Legislative Assembly of Ontario




Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

A-25

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

A-25

## Standing Committee on Government Agencies

## Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Intended appointments

Nominations prévues

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 22 October 2026

1re session
44e législature

Jeudi 22 octobre 2026

Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Présidente : Mary-Margaret McMahon
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

**Hansard on the Internet**

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

**Le Journal des débats sur Internet**

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

https://www.ola.org/

**Index inquiries**

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

**Renseignements sur l'index**

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

---

Hansard Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Journal des débats et services linguistiques
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4335

# CONTENTS

Thursday 22 October 2026


Subcommittee reports ..... A-305
Intended appointments ..... A-305
- Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano ..... A-305
- Mr. Marcel Gagnon ..... A-310
- Ms. Patsy Clarke ..... A-314
- Mr. Dinesh Parakh ..... A-319
- Mr. Georges Raad ..... A-324
- Ms. Helene Annette Evans ..... A-327

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Thursday 22 October 2026

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

# COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Jeudi 22 octobre 2026

*The committee met at 0902 in room 151.*

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Good morning, everyone. Welcome back, as your prelude to next week.

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will now come to order. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair. Thank you kindly for that.

Our first item of business will be the adoption of the subcommittee reports—so that would be the report from Thursday, September 24, 2026. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, September 24, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated September 18, 2026.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Is there any discussion on that? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That carries.

The next subcommittee report is dated Thursday, October 8, 2026. Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 8, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 2, 2026.

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

The final subcommittee report is dated Thursday, October 15, 2026. Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 15, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 9, 2026.

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

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

### MR. MAXIMILIAN MASSIMILIANO

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party, official opposition party and third party: Maximilian Massimiliano, intended appointee as member, Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Now to the most exciting part of our committee: the review of intended appointees.

Our first intended appointee today is Maximilian Massimiliano. He's nominated as a member of the Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. As you can see, he's here virtually.

Maximilian, you can make an initial statement, and it will be followed by three rounds of questioning from the different parties for 10 minutes each—except your time will be removed from the time from the government side, and they're perfectly fine with that.

Thank you very much for stepping up to serve Ontario. We welcome you to our committee. The floor is yours.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Maximilian Massimiliano. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today as you consider appointments to the board of governors at Cambrian College.

The continued success of Cambrian College as one of Ontario's leading colleges means a great deal to me and plays an important role in our community. This is why I'm passionate about becoming a part of the board of governors at Cambrian College.

I was born and raised in Sudbury—and I never left—by Italian immigrant parents who taught me the importance of hard work, civic engagement and, most of all, giving back to the community. From waking up at 4 a.m. to work at the family bakery, to helping out at our community church, my parents were always reminding me of how important these core values were, and I know they have shaped me into the person I am today.

I am also a proud father of three wonderful daughters. Watching them pursue their post-secondary education here in Sudbury has reinforced just how important strong local educational institutions are. They continue to amaze me every day as they succeed in their post-secondary journeys and in the multiple sports they each play and excel at, while they all attend Laurentian University here in Sudbury. Like many parents, I hope they choose to build their futures in Sudbury and maybe one day raise families of their own in this community that has given us so much.

After graduating from Cambrian College with a bachelor of business administration, I spent some time in banking but ultimately decided my career path was to take over the family business and local Italian bakery.

I am a certified baker, and during my time at the [*inaudible*] I was asked by the program director of the baking

and pastry arts program at Cambrian College to participate in the writing of the skills training examinations for the Red Seal baker apprenticeship program. Also, during my time operating the bakery, as a business owner and tradesperson, I employed over 10 apprentices who have since completed their apprenticeship programs with Cambrian College. I have always been a strong advocate for apprenticeship programs and work placements. I strongly believe that they are rewarding careers and vital to ensuring Ontario's economic prosperity.

Through these experiences, I've learned how important leadership, long-term planning, financial accountability and adaptability are to any organization's success.

As a Sudbury entrepreneur for over 25 years, as a small business owner and a tradesperson, I'm bringing a unique experience set that will enable me to contribute a varied perspective to the continued success of the Cambrian College board of directors.

Outside of my professional career, community service has always been a part of my life.

Today, I serve as the second vice-chair of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce and as director-at-large for the Greater Sudbury Soccer Club, where I have coached youth girls' soccer for over 20 years. I enjoy mentoring and coaching young people. I have also had the pleasure to serve my community as a volunteer high school coach.

