply for this?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: No, nobody did. I got an email—I've been interested and I was following it, and there haven't been any openings. When I got the email from the Ontario Bar Association, I applied.

MPP Wayne Gates: Just my own priority, I'd rather win an election than be appointed, but that's just me. We run into a lot of appointments that I'm seeing through here that kind of drive me nuts.

Regardless of whether a donation affected the decision to appoint you, do you acknowledge that political donations can cause distrust among the public?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: That's a tough question because—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Once again, the questions should pertain to the individual's capacity to do the job on the application.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): So we need to make a connection, as you are well aware, MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: I certainly do appreciate it, but I'll—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): If you don't mind making the connection.

MPP Wayne Gates: No, I don't mind at all; I appreciate the time to look at my next question.

This role is going to require you to deal with individuals who have mental health issues. In your extensive legal

career, have you dealt with legal issues for people with mental health issues?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes, many times. I'll give you a very basic example. When someone comes in and they want to instruct you to prepare a will, you have to do a mini cognitive assessment, look for any red flags, look for any family members that are with them or brought them to your office to make sure that they have the capacity. If you're concerned in any way, you send them off to their family doctor to get a letter to indicate that they have the capacity to instruct you to do a will.

Guardianship applications are always related to people who are incapable but have not signed a power of attorney because of that incapacity. So family members are trying to look after them, whether it's their personal care, their finances. They have to have a guardianship order from the court, and you need a capacity assessment. You'd have to go to court. You'd have to establish to the court that this person is indeed incapable and not just incapable but needs the assistance of a guardian.

Then, with the Consent and Capacity Board, all we deal with are people under the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act.

MPP Wayne Gates: With the role that you've done over the last number of years, are you seeing a big jump in mental health issues in society?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: It's a tremendous jump. Just to give you an example, we're dealing, at the Consent and Capacity Board, with about 8,500 cases a year. When I first started, there were about 2,000 cases a year. It's a tremendous jump. We are strained with getting all the hearings done because we're mandated to have the hearings done within seven days of an application. So, yes, I see a tremendous jump in mental health cases.

MPP Wayne Gates: I notice that you spent a lot of time on mediation in your career. How important is mediation to the system and—yes, I guess that's probably a fair question.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes, I think it's critically important, speaking not just as a mediator but as a litigator for many years. Courts are overburdened with cases. I'm on a trial list right now where I am looking at 2028 in the fall to have the case heard, and it's ready to go now, in the summer of 2026.

Mediation is a fantastic opportunity to bring the parties together and, at the very least, narrow the issues if you can't settle the case. Mediation is critical, I think, not just in civil litigation, but they're doing it now in criminal law as well.

MPP Wayne Gates: You might not be able to say this, but ballpark it: If you go to mediation and get it resolved, obviously, a big factor in that is the cost and court availability. But if you took a case all the way through trial—say, a three-week trial—what is the cost? What would you say would be a fair cost to do a three-week trial?

1000

Mr. Patrick Murphy: It depends on whether you have expert evidence. If you've got a number of expert doctors, a number of expert engineers—I just had a trial in 2025

that I was involved in where the disbursements between the three lawyers involved were \$200,000; not legal fees, just the disbursements. So the three-week trial would put another \$200,000 to \$300,000 on top of that.

MPP Wayne Gates: And that's why you want to try and get to mediation and explain all the ramifications if you lose.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes, you want to go to mediation, for sure.

MPP Wayne Gates: There are court costs and all that kind of stuff.

I'm a big fan of mediation. I've been involved in the labour union for a long time, and I think it's a way to settle things without both parties fighting over nothing and ending up in court. You know that sometimes happens.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: How would you work to ensure that the people appearing before you have a reasonable chance to participate in the review process?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: At first instance, they all have counsel. They have counsel who are familiar with the Ontario Review Board. They're familiar with the legislation. They meet with counsel. And the hearings are in person, and the accused come to the hearing in person with their counsel and have every opportunity to participate through their counsel and by their own evidence. So they have a full opportunity to present their case before the board.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thanks very much. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the third party. MPP Smyth, you have the floor.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for being here. It's nice to see you here today. We really appreciate it.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Thank you very much.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I appreciate and respect your background and the work that you've done before with the board and your work with the CCB as well.

What I wanted to ask you is, coming to this appointment now, what changes or shifting trends do you see now in psychiatry or in public safety that you've observed since your last tenure, and how would your past leadership experience with this guide your approach in this new term?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: My answer will be related to the Consent and Capacity Board because I sat on it in two different sections. Between 2003 and 2013, I would say psychiatrists were less likely to place somebody on an involuntary form than they are today. There were many fewer cases; I think in the middle 2,000s per year, whereas 8,500 in 2026. And I don't know whether that's because of training or experience within psychiatry.

I had a case recently where the psychiatrist kept the person in on an involuntary basis because, statistically, somebody with a diagnosis such as this person, if decompensated, would act out in 15% of the cases. Of course, the standard before the board is more likely than not, so more than 50%, and the psychiatrist was obviously unaware of that and so came to the board. We had a full hearing on evidence that this person was well under 50% likely to cause any harm to others or harm to himself. So I find they're being much

more cautious when people are coming to the ER in a disturbed state.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: This extra caution—given public safety is paramount and one of the mandates of the board, how do you feel about that?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: The ORB is completely different because the mandate is protection of the public, first and foremost. At the Consent and Capacity Board, it's the least restrictive option for the patient. The board is completely different. Your goal is to protect the public. If you're going to give an absolute discharge, the evidence is going to have to be overwhelming that this person is not going to be a danger to the public in any way, shape or form. So I think because the mandate is so different from the Consent and Capacity Board, it's easier to focus on the public than it is to focus on what may or may not happen to the individual themselves.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: So you don't see changing that, shifting your framework between the two different objectives, as difficult? In fact, there's a little bit more clarity, in a sense.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: I think there's a little bit more clarity, yes. I don't think it will be difficult at all. As I indicated, as an adjudicator, your job for the most part is to listen, and then of course you collaborate with your panel members, apply the evidence to the law and make a decision.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You mentioned—one of my colleagues asked you about decisions and you just brought up that when you're on this board, you are given a recommendation that's made by a crown attorney, typically. In the past experience, how often would you find yourself not agreeing with the crown attorney's recommendation? And then, when that happens on a board—and I'm asking because I'm not sure how it works—is it full consensus in making a decision?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Two parts to that answer: My memory back in 2007 is a little sketchy, but if I recall, the only absolute discharges I was involved in were recommendations from both the crown and defence counsel and a unanimous panel. Absolute discharges were rare then, when there was a dispute by the crown. The defence counsel often asked for an absolute discharge, but if the psychiatrist said, "This person is not ready. This person is likely to reoffend, and here's the reasons," the panel usually listened to the psychiatrist who had been treating this person for a number of years.

I'm sorry—the second part of your question?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Does it require a unanimous decision?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Oh. No, it does not. There is either a panel of three or five, and it's majority rule. And then, if there are dissents, there can be dissenting reasons.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right.

Have you reviewed recent decisions at all since your time back in 2007? How do you feel about those decisions that have been made? Do you feel that public safety has been properly respected and adhered to with the board?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: A couple of things: There's a trend right now—I don't really want to call it a trend, but when a person is on a conditional discharge or recommended for a conditional discharge, they can appeal those decisions. They can appeal a detention order and the court can look at it. The court recently has been saying that detention orders are not required in all cases where the Mental Health Act can protect the public.

When a person is released on conditions, if they deteriorate mentally, they're subject to the Mental Health Act. The difficulty with that is the test under the Mental Health Act is very different from the test under a detention order. So if somebody is on a detention order and they're released—because they can live in the community on a detention order—they can be brought back immediately into the hospital. There's no test; there's no hearing. If they're in the community and they just come to the attention of the police and they're brought to the emergency department, they have the ability to have that detention order reviewed by the Consent and Capacity Board, and the test is quite different, even if somebody is under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Review Board. So that's something the review board is struggling with right now—I would say in a small number of cases, but it's something that's on their mind.

The other is a more recent case: the Supreme Court of Canada just confirming what the test is for "unfit to stand trial." They just reaffirmed the Court of Appeal's decision that said you have to be able to give reliable information to your lawyer, whether that's to make a decision to call witnesses, to have your case done by a jury or a judge, or even just to testify yourself. If you're subjected to hallucinations and delusions, you're not going to be able to give those instructions to your lawyer, and that's really the dividing line between someone who's fit and someone who's unfit.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: In a new term, would there be anything specific you would advocate for change with the board or any room for improvements that you would be able to impact?

1010

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Well, I haven't been on the board in two decades, so I don't know, because I haven't sat on the board in quite some time. But I also don't think that's my mandate as a legal member on the Ontario Review Board. That would be government's job, particularly the federal government, which is in charge of the—

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I guess recommendations to the feds, then, or recommendations with the extensive background that you did have?

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes. Well, I think if the chair asked for my opinion on something, I would give it him.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. That's it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for your time today, Patrick, and for sharing your background with us—quite impressive. You have the choice of remaining with us for the rest of the morning and then witnessing your results of what happens

here today, whether you're appointed or not. Or you can go about your merry way, back up—safe travels—to the south shores of Georgian Bay. It's your choice, but we're happy you came.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Thank you very much. And I just want to say, I did have an ulterior motive to come here in person. I hadn't been to the Legislative Building since political science class at the University of Toronto, and I'm really glad I came back. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): You can do a tour. They are every half-hour.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Yes, absolutely.

MPP Wayne Gates: Drive safe.

Mr. Patrick Murphy: Thanks very much.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you. Hope you're back again.

MR. TIMOTHY DOBSON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Timothy Dobson, intended appointee as member, Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Our next intended appointee is Timothy Dobson, who is again here in person, like the previous candidate. We are always extra thrilled when our candidates come in person.

Timothy is getting his delicious Toronto tap water as well, and he is nominated as member of the Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario. Welcome so much to our, as you can see, friendly committee—warm, welcoming committee. You will have time right now to give a presentation, share your history and your experience with us, and then each party has 10 minutes to ask you questions. The time you take for your presentation will be deducted from the government side, and they are fine with that. They are happy with that—look at them.

The floor is yours. Welcome, Timothy.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: As the introduction says, my name is Timothy Dobson. I'm a registered landscape architect, also an international certified arborist. I come from two different regulated professions, so I'm quite cognizant of the examination process and the testing to gain public trust for any professional member, and also the responsibilities both professionally and ethically that go with those two professions. I believe that will be laterally applied to this College of Naturopaths.

In addition to my professional background, I have additional specializations in urban design, park planning and design, and also stormwater management. As a result, with that professional background—particularly the basis of landscape architecture as a profession—it takes a very holistic approach to inventoried analysis of the natural and built environment, and we apply those holistic principles to problem-solve for land development and the natural environment. The College of Naturopaths takes a somewhat similar approach in terms of how it views human biology and how it applies their holistic natural-systems approach to assessing and diagnosing persons, within limits, under the Regulated Health Professions Act. So, philosophically,

there's a certain parallel between my professional background and that of the College of Naturopaths.

In addition to all my professional background, my youth was filled with lots of athletics. I have done baseball, pole vaulting, sprinting, long-distance running, football, basketball and Greco-Roman wrestling. As a result, I've had a long list of injuries, including a ruptured kidney, fractured skull, dislocated shoulder, ruptured earlobe, two rotator cuff surgeries and burn grafts on the skin. So I've been on the operating table a number of times, and I'm quite familiar with the sort of human biology that might be involved.

In addition, I come from a heavy-science-background family. My father, oldest brother and youngest brother were all microbiologists, so I already grew up in a household understanding the human body and drugs, and also the natural system's effects that would apply.

I almost took a course in that direction, historically, when I did my grade 5 science project on the human lung and respiratory system and I rolled in a recently slaughtered cow lung on a rolling cart table. Sister Helena Reid was not amused, unfortunately. But that was my prop for showing the whole respiratory system in a grade 5 science project. So I almost went in that direction until I saw the light of day, seeing lots of problems with the natural environment and deciding to try to solve the problems of the natural and built-in environment instead.

I'm quite cognizant of a lot of the things with the human body. I think I would bring a very balanced perspective as a layperson to this college, because what I'm up for is a public interest perspective as a layperson on this College of Naturopaths.

I think that would be a succinct enough summary of my professional background, as well as my human medical interest.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for that story, Timothy.

We will now go to the government side with five minutes and 59 seconds remaining. MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Mr. Dobson, thank you for being here. It looks like you spend a lot of time in my neck of the woods of Windsor-Essex.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Yes.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you for putting your name forward for this position.

I know, as a regulated body, the kinds of things that would come up at the college would be the complaints, discipline, the executive and governance. What you've shared with us has been fair experience with different organizations that are either working on governance—I think of the landscape architects—or are just involved with professional conduct.

I'm hoping you might be able to share a little bit more as to what you're hoping to bring through your skill set, through your experiences, to the college, given your professional background and the perspective that you bring?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: In addition to what I just recently stated, I have been before the Consent and Capacity Board under the Ministry of Health as an advocate for a patient in a hospital. I've also been in front of

the Ontario Municipal Board and the land tribunal, both as a witness for land development and also as an opponent for land development. So I've been in front of tribunals of that sort and participated. I've at least had that experience on at least three different things.

I also did a complaint on a pharmacist, so I've been in front of the review board for the College of Pharmacists. I've been through that process of doing those hearings, so I'm cognizant of both the procedures and also how the panel members evaluate and conduct.

With those series of experiences of different boards and tribunals, I believe I can bring a perspective of following the rules of the procedures, and also keeping an open mind and evaluating everything on facts and what's actually presented and doing that analysis accordingly and basing my judgment accordingly—in addition to city hall. I've been in front of city hall many, many times, as well as committees of adjustment. So I'm very cognizant of all the different boards and tribunals and the procedures involved in that.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I want to thank you for being here today and sharing your experience and your injuries. I, too, understand the journey when we go through injuries and the experiences that we kind of internalize and take in.

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You talked about some of your experience in city hall, which is important. I guess this would be part of your job previously. Can you talk about that experience or other board of governance committees that you've participated in and how that will directly help you in this role?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Certainly, part of my interest in becoming part of a panel, like the college, also is parallel with my experience in front of city hall, especially like committees of adjustment and city council, because several times, I've actually had to file to the OMB because the city itself was not following their own bylaws.

Ms. Laura Smith: So these are project-based pieces of work that you've done.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Yes. A lot of it was actually public interest. I was approached by members of the public to participate as both an advocate and as a professional witness, because the city was not actually following their own bylaws and the Planning Act and bypassing it with the opinion that they could do *carte blanche* by ignoring that. So that's where I was getting involved in terms of finding the specific paragraphs within their bylaws and the Planning Act that—the city did not do their due diligence in terms of making their decision. In fact, they just blatantly violated it.

So if you go in front of a tribunal or OLT or OMB, you actually have to state the specific sections that apply to the complaint, and so that's where my experience was as a professional witness and also as an advocate.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Really briefly, can you give that specific—or it doesn't have to be specific—

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Okay, I'll give you one example. All right?

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Roundhouse Park, south of the convention centre—the original plan was to completely bulldoze the whole thing and make it into the south convention centre, and the city had actually had in their official plan that it was to be a public park. It was supposed to be the new central park. And the qualification was that it was to be in the same calibre as Queen's Park, where we're sitting right now, the park behind here—

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

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry—time. I don't like to interrupt, but we are on strict timing here.

Over to the official opposition: MPP Gilmour.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Good morning, Mr. Dobson—really lovely to have you here. Thank you for coming in person and sharing so much of your story, your experience and being willing to serve in the way that you are serving.

I wondered if I could just start a little back with what prompted you to apply for the position. Where did you see it? Did someone ask you? How did you find your way to applying for this position?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I've seen it on the public appointments portal. I have applied for a number of different ones. I have had some interviews for the land tribunal, and I believe there was one health ministry interview about a year ago. But I was not successful, so I was still pursuing other particular judicial appointments.

And in particular, because of how I have seen different councils and boards operate—and sometimes there is lip service, and other times they're very much together and they're fair. So over the decades, I've found it peculiar that I would take an interest in that, but mostly because I'm looking for a fair and independent assessment, regardless. So there is a skill set that people have that can be applied laterally to different—and so when this particular capacity—because I'm not specifically in the profession, I do not have a conflict of interest. I can bring the public interest perspective to it.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Can I pull you in just a slightly different direction? I'm curious about—because you're right: You don't have to have naturopathic experience *per se*; this is a position that's more open to the members of the public.

But I am curious. With the impressive, varied résumé that you have—you worked for, I saw here, the census for the federal government; as an election returning officer; you're a grant reviewer, architect, urban designer. I'm wondering if there are any qualifications or particular interests that drew you to the College of Naturopaths, or if, as you said, you've applied for a number of them and this was one among many, because you do want to put your gifts in service.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: What was the last part? Want to put my what—sorry?

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Your gifts in service. Is this one of many you applied for, or was there a specific interest in naturopathy for you?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I do have a specific interest in naturopaths. I've been well aware of the profession. As I alluded to earlier, they take a holistic approach in how they study, versus the silo mindset. I can relate to that because my profession, the engineering profession, is very much siloed. Then we complain about how certain things were done the wrong way, because it was too silo-driven as opposed to holistically driven.

My own professional background takes a much more holistic viewpoint, and I would look to apply that. Because I know enough about human biology just personally, I take that approach personally with my health, how I eat and everything else.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: You mentioned you had a number of athletic injuries; I think you said kidney, earlobe, rotator cuff, burn grafts, shoulder. In any of those, have you ever sought naturopathic care?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I don't believe it was available at the time.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: And since then, in the course of your life, have you ever sought any naturopathic care?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I have not sought it, no.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Do you know what the reason—

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I'm not too aware of the specific people that are naturopaths. However, I believe this is a recent addition to the umbrella of health coverage.

I do recall where there was a lot of dispute with Chinese traditional medicine, which was not covered, and it was all in the press a number of years back. Now there's a whole regulated section for traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. There was a time when those two were not accepted, even though there's a lot of people in the Chinese tradition that claim by it. But because it could not have this black-and-white proof of its validity, the province had difficulty accepting it and getting it into a regulated regime. I think those naturopaths face this type of thing.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm curious, though, about your own barriers. Maybe this relates to other people's barriers, but for you, what are the barriers? Why have you not sought out naturopathic care for yourself?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I would say I don't use the health system enough unless it's really necessary. I'm pretty good at self-diagnosis until I get to a certain point where I usually have to go to an urgent care unit for a quick assessment.

But I haven't had anything internally, which would usually be like the digestive system or something of that sort that is more system-based. Then, I would approach a naturopath, but I haven't actually personally experienced that like some other people have.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Have you had a chance to familiarize yourself at all with the scope of practice that's set out and the naturopathic diagnosis, the way they do treatment, how it's sort of distinguished from regulated health professions?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Yes.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Could you maybe give an example of that or describe that?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: There's a certain length of distance for an instrument or hand going up the anus. It's listed in the act. There's a limited scope for the practitioners. Beyond that, it goes to a different level within the regulated health act, so they have a limited scope within that.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: A limited scope, but the different philosophy around how a diagnosis is made by a naturopathic doctor versus a diagnosis made by a regular doctor: I'm just wondering if you've taken any time to familiarize yourself with that or learn about that.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: What I have read is about blood samples, and mostly—

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

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Ms. Laura Smith: This is kind of out of the scope for his role. If we could keep the questions pertinent to his role within the potential position.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I agree, but once we're on a board as a member, there's some need to familiarize yourself with those that you will be regulating, so I was just curious about if you know some of the more common naturopathic treatments. To be fair, you don't have to at this point. I'm just curious about it as you're moving towards this, because my next question will be, "How do you familiarize yourself if you're successful?" Because, of course, you're going to need to know some of this. So, at this moment—

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Well, I've read the whole act, but what I read was mostly brief, from what I could find. There may be more wording or legislation pages, but from what I read, it was more limited in the scope. But it did focus a lot on invasive things and blood samples. That was most of the gist of what they had explained. They didn't get into a whole lot of detail.