I also try to give back by participating in events as well as fundraising for various community organizations and charities, such as the Easter Seals chapter, the Health Sciences North hospital, St. Joseph Villa long-term-care centre, Vale hospice, Sudbury's Chill volleyball club, and Laurentian University flag football, just to name a few.

For the Health Science North Foundation, in particular, I founded and organized an annual celebrity pizza-eating contest. It has been two years in the making, and I was fortunate to raise close to $100,000 in two years. The event is a summer festival where members of the community can gather to watch competition and connect. I will work to exceed this number for our hospital at next year's event and to find new ways to bring our community together in celebration and civic engagement.

This is ultimately why I'm interested in serving on Cambrian's board of governors. Cambrian has made a meaningful difference in the lives of students, families and employers across northern Ontario. I have a long history with the college, and as an alumnus and volunteer, I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the work as a board director.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to take any questions that you may have at this time.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Maximilian. That was a delicious presentation. I'm sure we all are—especially some of us who haven't had breakfast. Wow. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

**0910**

We're going to go to the government side, and they have five minutes, 26 seconds. MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I'm hungry too, so I appreciated that morning breakfast, without eating.

Thank you so much for joining us, Mr. Massimiliano.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** You can call me Max. It's easy.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you, Max. I appreciate that.

You talked about giving back and providing those bridges for those opportunities for those students in your place of work, at the bakery. You talked about career skills, as well, and how that's important for post-secondary education.

Can you talk about the importance of gaining that hands-on career experience or work-integrated learning in post-secondary education? That's going to directly link to your role in this position.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I can speak to this question from personal experience. As I was completing my business administration program at Cambrian College, during my final semester, I had a work placement at the Bank of Montreal. This was a great experience because I got to see first-hand what my career would look like in the banking industry. My goal was to one day work on Bay Street for one of the big banks. But after seeing how the bank operated, I realized that I wanted to become an entrepreneur. My goal was to take over the family business. Without that experience, I could have graduated from college and entered the banking world, not knowing what it was like.

I believe that gaining first-hand experience and work-integrated learning opportunities are vital in helping young people decide on their future careers. I'm a firm believer in the apprenticeship program. I believe work experience while obtaining your accreditation helps shape you, better trains employees, and helps you prepare for the workplace.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Thank you, Max, for joining us today.

Coincidentally, I was with a number of our trade unions yesterday, and they highlighted the growing divide between what's in the college curriculum and their labour market needs. Certainly, it's our focus for post-secondary institutions in Ontario that students will graduate into in-demand labour market fields, but sometimes there is that difference between the demand from the students and, ultimately, the opportunities that are out there in terms of job prospects.

Might you be able to share a little bit of your thoughts on the importance of ensuring that those strong partnerships exist between the colleges and local employers, and ultimately giving those great career opportunities to students in the community?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Like I said before, I've been a strong supporter of partnerships between colleges and local employers. I have employed apprentices in my field, and they participate in the apprenticeship pro-

gram development. They're vital and essential to ensure that the students graduate with the skills, knowledge and practical experience needed to succeed in today's labour markets.

As critical minerals play an enormous role in the current geopolitical world, mining and skilled trades play a significant economic role between colleges and sector-specific employers.

We definitely need to maintain and keep these partnerships strong and alive between the colleges and local employers.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you, Max, for coming in today.

I read your résumé. With all of your wide board experience and in the private sector, can you give an example of when you helped an organization navigate through a difficult decision or conversation?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I have to say, the one experience that stands out is my involvement that I had with the municipal accountability task force, through the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. In that role, I had the opportunity to participate in some difficult but important conversations with municipal officials surrounding accountability, transparency, fiscal responsibility, and a lot of decisions that were impacting our local business community. The discussions weren't always easy, particularly when there were different perspectives, municipal priorities and directions of the community. I believe my contribution to navigate through those difficult conversations was helping maintain respectful and constructive dialogue while ensuring that the concerns of the business community were still heard, rather than focusing on the disagreements. I felt it was important to ask—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Less than a minute.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** —challenging questions. I learned that it was—be able to keep people accountable while maintaining strong relationships.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** There's 24 seconds left. No? Okay.

We'll head over to MPP Gilmour from the official opposition. The floor is yours.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you so much, Mr. Massimiliano, for being here and for your involvement in Sudbury, for your years with the soccer club. And, yes, the two years of the pizza-eating contest makes me want to come to Sudbury.