But what I do understand is, they look at the approach of how the lymphatic system affects the body and how there are blockages. There might be either acupuncture or massage treatments that actually unblock the flows that are being blocked internally so that the body takes a more self-healing approach, and do as much of that before there is anything more invasive through a different practitioner.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I appreciate that you took the time to read the act. I think that's really important. Certainly, as you go, learning, moving into that space of the clinical nutrition, the coaching, botanical medications, acupuncture, all that stuff will sort of come.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm just wondering, in terms of your own life, have you ever donated to a political party or been a member of a political party?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Yes.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Which party was that?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Currently, it's Conservative.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: And how much have you donated to the Conservative Party?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: One hundred dollars.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: That is just this year?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I haven't donated anything this year. That was last year.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Would it be correct to say \$249 in 2020 and \$700 in 2023-24?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I don't think it got up to \$700, but it could have been.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: So PC donations just in the last few years, nothing last year.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I probably made more money that year, that's why.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: There you go.

I appreciate that you've been before us and that you're engaged in the political system.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Although I can say that I did vote for Bob Rae for Premier of Ontario decades ago.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: There you go. Thank you. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the third party. MPP Smyth, you have the floor.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for being here today; we appreciate it.

Can you explain to us again what the Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario does?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: It regulates the members of the college that are tested and the skill set of naturopathy. There's a specific examination set that is like a subset of specialty, much like acupuncture or something along that line. It's a specific skill set that has a limited scope. So they're tested and examined on that to be accepted into the college, and then it falls under the umbrella of the Regulated Health Professions Act.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: And the overall mandate?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: To protect the public interest and also to discipline the members if they fall outside of both the ethics and the quality of care.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Clearly, your experience as a landscape architect, an arborist, working in urban design, stormwater management—all these things are impressive. I just wonder how you come to feel that you have experience that can prepare you to oversee, essentially, a health regulatory body.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I take a personal interest in health. I've always been a fairly healthy person. Particularly when I was doing Greco-Roman wrestling, I was on very strict diets. I lost 13 pounds in a day and a half to meet weight for a match. So I've always been cognizant about proteins and carbohydrates and exercise and not smoking, not consuming alcohol, not doing any recreational drugs of the sort. I've always been a health-conscious person, and I've maintained that.

I see the parallel with the interest in the naturopath college because they're looking to ensure that, from a diagnosis standpoint, people are doing the best they can with having the body heal itself with its most potential and only intervening when it's absolutely necessary, when their

own personal body potential and their systems cannot do the job for them. I have taken an interest in that, personally.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: So you have an interest in your health, but not, admittedly enough, to have you seek out naturopathic medicine.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: If I felt there was something compelling, I would seek it out. There haven't been too many cases where I got to that point. But what I do think of is that—my father died from cancer, but there was a period where he was feeling something strange and he couldn't pinpoint what it was. But when he went to medical professionals—and he was in Europe at the time—they couldn't figure out what was wrong with him. They said that, well, it was all in his mind; he was just faking the illness. And then when he finally quit the job and came back to Ontario, he found out immediately he had cancer, and then it was too late.

So there was something in how those people were analyzing that could not pick it up. I believe the naturopath college is one where they're putting a more open mind in how they assess people and knowing the natural body systems that can then try to pinpoint where there are particular internal problems—because it's mostly internal problems. I don't think naturopaths are going to be looking at a cut in the arm, because it's black and white. It's mostly internal, and those are the most difficult to diagnose.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: What unique perspective do you think you bring to the Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario as a landscape architect, as an arborist, as I said, as an urban design person, as a stormwater management person? What is it that you think makes you feel that you have that perspective to have impact on this profession and this body and the public interest?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: The college members and the profession—keeping a clear inventory, analysis, and then evaluation and conclusions so that there's a whole process so they're not having a bunch of quacks practising. Because that impacts the whole integrity of the profession and the college and the public interest, because if the public loses confidence in the college, then the whole regulation of the college is impacted.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Do you think there are a lot of quacks trying to practise naturopathic medicine?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I wouldn't say there is, but in every regulated profession there's always a bad apple someplace and you never know when it's going to pop up. It's not there all the time, but sometimes it does come up.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: What do you think the future of the naturopathy profession is?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I believe it's going to be growing, much like certain other professions are growing. As I mentioned earlier, acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine—it took a long time for those to be accepted by both the public and also the Ministry of Health. Now they have their own sort of scope of regulation, and naturopaths is very similar. So I believe the actual practice is going to grow. There's going to be more members, so the size of the college is going to increase. That will require a degree of oversight, both professionally and with lay people—

which is what I'm up for—to ensure that the college is run properly and that the members are following their scope properly, that they're maintaining their continuing education credits and also ensuring that they do their best not to make mistakes, and if there are mistakes there's a certain clear disciplinary process. I'm already in a profession where we have ethics committees and continuing education requirements, so I'm familiar with that whole process of having to keep up within a particular profession—otherwise, you lose your membership.

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MPP Stephanie Smyth: I'm just kind of curious: How many boards have you actually applied for and why do you have this interest? Many members of the public have no clue about these potential boards they can sit on. You seem to have a really, really keen interest in giving of your time. How many boards have you applied for, would you say?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I would say there are about four to five. The land tribunal and the Niagara commission are two that I have had a very strong interest in; they just haven't been accepted, but it's right within my profession.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: And again, you don't feel any—I don't want to say the word “concern”—a little bit wondering if you're perhaps the right person to sit on this board, given the public interest? I see you've had other experience that I admire, but is this really the right board for you?

Mr. Timothy Dobson: Well, it's a part-time thing, so it's not as much of a commitment at the moment. As I say, over the years I've seen different boards that I've had to face where I could tell certain members were not qualified, and that bothered me, actually. It actually bothered me. But there are also ones where people that aren't particularly professional for a field—they were a lay-person—but they held a very balanced viewpoint on how they evaluated the things that were before them. So that's where I took an interest for many decades, actually, thinking, “You know, I think I could do a better job.”

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay.

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

Mr. Timothy Dobson: I've said that decades ago.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Timothy, thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Timothy, for coming in today and sharing your story with us. You are welcome to remain here while we interview other people to find out our appointment concurrence process at the end, or you could go about your day and find out later.

Mr. Timothy Dobson: On my merry way? All right. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you so much, Timothy.

MS. SALLY ASHTON

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Sally Ashton, intended appointee as vice-chair,

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario and Social Benefits Tribunal.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now move to review the next intended appointee, Sally Ashton, who is coming to us virtually. She's nominated as the vice-chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

Welcome, Sally to our lovely committee. We are happy you are here, online. We're happy that you have chosen to serve Ontario. You can present your story to us, your experience and your background. Take as much time as you would like, and then all three parties will interview you for 10 minutes each, but whatever time you use for your presentation will be deducted from the government side, and they're fine with that.

We'll just wait a minute. Sally, can you hear us?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I can hear you, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Oh, there you are. Whew. We were looking at a different picture of someone who we just interviewed, so we were getting a little confused. But Sally, welcome.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I was confused, as well, because I couldn't see you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now can you see us?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I can see you, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Well, you're going to see some other friendly faces in a moment when I pass you over to them. Did you hear my instructions?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I did, yes. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): All clear? Clear as mud? Okay. Thank you so much. The floor is yours. Tell us your story.

Ms. Sally Ashton: Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and good morning, everyone. I look forward to being able to see you; I can't yet.

I do appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you my qualifications. I'm actually here in candidacy for both the position of vice-chair with the Social Benefits Tribunal and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

I'll start by telling you a little bit about my professional experience. I first joined Tribunals Ontario after a merit-based competition, which resulted in my appointment to the Social Benefits Tribunal as a part-time adjudicator. That was in early 2022. Two years later, I was cross-appointed to the Human Rights Tribunal, having demonstrated my commitment and skills.

My work with the HRTO includes managing files through the jurisdictional assessment stage, presiding over summary and merit hearings, preparing decisions and issuing reconsiderations of other members' decisions. With the SBT, my work involves less file management but is more relevant to the conduct of appeal hearings and decision-writing.

I pride myself on my ability to manage the hearing room, particularly with a view to ensuring the effective participation of unrepresented litigants and providing a process respectful of all parties. My decisions are sound,

accessible and fair. This is borne out in consistent positive performance appraisals and the fact that, in four years with the SBT and with several hundred decisions issued, parties have sought reconsideration of my decisions on a very limited basis. My record with the HRTTO has proven similar.

With both tribunals, I have taken on mentorship roles, participated in onboarding training, providing peer review of new member decisions and sitting as a panel with new members learning to conduct their own hearings. Training and support of new members is critical to their success and retention, and I am pleased to be able to contribute in this way.

Before joining Tribunals Ontario, I spent more than two decades as senior crown counsel to the provincial government here in Ontario. My work focused extensively on Indigenous and constitutional issues, regulatory modernization and dispute resolution. I provided strategic legal advice, drafted legislation and regulations, supported complex litigation and led outreach and consultations with Indigenous communities, stakeholders and other ministries. I also held leadership roles in issues management, equity and diversity issues and FIPPA matters, including defending complex access-to-information appeals involving sensitive data.

Across these roles, I have consistently worked at the intersection of law, policy, dispute resolution and public service. I've led teams, supported institutional change and contributed to modernization initiatives recognized through multiple provincial awards for service excellence, innovation and technical achievement.