I want to just start at the beginning of your process, with the application. Your application was submitted on June 23 of this year. How did you first learn of the vacancy? I'm wondering if anybody suggested that you apply—including someone from the minister's office, or an MPP, anyone in the party, the Premier, those sort of things. Did anybody suggest that you apply to this, and who would that be?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** No. The appointment process was facilitated through the college's annual candidate nomination process. The college reached out to me, as someone who has worked with them before and, obviously, an ex-alumni.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** The bylaws for Cambrian College say that the committee looks for nominees who would round out the board's experience, meet those college needs. So you're saying that they recommended and interviewed you through this process?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I'd say that they felt they wanted someone who was an entrepreneur in small business and someone who has been fiscally responsible and understands how transparency needs to be facilitated through the college's board.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I want to just check, because our committee here routinely asks about political involvement: Are you currently or have you ever been a member of a political party?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Yes, I have.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Have you made any donations to a political party?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Yes, I have.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Have you ever been a candidate for office for a political party?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Yes, I have.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Which party would that be?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Your application lists your business, your community roles, but it doesn't mention your candidacy. Your walk through how you served the Sudbury area mentioned, again, your volunteer roles, your business connections, but it didn't mention your candidacy with the PC Party. Did you consider it relevant to disclose this to the committee?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I was the candidate for the previous election, but right now, I'm just a candidate of record, so I did not think that it was prudent to actually put that information forward.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** In fact, your socials still list you as the PC candidate for Sudbury, so—

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Sorry. I can change that. I left that up. I did not make an adjustment to it. I'm sorry for that.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** That's okay.

Do you intend to seek a nomination to run for provincial office again?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** At this point here, I'm not sure, to be honest with you.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** If you do seek a nomination while serving on the board, would you step down from the board?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Well, I would disclose my party affiliation with the board and recuse myself if there's any discussion or decision-making where the interests of the college intersect with my political affiliation.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** So, at this point, you're not sure. But just in the last few weeks, you have stood with the Premier for pictures, with Minister Sarkaria for pictures.

You're still listed as the candidate on record for the PC Party of Sudbury.

My concern, really, is that students deserve a governor, not a candidate-in-waiting, so—

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I think we need to keep questions in the scope of the individual's qualifications for the job.

**0920**

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Okay. Yes.

MPP Gilmour.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Of course, when there are many opportunities where the college will be speaking with the ministry, with this government, we need to be sure that anybody who is sitting on the board of governors is impartial and is not going to have motives that are other than serving the students and the body. This is what the line of questioning really is here.

For example, Cambrian's bylaw says that when the college expects an accumulated deficit, the board must seek the minister's approval for its budget and submit a recovery plan. Cambrian is in fact projecting a deficit this very year. How would you assure students, staff, the Sudbury community—after posing in pictures with the Premier in the last few weeks, after posing in pictures with Minister Sarkaria in the last few weeks, after being the PC candidate and still having that on your socials—that you can bring an independent judgment to the process, given your ties to the governing party?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I worked with Cambrian College for more than 15 years. My judgment, on the board of governors, will be within the lines of making decisions on what is going to benefit Cambrian College, first and foremost. That is my top priority, and that is why I want to be on the board of governors for Cambrian College.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** And yet, you didn't disclose that you do have this connection.

When the board is going to tell the minister that program cuts are going to hurt the northern students—in particular, the rural students—will you be comfortable saying that to the government that you ran to join?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Well, it is my understanding—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry to interrupt.

Point of order, MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Point of order: The questions need to be relevant to the individual's qualifications in his job—what he has done, what he has accomplished to be relevant to the board.

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

MPP Gilmour, we're just looking for a strong link to—

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Conflict of interest is an important matter. It needs to be assured that there will be a strong candidate for this position, who will not have a conflict of interest; that we will be able to support the students—especially those northern, Indigenous students who count on this college. This college is in some serious decision-making times, with programs lost, financial funding lost. We need to ensure that the candidate before us will be making decisions based on the best interest of the community and not based on his political career and/or his connections to the governing party.

I'm wondering, sir, in your view, what is the single most serious financial challenge facing Cambrian right now?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** It is my understanding that Cambrian has a very good financial—and healthy, robust balance sheet at this time. They have made a lot of great decisions to ensure that they keep that fiscal responsibility, moving forward.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Do you know, roughly, how much the college revenue has changed from last year to this year?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I do not know that because I am not a board member, unfortunately.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** The revenue fell by half last year, from nearly $300 million to $150 million. This is the first page of the college's financial statement.