Despite an active professional career, I've also found time to complete my master's degree in law at Osgoode Hall Law School, with a focus on alternative dispute resolution and the ethical consideration when dealing with under- and unrepresented litigants.

On a more personal note, I have to say it has been a tremendous privilege to serve the people of Ontario as a member adjudicator, facilitating access to justice each day I go to work. It is incredibly rewarding to be able to make a meaningful, tangible difference in people's lives. It is also incredibly humbling, because the meaningful difference may not always be what that individual had hoped for.

I am committed to continuing to serve at both the HRTTO and SBT. I've sought a leadership role in each tribunal because, after four years, I am invested. I care about the public's confidence in the work that we do, and I have skills and experience to offer as we work to consistently deliver adjudicative excellence and operational effectiveness.

Thank you for your attention. I'm certainly happy to answer any questions the members may have.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much and thank you again for your willingness to serve.

Over to the government side: You have six minutes. MPP Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I won't take all six; that's for sure.

Thank you, Ms. Ashton, for coming in today and presenting. You've got a great résumé; I've been looking through it here.

As I understand it, the Human Rights Tribunal has got a great, heavy caseload. So, obviously, to manage what you've done in the past already, you must have a real ability to manage heavy caseloads and deliver decisions on time. Could you give us a quick outline of how you manage that? Because I could use some advice.

Ms. Sally Ashton: Absolutely. For sure. I manage heavy caseloads by staying disciplined about file triage and preparation.

At the HRTTO, I'm used to moving efficiently and effectively through jurisdictional assessments, scheduling and decision-writing. I keep a structured workflow, and I set realistic internal deadlines and protect my writing time. I've always had an innate—some might say annoying—organized and efficient approach to most everything I do. I know how to prioritize. I'm constantly re-evaluating as demands change. We also have the benefit of any number of electronic tickler and reminder systems available to us, and I utilize those. Colour-coded calendars—the electronic things that are available today are wonderful.

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I will admit that I'm also a bit old school. I like putting pen to paper for my daily to-do list. There's something very satisfying about the physical act of striking something from that list, so I'll continue to be a list-keeper along with the other tools we have available.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Ms. Sally, you bring experience as a senior counsel and team lead. How have these diverse roles prepared you for the responsibility of a vice-chair at this tribunal?

Ms. Sally Ashton: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I do have a master's degree in law, in which I focus specifically on alternative dispute resolution. As a result, I am bringing both a theoretical and a practical perspective to the work that I do. I can't think of a time in my professional experience overall that didn't involve high volume, high expectations and tight timelines, and I've always excelled in such environments. I do have exceptional analytical and writing skills. It helps that I love to write.

And if I may, my decision-writing record speaks for itself. I have consistently exceeded decision-release targets without compromising quality. In four years and several hundred decisions with SBT, for example, parties have requested reconsideration of my decisions fewer than 20 times, and I have been overturned only twice. My record with HRTTO is proving similar.

I have subject matter expertise built over four years with Tribunals Ontario, and throughout my career I've been an effective team player as well as a team leader. I seek out opportunities to mentor and support other members. I remain open and approachable. I think all of these experiences throughout my career are easily transferable and serve me well here with Tribunals Ontario.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Ms. Ashton, thank you so much for being here. We know that many tribunals, including yours, have individuals appearing who are self-represented. I wanted to see if you had any thoughts on how all parties, regardless of their inherent legal knowledge or their representation, can fully understand the process that they're going through and have that fair opportunity to participate in the tribunal.

Ms. Sally Ashton: Absolutely. I can certainly speak to it. This is absolutely a pressing concern. It has been a significant concern for several years now, ensuring fair, accessible processes for under- or unrepresented litigants.

For my own part, I do manage a hearing room with a focus on clarity and respect. I explain the process in plain language. I check for understanding. I structure hearings so everyone has a fair opportunity to participate. I use empathy, active listening skills and, frankly, I observe non-verbal cues that might suggest a need to pause, to explain, to question differently. My goal is always to create a space where parties feel heard, even if the outcome is not what they had hoped for.

This is what I strive for. How can I know that I'm achieving that? That's always an issue for me. I was pleased when I had an opportunity to do my first hearing with HRTO. It was observed by a supervising vice-chair at the time. As soon as that hearing was done, she texted me immediately, saying, "Beautifully done—firm, fair, compassionate." I couldn't have asked for better validation of the approach that I take and what I'm trying to achieve to ensure all parties benefit from the process, participate effectively in the process.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the official opposition. MPP Gilmour, you have the floor.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you, Ms. Ashton, for coming before us with your great breadth of experience and capacity and for being willing to serve. I was very much moved by your last story about being firm, fair and compassionate—certainly something that I think our world needs a whole lot more of. So thank you for that.

I'm quite curious and interested in that background that you had before joining Tribunals Ontario, concentrated in regulatory and Indigenous law. In the Ministry of the Attorney General, you had a couple of branches that you were working with. I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about how that background does or does not translate to the human rights adjudication context, and also what steps you've had to build to be a subject matter expert in the code-based discrimination law.

Ms. Sally Ashton: Let me say, with the various ministries that I've worked with—you will have seen, and you heard from my initial remarks, my practice was very much, for many years, focused on Indigenous issues like consultation, negotiations. I gained a lot of cultural competence and cultural sensitivity putting those active listening skills to the test.

Even just managing internally with ministries and cross-ministry discussions and building consensus towards process and policy changes—all of those things come into play in terms of my ability to deal both with the

adjudication but also mentoring of new members and their effective participation.

My interest in mediation specifically started when I was a brand new lawyer, when mediation and alternative dispute resolution hadn't really taken off a lot. I was working for the Public Guardian and Trustee at the time. The Public Guardian and Trustee had been at that time appointed guardian for an individual with significant, significant assets, and we had multiple family members who wanted to take over that guardianship and manage those assets. It was extremely litigious and ultimately ended up at the Court of Appeal.

I appeared as the neutral Public Guardian and Trustee there to assist the court. We were five minutes into that hearing when the court said, "Ms. Ashton, please take these parties out into the hall and get this settled. We don't want to [*inaudible*]." I'm a one-year-called lawyer—overwhelmed—and that's what prompted my interest in mediation specifically. That's when I started my studies about alternative dispute resolution, obtained my master's degree, and that has been tremendous to put to work here with Tribunals Ontario.

I think the last part of your question was in terms of gaining the subject matter expertise: four years of doing this work; two years specifically with the Social Benefits Tribunal; hundreds of files and hearings and decisions; the confidence leadership had in me to then cross-appoint me to the HRTO and I've now been with the HRTO for two years.

Their onboarding processes are tremendous. There's ongoing training, learning opportunities, professional development, both weekly and monthly, depending on which tribunal.

I have great confidence now in what I'm able to do, and the tribunal is tremendous in supporting its members to a T. That's substantive subject matter excellence.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I wanted to just touch on a few of the issues the tribunal is facing at the moment. One of them is, in 2024-25, the tribunal issued 75 decisions on the merits compared to 1,807 decisions on other grounds, including procedural dismissals.

Stakeholders like Tribunal Watch Ontario and the Income Security Advocacy Centre have raised very specific concerns about the rate of pre-hearing dismissals. I'm just wondering what your perspective is on ensuring that applicants receive substantive access to a hearing whenever it's appropriate. What's your perspective on that?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I'm aware of those criticisms. I've seen that when I became a member. I want to give credit to the current leadership at the tribunal, who is also listening to that criticism.

The things that I have seen change in the two years that I have been there—again, part of it is just the training, the resources available to new members. Mediation is now mandatory. It was not two years ago, when I joined. It has just been a year that mediation is mandatory—a far preferable resolution to disputes where parties have more control over the outcomes, can resolve issues more quickly; a tremendous tool. I think that's very significant.

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The tribunal also has recently reinstituted summary and preliminary hearings so that there is that opportunity for an oral hearing before a decision is made to, for instance, jurisdictionally dismiss just on paper. I think that's tremendous. The wait-lists for merit hearings are very long.

I think, as I say, the tribunal has taken great strides in the last year, year and a half to address that and institute procedures that are going to be, I think, well received by our stakeholders.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to take you into another area. You have clearly got lots of good background on this, so I'm curious to hear what you think about the in-person hearings and the overwhelming majority of them that are conducted virtually. In fact, in 2024-25, only one hearing was in person.

ARCH Disability Law Centre and the Ontario Bar Association have raised concerns about this creating barriers for people with disabilities or those without reliable Internet access, and these are sometimes the very people most likely to bring a human rights application forward. I'm wondering if you agree that there's an access problem currently in the system.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I understand the concerns that have been expressed. I've heard them.

In my own work—and I spoke to this in an earlier question—I'm very live in the hearing room, which for the most part is virtual. I certainly have done in-person hearings where accessibility needs required that.

But in the hearing room itself, we're trained, and we practise ensuring that we are aware of the parties before us. We have opportunity to prepare. We can identify some of these issues in the files that we have before us and can approach accommodations and accessibility needs in the hearing.

Tribunals Ontario also does a lot to provide access in terms of the technology for people that may not have it, space for people that do not have a private space to participate in the hearing. So I think, institutionally, there are things that Tribunals Ontario is doing to address those concerns about the accessibility of virtual hearings, and I think all of us sitting in the hearing room are trained as well to recognize those issues and address them as we can in the virtual setting.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Is there more to be done?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Yes, there may be; I'm not aware. I would be interested, actually, to hear. I know that they do surveys of participants—how they experience the process, what concerns and comments they have. I think Tribunals Ontario is always collecting that information and responding to it. I don't personally know what some of that is right now. I can't speak to what more might be done.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: So in this new role as vice-chair, as you imagine it, what new solutions, what focuses, what kind of things that you have seen would you like to really sink your teeth into and make a lasting difference on?

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: What would you change, offer to build it even better, stronger?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I do want to wait until I'm at the leadership table. I want to hear what they've identified as the gaps and needs, and, obviously, I will work with that.

I mentioned some of the things that are already being done, and I'm really looking forward to participating more in mediations, in the summary and preliminary hearings, so that those folks are getting that opportunity for the oral hearing before their matters are addressed on paper.

I believe so strongly in the mentoring. That's a big part of the motivation for me in applying for this role: that mentoring and training of new members so that they can succeed.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the third party: last but not least, MPP Smyth.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Lovely to see you here today, Ms. Ashton. Thank you for being here virtually. It's great to be able to talk to you about your incredible experience, your extensive experience with the service you give to the Social Benefits Tribunal and the Human Rights Tribunal.

I'm in awe of what you're able to do and how you're able to manage it all. I know you said you love writing. You love all those things. What continues to motivate you to want to serve this way?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I think I touched on this in my opening remarks. When I first applied for this position, I honestly didn't know what I was getting into. It appealed to me because I was looking, at the time, for something outside of the traditional practice of law. I wanted to be able to use the training I had received doing my master's degree in alternative dispute resolution, and I have been able to do that.

What motivates me, why I continue, is that—as I said in my opening remarks—I find this job incredibly rewarding. I am thrilled to be able to make a difference in people's lives every single day that I go to work. And as I said, it's humbling. People aren't always happy with the decisions, but it's an incredibly rewarding job. I just love what I do.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I know there's got to be a lot of pressure with the Social Benefits Tribunal and human rights. They're all heavy caseloads; we know that.

What I wanted to ask you, respecting your extensive background in regulatory law—you name it; what you've been doing already and going to the vice-chair role—is, how do you find that you approach cases now where a strict reading of the law would result in an outcome that might feel really deeply inequitable, especially to a vulnerable applicant? Do you feel a sense of hands being tied or wanting to effect any kind of change with that kind of situation?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Certainly at the Social Benefits Tribunal, the appellants that come before us are among the most vulnerable, among the people struggling the most with financial hardship. You can't help but be moved by their compelling stories; you really can't.

But my role as an adjudicator is to apply the law. It's not my job to make the law. I have a certain amount of

discretion, but my job is to apply the legal tests that have been set out in the legislation and regulations, and I do that. Where there is evidence that I can rely on that will get the person the result that they want, obviously I'm open to that evidence. But I do have to apply the tests as they're provided to us in the legislation, which can be hard.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Do you feel like there is an inordinate number of those who are unhappy at the end, versus—is there a way to find anyone walking out of the virtual room content?

Ms. Sally Ashton: For the most part, obviously, we aren't giving our decisions there in the moment, but I do like to conclude my hearings ensuring that I have given every opportunity to those parties to express themselves, to say what they had wanted and needed to say. I hope that that goes some way to giving them some satisfaction with the process, that they feel that they've been heard. Ultimately, though, I don't know how they react when they get the decision if it's not in their favour.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: It's a process question I'm not aware of: Do you ever get asked to give feedback on regulation or anything when it comes to what you have to deal with, with the experience that you see? And if you're seeing inequities or problems, there's no way to give that feedback?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Not as an adjudicator.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I mean, being asked, even with the breadth of experience and depth that you have.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I've never been asked. I don't know if, at the leadership level, those questions are asked. I can't speak to that.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: We know that with tribunals in Ontario, there's been the pressure regarding processing delays and the backlogs of the hearings for the social assistance appeals. Drawing on your experience as a team lead with the Ministry of the Attorney General, as I understand it, what do you see as specific case-management strategies or efficiencies that you could see or implement that would accelerate the decision-making timelines?

Ms. Sally Ashton: With SBT, it's much more structured. We receive our files on a Thursday. We conduct the hearings for those files on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the following week and, for myself, by the following Monday, I've written and submitted all of my decisions for those hearings. I think most people try to structure their work at SBT that way because the next week, we start in on another nine to 12 hearings. I think SBT has done a tremendous job of hewing to those timelines and removing and eliminating the backlog.

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HRTO can be more challenging because there's much more file management done by the adjudicator. There are more adjudicative decisions made along the way, and that does require attention by the adjudicator, following up. I spoke earlier about the electronic tickling systems that we use as VCs. They're continually reviewing the status of files with members, ensuring they're getting the support they need, the dedicated writing time they need to get decisions out in a timely way and effectively. But it does,

to a certain extent, come down to an individual's personal skills and ability to do that, and we can only do so much to try and support those members.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: A lot of the SBT caseload involves reviewing some complex medical files to determine the eligibility, say, for ODSP and those benefits. How does your past experience and your time on health care boards inform how you evaluate sensitive medical assessments and personal hardships objectively?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Well, I'm not a doctor, and so I have to rely on and hope that what is put before me is accessible to me—that there is enough there that I can understand. It's not for me to research and try to understand something that's been put before me that's inexplicable.

One challenge that we have are encounter notes that are handwritten that are completely illegible. There are things that come before us that we can't rely on, and we can't let that inform our decision because we don't understand it or can't decipher it.

That said, I think there's common sense. I think all of us have dealt with doctors and dealt with medical issues, and the evidence in general, in terms of forms that are completed and so on, is put before us in a way that is accessible, and we can make those determinations and assessments in making our decisions.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay, I think that's it. Thank you very, very much.

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

We will now move to the next intended appointee, which is you.

Laughter.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): This is maybe a first. We're just going to do the exact same thing, because this time you're nominated as the vice-chair of the Social Benefits Tribunal.

You know the drill. If you want to start with an opening statement, that's great, and then we will go back to the questions.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I actually didn't have a separate opening statement prepared. I'm happy to rely on the opening—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That's fine. It's totally at your discretion, and I think it's so recent that people can remember your first one.

If that's okay, we'll just start with questions. We'll start with the government side: 10 minutes.

Ms. Laura Smith: First, I have to say, once again, thank you for coming in, albeit virtually. I'm not going to focus in on too much that you've already done but, sadly, this is something that we're going to be doing.

You talked about a wide range of experiences and the SBT qualities, which is something that I really want to focus on. How will this SBT background be helpful in the role that you're about to go into with this other position?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I'm not sure I completely understand your question. How has the time I've spent—

Ms. Laura Smith: How will your previous work experience—this is a general question, which you've

basically already answered with the last. This is ironical, because you're not going to be providing another statement. But this is a new role, so I'm asking you how your experience will help you in the role of SBT.

Ms. Sally Ashton: The specific position I'm applying for now is vice-chair, and I think I'll just say that I'm applying for that position now because I do have four years of experience with the SBT. I think that means that I'm in a position now to have the knowledge and the experience to provide the mentoring that I want to be able to provide, which is a significant part of what a VC role is.

I think also the fact that I have now spent four years doing the work will give me just that much more credibility with the members who I now may be mentoring and supervising, and I think that's not insignificant.

Again, I apologize. Maybe I misunderstood the approach to this. I did answer the earlier questions—

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes. It's a separate application. It is challenging, yes.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I understand. I don't want to be too repetitive. I apologize; I probably will be.

But again, I talked a little bit about my experience generally with team leadership, just being a team player, contributions to institutional change and things. All of these, I think, are things that the position of vice-chair will draw upon.

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

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you for the presentation. You were already on the Social Benefit Tribunal board. One question I have, being parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Francophone Affairs and representing a big francophone community myself: I'm wondering, do we have the proper resources for French-speaking parties before the SBT? Maybe you can elaborate on that.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I don't know for sure the numbers, how much call we have for French-language services, but we do specifically ensure that we have adjudicators appointed who are completely fluent in French and can manage those hearings. Again, I'm not yet at the leadership table. I can't speak to whether it's adequately resourced, but I know those efforts and resources are in place.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Maybe one more question. I like to know more about people and the engagement they have in their community—you know, volunteer work. Is that something you have engaged in with your community? If so, did you learn from it?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Oh, absolutely. Yes, over the years, I have done various volunteer positions, some very ad hoc—setting up the table for a fundraising dinner at the curling club, to sitting on the hospital board in my local community. I sat on a library board. I was a volunteer for victim services—I don't know if you're familiar with that, but dealing with people in crisis situations.

I learned tremendously from all of these experiences. A lot of it is just about dealing with people, dealing with crisis situations, dealing with difficult situations and people. So absolutely, all of these experiences come to bear.

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Chair. How many minutes are left?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): You have four minutes and 44 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Welcome back, Ms. Ashton. Actually, I'm going to build on a question I asked the last time, because I think you've got some experience both with the Human Rights Tribunal and the Social Benefits Tribunal. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that those who are appearing at the Social Benefits Tribunal are more likely to arrive without representation. In fact, they're receiving benefits; they don't have access to funds. This can obviously create some challenges—for themselves, but also for the process.

So I'm hoping you can elaborate on how you plan to work with them in your new capacity as vice-chair, subject to approval, to ensure that they have a fair hearing when they appear, even when chances are good that they're not going to understand the operational minutiae and the procedures that are in place at the tribunal.

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Ms. Sally Ashton: Again—I hate to be repetitive—I did speak to this a little bit. Certainly, my own approach in terms of the hearing room: ensuring that time is taken to explain the process, the process is structured, questions are answered—all of those things.

You know, I didn't speak to this, and maybe I will. I don't know if it directly answers your question, but just in general—about ensuring a fair process—it also demands impartiality. I think that's so important: that all of our adjudicators go into the hearing room not having predetermined. We receive a file and we can review that and may come to some conclusions, and I think it's very important that we don't. We haven't predetermined the case. We come into the hearing room, open to the testimony and submissions that parties will bring and we do our best, in that room, to facilitate, to ask the questions that the parties themselves may not think to provide or testify to and help them through the process by answering all their questions.

I think, again, fairness demands that subject matter expertise that we've talked about, the ability to weigh evidence, to assess credibility, to recognize the person where they are coming to you and be able to deal with that and appropriately assess their testimony and apply the applicable legal standards.