When I joined a board in the past, when I've sought a job, one of the first things I've done is look at the organization's financial statements, to ensure stability.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Like I said, the financial statements are very healthy and robust at this time. They have not had any staff layoffs. Even though they have gone through some tough times, they are still operating very, very, very good.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I respectfully disagree. When the college is projecting a $1.7-million deficit in 2026-27, I'm wondering how that's called a healthy, robust situation.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Cambrian has also suspended the intake of 16 programs. Students in Little Current, in Espanola need to know that there's someone at the table who's going to fight for the programs for them, and who's going to ensure that there's no conflict of interest.

If Cambrian's own board has to have an open search—I wonder who the candidate might have been.

I'm very concerned—while this witness does care very much about Sudbury—that Cambrian is facing a $1.74-million deficit, 16 suspended programs, and a revenue drop by half in a single year. It needs a governor who is chosen for what they can bring to the college and not for what they've done for the PC Party.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Over to the third party: MPP Smyth, the floor is yours for 10 minutes.

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

I think that in the context of what my colleague was asking you, the relevancy to background and political involvement is there—particularly in the context of the deficit with the college programs, suspensions etc. You're

saying it's a robust balance sheet; the numbers show otherwise. So there is a bit of concern there, in terms of understanding the context of where the college is right now. I do appreciate you caring to be a part of it and wanting to help, and your background.

In your position on the board of governors, how would you balance the college's financial sustainability with the need to maintain accessible and high-quality education? We've already seen that this college has taken a hit. In that context, what are you going to do?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Well, I believe that strong financial stewardship is one of the most important responsibilities of the board, especially for an institution like Cambrian College, because it plays such a significant role in our region's economy. First and foremost, I believe in accountability and transparency. There has to be a responsibility to ensure that the fiscal resources are being managed responsibly, and that the decisions are made with the long-term interests of the institution in mind. Coming from a business background, I understand the importance of balancing financial discipline but also having strategic investment. It's not just about reducing the costs or balancing the budget. It's about making some smart decisions that position the organization for long-term success.

Another important principle that I firmly believe in, that I've been taught, is to be proactive rather than reactive. That means making difficult decisions and asking questions to plan for future challenges, to ensure that the institution can still be flexible to adapt to changing economic conditions and ensure that the college is going to be responsive to the needs of the students and the labour market.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So, with all of that said, how do you feel about the programs being suspended? Is this what you want—16 programs and the financial situation? Is this how you envision the college moving forward—the one that you went to that's so much a part of you and who you are and why you want to work there?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I understand that the suspensions happened, but unfortunately there was very low enrolment in a lot of those programs, and a lot of them were tied to international student enrolment. So those were hard decisions that, unfortunately, had to be made to preserve the college's fiscal responsibility.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What were some of those programs that were cut, that you say had low enrolment? Did you agree with that? When you look at that now, going in, you have that perspective of what the college has lost. How is that going to help the college, going forward—and what would you fight for, to maintain?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** If the programs have low enrolment, I would fight to try to find a spot for these students to be able to pursue their career, maybe at a different college.

I believe they cancelled 16 programs, but that gives them an opportunity now to maybe develop more programs where they can attract more students. This way here, the college can continue to grow as we navigate through these times.

Not every program that was offered 20 years ago is still sustainable—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Relevant.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** —and relevant these days. We are in a changing economy, changing times, and unfortunately, we have to able to adapt to that as well.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What are some programs you would fight for, to see maintained at the college, or even advocate for, to include, you think, that might help the balance sheet?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Well, I'm not sure which programs that they will offer. I know that there are people who work at the college who will do their due diligence and research and present it to the board for us to make a decision about which programs they feel and they believe would benefit the college.

**0930**

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How would you see your continued involvement with the PC Party? You haven't ruled out the possibility of another run. I know I'm going to get a call of order here. But my question is, how do you see that continued involvement intersecting with your responsibilities as a college governor? You've talked about transparency and accountability, yet your connection with the party wasn't disclosed. How do you see that intersecting those responsibilities, going forward—and being able to have an independent voice with this college, without any kind of outside influence, keeping in mind the pictures with ministers and people within the party?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Like I said previously, I will disclose my party affiliation with the board and recuse myself from any discussion or decision-making process if it intersects with the college and the interests of my political affiliation.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Can you talk to us about donations that you've made to the PC Party in the past and what motivates your contributions?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** I made some donations last year and some this year.

We all know that people have political affiliations, and they tend to choose to donate to the parties that they—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt again.

There's a point of order from MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I want to remind the committee that we're here to ask questions about the individual's qualifications.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I think qualifications are there, but so are connections. That's why we see this as a relevant line of questioning.