Again, fairness demands timeliness, and so our decisions need to be issued as quickly as we can after a hearing. This is an incredibly stressful, difficult process for an unrepresented, vulnerable person to come in an unfamiliar proceeding—very, very, very difficult. And so to make them wait, then, for that decision, I don't find it acceptable. Again, that's why my decisions are out within the week of the hearing that I've held, and I think that is generally the approach and expectation with tribunals—that decisions get out very, very quickly.

I'm not sure if that answered your question specifically, but I hope so.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Yes. I've got a quick follow-up. Thank you for mentioning and reminding us of your approach that you take and the importance of fairness and impartiality.

Beyond your direct tribunal experience, what has informed your approach? Going back to some of your community organizations—this is more of an open question. How did you develop your approach to that fairness and impartiality that these cases truly need?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I think it's, again, a bit of an innate, personal characteristic. I've always been committed to fairness and openness. It's important to me, just in my life, generally.

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

Ms. Sally Ashton: I've had specific training in alternative dispute resolution and ensuring fair processes, and I've witnessed so many different contexts and participated in different contexts. Again, the experience that I had for years, dealing with Indigenous communities, learning that cultural competence and applying those negotiation and dispute resolution skills—all have been brought to bear in my work with the tribunals.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the official opposition: MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you for being here twice, I guess. But with no disrespect to you, I believe we should be interviewing Blair McCreadie for the Liquor Control Board of Ontario board of directors. He's a past president of the Ontario PC Party from 2002 to 2008, and he donated close to \$7,000 since 2018. He refused to come.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry, with all due respect, this is completely out of order for this candidate. If we could just ask the questions—

MPP Wayne Gates: Sure, I can appreciate that, but I've been saying for a long time now—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): If we can just keep the questions relevant—

MPP Wayne Gates: Can I make a motion, then? Can I make a motion that we change the party—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Not at this point, in the middle of the interview.

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, I guess we should call the committee the “just say no” committee, because that's what's going on here. It's wrong—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Can we do this at the end? Thank you. Just out of respect—

MPP Wayne Gates: It's wrong, and I'm going to ask her questions and she's going to answer the same thing: “I've already answered that question.” And that's what's been going on. I just think that we have to take a serious look at what this committee is really for and who we should be interviewing.

I don't want to be making a joke of it, but just say no and you don't have to come here. It doesn't make sense.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Well, we can take that under advisement at the end, but out of respect to the candidate who's before us, if we could ask the questions and keep them relevant. Thank you very much.

MPP Wayne Gates: I certainly appreciate your ruling. Thank you very much. I just get upset with what's going on here.

Do you have any experience dealing with Ontario Works or ODSP, and are you familiar with the challenges that recipients face?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Beyond my experience with the Social Benefits Tribunal, I don't have any direct experience with the ODSP and Ontario Works programs, but I also worked for a few years—it's been some years ago now—with the Public Guardian and Trustee, many of whose clients were receiving those benefits. But certainly, yes, for four years I've been sitting hearings for the Social Benefits Tribunal and very, very familiar with the issues that these recipients face.

MPP Wayne Gates: Just a question I think that is fair and reasonable: Do you think \$750 a month is a reasonable amount of money for an adult in Ontario to live on, considering it's less than one third of the official poverty line?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I can say for myself—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Point of order by MPP Smith—sorry to interrupt again, Sally.

Ms. Laura Smith: If we could keep the questions to the applicant's credentials and her ability to do the job that she's applying for.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you—relevant questions. MPP Gates, continue.

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate your ruling as well. I think that understanding the reality of how people on social benefits are being forced to live is important, and I think it's important that if someone can't say that \$750 is not enough to live on, I don't think they really understand the issue relevant to their appointment. So I think it's important for this particular candidate to answer the question.

Do you need it repeated, or are you okay?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I'm happy to answer the question. I can tell you that I personally would struggle tremendously to survive month to month on that amount of money. As I think I said in answer to another question, without doubt, the individuals that come before us at the Social Benefits Tribunal are, almost without exception, suffering significant financial hardship. My role as an adjudicator is to determine their eligibility for that benefit, not the amount of the benefit. I can only do what I can do as an adjudicator.

MPP Wayne Gates: Well—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: The questions must relate to her ability, within her experience.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much. It was at the candidate's discretion after that was already mentioned, and she chose to answer.

So let's finish up and let's try and be cordial. MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: I am trying to be very professional and cordial—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): And relevant—cordial and relevant.

MPP Wayne Gates: I think it is, because I'm going to say that to Sally—you don't mind if I call you Sally? I do

appreciate your honesty, because I don't think there's anybody in Ontario who can say that somebody can live on \$750 a month. So I really do appreciate your honesty. I think that goes a long way when I'm making a decision on who gets voted to a committee, so I want to say thank you very much for your honest answer. I think it bodes well for you when I do my voting, for sure. Thank you.

You were nominated for two positions today, both on Ontario tribunals. How will you make sure that you have time enough to give both roles the time they need as a part-time for each, I guess, which means a full-time in a way.

Ms. Sally Ashton: Yes, it's interesting. I am part-time now and the roles I've sought are part-time, which frankly gives me a little bit more control and ability to meet the demands of both, because I can effectively, practically work full-time and truly that is how I manage now. I'm not afraid of the work or shirking responsibilities. I'm not trying to stick to, "No, I'm only available six hours a week." I'm there. I'm all-in and I'm managing by giving more of my time than, perhaps, many others might.

MPP Wayne Gates: While making decisions at the Social Benefits Tribunal, how do you take into account that you will often be working with vulnerable people who may be at risk of losing their housing or medical benefits?
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Ms. Sally Ashton: Again, I've spoken to this. This is very, very difficult work. We see some of the most vulnerable people at the Social Benefits Tribunal, who are in very difficult circumstances and at risk.

Again, my role as an adjudicator is to apply the law, determine their eligibility. I don't have discretion beyond that. I have discretion to take in the entirety of their circumstances, but at core, they do have a test to meet in terms of disability and that's what I have to apply, as difficult as it can be.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you for your answer.

I know the tribunal can't set social assistance rates, but it decides whether people are eligible for them. Should the adjudicators consider the serious consequences of a denial when eligibility is unclear?

Ms. Sally Ashton: If that's what the legislation provides, then I think that's what the adjudicator can consider.

MPP Wayne Gates: As an adjudicator, how would you work with recipients without representation to make sure they are actually understanding the process?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I've spoken to that a couple of times now, I think. I'm happy to reiterate. It is incredibly important to me personally to manage a hearing room that ensures those individuals understand what's going on, understand the scope of my decision-making authority, understand the process as it unfolds with them in the moment. I take a great deal of time to ensure that things are explained, that I'm using plain language and that they have the opportunity to ask questions as we go. That's the approach that I take.

MPP Wayne Gates: My last couple of questions, which I ask everybody: Do you belong to a riding association?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I do not.

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

Ms. Sally Ashton: Not that I recall, no.

MPP Wayne Gates: Okay. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Welcome back, Ms. Ashton. I'm just going to ask a couple of questions regarding the Human Rights Tribunal appointment of vice-chair.

A component of the tribunal is voluntary mediation—I know you spoke to mediation earlier a little bit—to resolve discrimination claims before they reach a formal binding hearing. Given your past work as senior counsel for strategic issues at the Law Society of Ontario, if I'm correct, where you focused specifically on access to justice, what strategies would you employ to increase the success rate of early-stage mediations—or continue to do?

Ms. Sally Ashton: I will make one small point of clarification: Mediation is no longer voluntary. It's mandatory, which is a tremendous improvement in processes. Because again, it's at mediation, it's an early opportunity, it's where parties have more control over the process.

Again, much like in a hearing room, mediation can in part depend on the skill of the mediator. Their grounding in the fundamentals of the legal principles applicable are key to helping parties understand their positions and their potential success should a matter proceed to a merits hearing.

Again, I think training is key. Subject matter expertise is key. And I think that tribunals are doing a tremendous job right now to ensure that the mediators have those skills.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Your background also includes a lot of—the team lead focusing on Indigenous legal issues and lands and resources for the Ministry of the Attorney General. How will your specific expertise in Indigenous law and systemic equity shape how the Human Rights Tribunal handles human rights applications brought forward by Indigenous individuals or communities?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Sorry—I'm not sure I follow the question. Do you mind rephrasing it or repeating that for me, please?

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You've got specific experience in Indigenous law and systemic equity. How would that shape how the Human Rights Tribunal deals with applications brought forward by Indigenous individuals or communities?

Ms. Sally Ashton: Should I be appointed to the role, I'm happy to bring the expertise and experience I have to bear. But I will say that Tribunals Ontario also has teams working on, particularly, specifically, Indigenous participants in the system. If given the opportunity, I'm happy to contribute to that.

I don't think I want to say more specifically about what I could or would do. That work is happening, and I'm happy to contribute to it, should I be appointed.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay. That's all the questions I have. I'm done. Thank you very much. Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you for the double duty today, Sally. We appreciate you coming in and, of course, your wealth of experience and your willingness to serve.

You're welcome to remain online. We have one more person to interview, and then we do our concurrence for approvals or non-approvals. You're welcome to stay online or go about your day and enjoy the outside and find out later. It's up to you.

Ms. Sally Ashton: I do have a fair bit of work I need to accomplish, so if there's no objection, I will leave you and I'll thank you again very much for the dialogue. It was interesting for myself as well, so thank you.

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

DR. KENNETH BLANCHETTE

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Kenneth Blanchette, intended appointee as member, University of Windsor board of governors.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now move to review the last intended appointee, Kenneth Raymond Blanchette. He's nominated as a member of the University of Windsor board of governors. I'm just looking at MPP Dowie for that.

There he is virtually. Thanks so much, Kenneth, for coming, at least virtually. The way it works is you're going to have some time right now to give a little presentation or share your story with your experience and background. We're all ears.

Your time will be deducted from the government's question time—everyone has 10 minutes, each party—they do not mind. They are happy for you to share your story.

Go ahead. Welcome. The floor is yours.

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Thank you very much for having me and for considering my candidacy.

Why am I interested in the board of governors for the University of Windsor? Well, I've been born and raised here in Windsor-Essex. I've spent the majority of my career here. The first few years, as you can see in my résumé, I practised as a chiropractor in Michigan but still lived in the area. Then I spent a significant amount of time—over a decade—working at its partner institution, St. Clair College. So it's post-secondary education and a tremendous amount of time in senior leadership roles within the area.

I have been asked and elected in several locations in multiple areas to lead from a provincial level, from the college and lead health care reform within the area.

I have been a past member of the board here at the health unit when I first started my senior administrative career back in 2010-11. I spent time on the board of governors for Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare, to which I was elected as the board chair.

I've done a lot of additional work in terms of strategic planning and helped out other organizations as well, and I feel that experience is going to be very helpful for the

University of Windsor. I know that they have some fat—them as well as other health care institutions—and some decisions to make ahead to make sure that they stand within the funding envelope that they have received and to also ensure the ongoing stability of the University of Windsor.

It's a pillar institution in Windsor if you're not from Windsor or the Windsor area. It's a means of accessibility for post-secondary education for a lot of southwest Ontario. It is very well embedded as an economic driver within the local economy in terms of jobs, and it's very important that they succeed and we have a sustainable approach in the future within Windsor-Essex.

I feel that a lot of my work in the past has been really surrounding that, creating a sustainable future, accountability, leadership. I am well known for getting things done. I'm a person who is well known for getting opposing parties together into a common solution or agreement. I am also well known for being upfront and transparent—sometimes even having the harder conversations, but in a way that gets people to let their guard down and actually work together and actually address the matters at hand.

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I feel those skill sets are really important, especially on a board. You'll have opposing views. I know very well what an academic board is like; I was an administrative rep on ours for a couple of years, elected by my peers at St. Clair College. I do know there's academic representation. I do know there's student representation. I do know that there is sports staff representation as well. Being able to understand the nuances of that, as well as having the strong governance background that I have, I feel will be a very big asset for the board. You'll have somebody who is coming in who can get involved and get up to speed very quickly as to the business at hand for that institution.

As you've also seen, I've spent a lot of time volunteering. I do take my role here at the health unit very seriously, but I also make sure that I take my time and my responsibility for the community. I've been provided a lot of experiences in my career that I feel will help the community, and that's why I feel like this is a great next step for me. I've spent over a decade on Hôtel-Dieu. I've spent almost a decade here at the health unit, and I'd like to be considered for a good, long term at the University of Windsor as well so that I can provide some insights, some leadership, some guidance and help the institution and the committee.

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

The government now has five minutes, 44 seconds. Who would like to start? Let me guess—MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Blanchette, thank you so much for being here at the committee. I know you're acutely aware, with involvement in governance of academic institutions, so I appreciate you putting your name forward. Your CV has

quite a bit that I know can assist the University of Windsor in its recent challenges.

One of those challenges is enrolment. We noticed a sizable drop in the number of international graduate students, even though domestic enrolment has actually increased.

Understanding that post-secondary education is a joint responsibility between the government and institutions, I was hoping you might be able to share with us the steps that you intend to take as a member of the board of governors to keep that board accountable for its decision-making in both financial and social matters. I would point to, say, the University Players decision, which, again, was attributable to a drop in enrolment, but ultimately the board of governors was not advised of that decision by the administration. I'm hoping you may be able to elaborate on that.

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Certainly. From my perspective as a board member, one of the first things I'd like to be able to see is, obviously, transparency—information about something like that is incredibly important to have when you're making such a decision.

From a governance lens, my questions would be, what are they doing from a CQI perspective? What are they doing from an ROI perspective to make sure that the programming is relevant, that it's not only timely for the job market and what we need in the community for right now, but also that it's projected into the future? What are the strategies, what are the metrics, what are the scorecards they have in place to be able to best predict those elements? I know from my experience at the college—I've actually even built that system there—that we can monitor the progress of programs, the relevancy of the programs, the academic—actually, also the impact that we'll have within the community.

So from my perspective, if I was on the board and a decision of such magnitude like that came to the board, I would be asking those questions. What data have you looked at? What have you calculated? What does the community need? What does the industry need?

It's also about reputation as well. Sometimes, it's not a matter of being the best at everything. What are your skill sets within the university to increase your domestic enrolment, not only locally but also across the province?

It's reputationally. It is the research component as well. So for me, it has to be a fulsome approach when you're looking at an academic institution. What are they bringing to the board for those big decisions? It has to be clearly laid out, very well-analyzed and fully transparent in how they're bringing that information forward.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Just to build on that: Also, that reputational component is very, very important. Another decision that the board was not a part of, that the administration put forward, was the agreement on the encampment at the university. Do you feel that that's something the administration should have advised the board of governors of in reaching that agreement, or would you say that that's

administrative in nature and the board of governors does not have a role to play in that?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: I firmly believe that the administration should be notifying the board on that. That is a reputational risk, especially when you're making an agreement of such magnitude. It could have an effect on your reputational risk. It could have a risk on partnerships.

One of the biggest things when you're on a board is not only fiduciary responsibility, but it's your responsibility to mitigate risk. To me, that had multiple levels of risk from an organizational perspective, not only locally. But that one—a decision like that could have ripple effects on other institutions because there were encampments across the province as well.

So, yes, I fully believe that that should be something that is at the board level.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I guess I'll keep it short.

What steps do you believe are necessary for the university to better prepare young people for successful careers as they leave the institution?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Thank you for your question. I believe there are a few things that I'd like to articulate on that.

One I mentioned before is about the relevancy of programming. It's very important for any academic institution to make sure that they are in touch with the industry—in touch with the local industry, in touch with provincial industry—as to if the education they're providing is relevant so that the graduate is fully capable to contribute as an entry-level employee, or at whatever level or whatever degree that they're at.

The other thing I think that's really important is, we've seen in education, over the last several years, the opportunities that are there or created from the academic institution for some form of practical—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much. I'm sorry to cut you off. I'm normally not that rude, unless you talk to my brothers.

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: My apologies.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the official opposition. MPP Gilmour.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Good morning—it's still morning. Thank you so much for appearing virtually. It really helps us a lot when we're overseeing this committee, to have the chance to interview you. Again, thank you for putting yourself forward on a number of boards and ways of serving Ontario. It's clear that you have a passion for the overall health of the community, and that is appreciated.

I'm just wondering—taking you back to the beginning—when you thought about stepping onto this board, how did you discover that this position was available? Did you find it somewhere? Did someone approach you? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: I had some interest in the board to begin with, and then I knew that there was a

member, a provincial member, that was coming off. So I reached out to the university and asked what their process would be to be able to put my name forward.

I'm here today now, having sent in my applications. I'm excited that I'm having the opportunity to be considered.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: You currently serve as the CEO of Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. That's—I think it was a \$36-million budget or something like that—over 200 staff and lots of board commitments.

I'm wondering if you can speak a little bit about balance and the time demands you spoke about—volunteering; you've got this full-time executive responsibility. How would you balance this part-time governance with all of those other pieces?

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Mr. Kenneth Blanchette: I'm known for always being busy. What I have done—I am no longer on the board for the hospital. I left that position several years ago. I was asked to co-chair the OHT by my colleagues at the Windsor-Essex county OHT for a two-year term, which will be ending this year as well. When the opportunity came—and like I said, I've been looking at the University of Windsor—it's really a matter of shifting my time that was already committed to something else. That will be finishing; this will be starting. I will be able to balance that within my structure.

I have talked to my board chair at the board; they're fully supportive of me moving into that role as well. And for my role here, I balance it very well. I have a very good team, a very strong team, that I work with. This is a good thing, I think, especially with the community. I'm very well-connected in the community itself, and also known for connecting a lot of folks, even outside of industry. My time with the college expanded my circle of influence and connection well beyond just health care, in the trades and business.

So, yes, this would be my next venture for as long as the university—or if I'm allowed to do it, as long as I could take. And then, maybe in my retirement years, maybe I'll do two in the future; who knows.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's lovely to see the passion as you think about this and imagine it for yourself.

The University of Windsor is performing so well, and across a number of rankings. I think it was third in Ontario of non-medical universities. It has great impact and alumni impact—all of this. But yet, at the same time, the sector as a whole, including the university, is vulnerable to underfunding of higher education by, originally, the former Liberal government and now this Conservative government.

So I am wondering: According to the Council of Ontario Universities, we're seeing that Ontario public universities are reaching the limit of what they can actually do through cost reduction alone. What strategies would you have in mind for increasing revenue or encouraging the government to meet its funding obligations to public universities?

Mr. Kenneth Blanchette: I would say the cost reduction alone—there are always ways internally to create efficiencies, so I would definitely still be pursuing that. That's something I think any public institution should be doing. We're here doing that ourselves, right?

In terms of the other avenues, I think it's wise to explore different avenues of business ventures, research ventures, things especially with local businesses. If you can help with entrepreneurship, especially within your own community and the region, I think it's a great way for the university to do that. All of those things that help build your reputation—because I think their latest ranking was 500 out of 1,600 in terms of top institutions in the world, right? The further you can enhance building your reputation, the decisions you make, CQI stuff that you do, what you end up doing is drawing more and more and higher-level academic interest within the region.

And it is a long-term plan, right? You have to have the short-term plan, as you mentioned before, and the internal stuff for the finances, but the long-term business vision of the academic institution is really important. That's where I would go back to program relevancy, not only for now but the future. Are you in touch with the business? Are you in touch with the economy? Are you well in touch with how you can predict to the best of your ability, so that you can create not only strong, sustainable programming now, but something that you could probably build on: a master's, a post-graduate certificate.

That's another avenue, as well, I think, in continuing education: where an academic institution invests itself into post-graduate certificates, especially for the workforce that cannot take the time off of work to be able to attend the academic institution. I think it's a very viable way to increase your income source to the university.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: You clearly have some ideas of how you'd build on the success that the university already has. Would you also, as a board member, advocate publicly for increased public investment in universities?

Mr. Kenneth Blanchette: I think first you have to get your house in order, right? I think the most important thing to do is to look at what you are doing internally to maximize—you have to maximize the impact of every dollar you receive, whether it's from the government or whether it's from the city—because the students are paying tuition as well. I think that's our duty and responsibility to anybody that's investing in their own education in there. With that, then you have a more valid conversation around what the optimal way is to be able to do that. I think that's first and foremost what needs to be done.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I just want to move into student life a little bit. For you, were you fortunate enough, would you say, to be able to be born into a family that afforded university? Or did you pay your way, use OSAP? Do you have any experience with those?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Yes. When I was at the University of Windsor, I was on scholarship, but when I went away to professional school, I did have to take a loan.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I'm thinking about this loan piece and the recent government cuts to the OSAP grants, going from 85% down to 15%. At the same time, there's been a hiking of tuition in our public universities. This is at the same time as there's also youth unemployment that's nearly 16% in Ontario. I have spoken to all of these students in my riding and around for whom these changes actually upend their dreams and the potential for the rest of us of having their gifts—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I was just actually waiting for her to end her question, but I wanted to remind everyone at this table that we're asking questions about this individual's capacity to do the job and their application.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Of course.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Right—relevance to their qualifications. Thank you.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Absolutely. As a board member, I'm wondering what long-term effects you foresee in the university sector as a result of students taking on so much debt to finance their education.

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: From a governance perspective on this—I can speak for myself. I remember having to invest quite significantly into my own education.

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

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: To do that, the further you invest within your own education, it opens up even more opportunities for you as a graduate and to earn a good income. For those that are striving to do the post-secondary education, I think we all have to look at it as an investment within ourselves, to be able to ensure that that's a path for success for us.

On the board, it's about making sure—from a governance lens—that the program we are offering to them is as relevant as it possibly can be. Are we giving them the best tools for success so that they can not only acquire and land the best job they can, but to have pathways for them for career advancement, career changes—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much—again, sorry about that.

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: That's okay. Sometimes I get a little carried away, so my apologies.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): No, you're very passionate. I appreciate that. It's nice to see.

MPP Smyth—over to the third party.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thanks for being here today, Mr. Blanchette. I just want to follow on what my colleagues are asking about, but I wanted to start a bit of a different way. Based on your experience, what do you think went wrong with Conestoga College, and what can you take from that as you approach this new role with the University of Windsor board of governors?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Can you give some context as to what you mean by what went wrong?

Ms. Laura Smith: Point of order: This has to be—

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

Ms. Laura Smith: We need to keep within the scope of this individual's capacity to do the job.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Can I explain?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Go ahead—and if you can make it relevant to the qualifications.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: The province dissolved the college's board of governors and took full control of the institution due to a massive financial and governance scandal. What learnings do you take from that that you might apply to the work that you do on the board of governors at the University of Windsor?

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Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Thank you. Because I was not on the board, I don't know of the details of why that would happen or why that did happen, so I have no real opinion on that part. When it comes to the governance structure and being a board—

Interjection.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Excuse me, but he was a VP of a college, right? A VP of a college.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: Once again, this isn't within his scope. It should be within his scope.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Right.

Ms. Laura Smith: The questions need to be within his scope.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Kenneth is applying for the University of Windsor board of governors, and so all questions need to be relevant to that board position with relevance to his qualifications, please.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Okay.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: So he wouldn't have any qualifications that might matter in looking at what happened historically at a college as he moves forward to a university appointment—but, okay. I'll carry on.

So you spent over a decade in senior academic leadership roles at St. Clair College serving as the chair of the health sciences, associate VP of academic. And all the colleges focus really heavily, as we know, on applied polytechnic training. A university environment operates under a distinct governance model with a heavy emphasis on academic research and senate independence.

How will your deep experience in the college sector—that doesn't include being able to comment on Conestoga—shape your approach to being on the board at the University of Windsor?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: The experience I have at the college when I was there—yes, the focus is on the polytechnic and the skilled trades, the skill sets. However, when I was there, we also developed three degrees under my role as the associate vice-president academic, as well

as creating and developing the research department. In that capacity, I spent quite a bit of time with university colleagues and the university sector in building that part. So I have a very good understanding of the academic scrutiny in terms of building a degree program, the processes you have to go through with the Ministry of Education in building it to ensure that all of the learning outcomes are to the level that are needed for a university degree—and with the research component as well, working in that aspect in terms of not only building and assisting the VP in building that department, but also working with our businesses and industry leaders on building the projects within there and creating the scholarly activity as we had within degrees.

I'll take our nursing program, for example. We made sure that we enhanced their scholarly activity in terms of their ability as faculty within the degree program so that they had the opportunities, the resources and the capabilities in there to be able to do that so that we could meet our accreditation for that program as well.

Although from a general college perspective, it might not seem that there's time and learning and space in there, there was quite a bit under my tenure in my time there so that I could really fully understand the university aspect of it as well.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right. Thank you.

Your current leadership as the CEO of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit—that organization executed that landmark partnership with the University of Windsor to co-locate the operations of the health unit directly onto the university campus. Given that you now sit on both sides of this equation, as the executive lead of the tenant agency and new governor of the host institution, how are you going to manage any potential conflicts of interest and leverage this integration to enhance the research partnership, student placements and shared infrastructure?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: That's a very good question. The intent to move there—we had to stop that because the project came in well over budget. We did not end up moving on campus with that.

In terms of conflict of interest, I even had the conversation with the university that, if there was anything in relation to a partnership that we would have, that I would have to declare the conflict of interest in any decision made at the governance level, especially with the board. I was very transparent with them in that aspect as well.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Yes, you have mentioned that transparency is key to you.

The University of Windsor board of governors is directly mandated with managing the institution's property, finances and capital-building construction. With your background as the former chair of the board for Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare and co-lead for regional health teams, what unique oversight do you think that you bring to the university's capital investments when it comes to, say, expanding health research labs and regional medical training facilities?

Dr. Kenneth Blanchette: Great question. I think I bring a very unique perspective, because not only working in the college system, I understand the ministry funding for it as well as the student tuition, as it comes to running an academic institution.

But I also have a very good financial acumen as it relates to capital investment, capital planning, deferred maintenance. One of the things I did when I was at the college, and even in my role here, was to spend a lot of time with projects, project management and long-term investment within the future, building out budgets themselves, even building a zero-based budgeting system, both at the college and from the academic sector, to ensure we had that strong and fiscal viability in creating with my colleagues a long-term capital plan—not just a one- or a two-year; a five-, 10-, 15-year.

Then, also, working with multiple levels of government, are there areas where we can see grants or funding opportunities? What can we do from a philanthropy perspective within the region, as well? Because I feel like it's just as important for the homegrown organization and home community to have just as much investment, accountability and stake in the game as it is when you're going to ask for any kind of investment from the province or from the federal government, as well.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I guess I just wanted to ask you finally about enrolment in universities in general. We have talked about OSAP. As you're sitting on a board that is the board of the university and the success of that university is under your purview, how do you see the changes in OSAP impacting potential enrolment at your university? Is this considered something that would be of great consideration by the board, something that you see because enrolment is key to success financially for the institution?

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I think this is out of the scope and is giving directions and opinions which are not part of that. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Smyth—relevance, yes? Thank you.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I think it's relevant to the success of the university enrolment, which is impacted by students who now have less opportunity to get to those institutions due to a debilitating change in funding by this government.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Forty-one seconds.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: That's all, and thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Kenneth, for coming online today and for your willingness to serve and make Windsor and Ontario an even better place. You are welcome to stay on the line. We are going to go to our concurrence portion of the

meeting today, or you could go about your merry way—or not—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Oh, you're still there. Sorry. I lost you. I was thinking you were just fed up with my interruptions. You can stay online, or you can head about your day and find out later. But either way, we're very thankful that you chose to apply for this board. Thank you.

Dr. Kenneth Raymond Blanchette: Thank you very much for the opportunity. I think I will step off, because I do have my duties here at work, but thank you very much for taking the time, and thanks for your consideration.

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

We are going to move to the concurrences. Is everyone ready? First is the intended appointment of Natasha Pappin. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Natasha Pappin, nominated as member of the Ontario Review Board.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Gates, Gilmour, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Laura Smith, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Wow, look at that. That carries, obviously, unanimously. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Patrick Murphy, nominated as member of the Ontario Review Board.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Laura Smith, Smyth.

Nays

Gates, Gilmour.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That carries. Congratulations to Patrick and Natasha.

Now we will move to the intended appointment of Timothy Dobson. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Timothy Dobson, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Concurrence has been moved by MPP Smith. Is there any discussion? MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Laura Smith.

Nays

Gates, Gilmour, Smyth.

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

We will now consider the intended appointment of Sally Ashton to the Human Rights Tribunal. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Sally Ashton, nominated as vice-chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Gates, Gilmour, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Laura Smith, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Another unanimous one—that is fantastic.

Next up, considering the appointment of Sally Ashton to the Social Benefits Tribunal this time.

MPP Wayne Gates: That's the same person, right?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): It appears to be, yes.

MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Sally Ashton, nominated as vice-chair of the Social Benefits Tribunal.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please.

Ayes

Bailey, Dowie, Gates, Gilmour, Sabawy, Sarrazin, Laura Smith, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Back-to-back unanimous—congratulations to Sally Ashton and also to Timothy from before.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Kenneth Raymond Blanchette. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Kenneth Raymond Blanchette, nominated as member of the University of Windsor board of governors.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Concurrence has been moved by MPP Smith. Any discussion? No discussion.

Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? That carries. Congratulations to Kenneth

Blanchette and Windsor in general. That concludes that portion.

Next, certificate extension, the last item of business: The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the July 17, 2026, certificate is set to expire August 16, 2026. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I heard a no.

That's the business of the day. The committee now stands adjourned until August 27, 2026. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 1214.

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