What would you consider your top priorities during your appointment to the college? And how would you measure being effective in that role?

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** It gives me a tremendous opportunity to play an even greater role in shaping the economic future of Greater Sudbury and northern Ontario.

There are a lot of significant opportunities in our mining and critical minerals sector. Sudbury is already

recognized to be a global leader in mining. With the provincial and national priorities revolving in critical minerals, the college can play a monumental role in providing the skilled workforce for mining, advanced manufacturing and technologies. As a member of the board, I want to contribute to that, to keep the momentum growing. They've done some great work. They've made some great strides in research and development for electrification, environmental remediation, and defence technology as well.

I think that Cambrian can be a great partner in education for future years, and I want it to continue to be a pillar in our community.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you so much, Maximilian, for taking the time to share your story and your history and experience with us. You're welcome to stay while we interview other people, or you can go about your day and enjoy the outside. You'll find out the results. We appreciate you coming and being willing to serve.

**Mr. Maximilian Massimiliano:** Thank you so much for your time, everybody. I appreciate it.

## MR. MARCEL GAGNON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and third party: Marcel Gagnon, intended appointee as member, Lakehead University board of governors.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now move to the second appointee, and that is Marcel Michael Gagnon. He is nominated as a member of the Lakehead University board of governors. He will also be appearing virtually.

Hi, Marcel. Good morning. Welcome. I'm not sure if you've ever followed the committee, but the way it works is, you have time to give a presentation and brag about yourself, and then each party will have 10 minutes to question you. Your time that you take to share your story is deducted from the government's time, and they are A-okay with that.

Thank you very much for stepping up to consider serving Ontario and making it a better province to live in. We appreciate it. The floor is yours.

We cannot hear you, unfortunately. We're going to figure that out. Hold that thought. You're muted, I guess. Maybe turn your volume up. We're just going to check on that.

*Interjection.*

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

We're going to recess for five minutes. Is that okay, guys?

Marcel, we're going to ask you to log off and log back in again, if that's okay. We'll get this sorted out. We're anxious to hear from you. Thank you.

*The committee recessed from 0936 to 0939.*

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will come back to order. We're welcoming Marcel Michael Gagnon. He's nominated to be a member of the Lakehead University board of governors. He knows the drill. He's ready.

The floor is yours, Marcel, for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Thank you for inviting me to the standing committee. It's the very first time I've ever been in front of a standing committee. I watch you on TV all the time—but never in person, obviously. I would have loved to be there.

Anyway, I'll just give you a little bit of personal history. My name is Marcel Gagnon, obviously. I live in Thunder Bay. I actually live about 40 kilometres outside of Thunder Bay, at our retirement home on the lake, so it's pretty nice. Today, it's very foggy—but that's this time of year, and that's happening.

I've been married for 46 years to my wife, Karen. We have two boys. Our eldest son—he's a CPA here in Thunder Bay—works in industry. Our youngest son lives in Ottawa, and he's a physician and internist. He just recently had a baby girl. So we're proud grandparents as well.

I'll give you a brief history of my experience.

First of all, I'm a very proud graduate of Lakehead University. I graduated in 1979.

I then articled with a company, BDO Dunwoody, in Toronto, and I spent five years there. My wife was not a fan of Toronto. She didn't like it. She wanted to move back to Thunder Bay, so we moved back.

I took a job with a construction company as a controller and did that for a couple of years.

Then, I moved on to a hospital, St. Joseph's Care Group hospital. I was a financial controller there for a couple of years.

I was approached by some friends of mine here in Thunder Bay to join their accounting practice—it was called Fitzpatrick and Partners—back in 1988, and I became a partner there in 1991, I guess it was. In 2010, we merged in with a national accounting firm, MNP—some of you may know it; we're growing quite large.

In 2024, I retired, after spending some 45 years in the business.

My tenure as a partner in a large accounting firm—most of my clients were in the health care, not-for-profit and Indigenous niche. I spent a lot of time on northern reserves, north of Thunder Bay, and really enjoyed that.

In 2020, I was awarded the distinction of a fellow of the institute of CPAs of Ontario. I'm very proud of that as well. So I have a FCPA designation, and just for those of you who don't know, it is awarded to roughly 50 CPAs a year. There are 100,000 CPAs in Ontario, and 50 of us get nominated and are given the distinction of being a fellow of the institute. We're recognized for our commitment to the community, for our commitment to our profession, and for our leadership in our working positions.

I've always given time to the community. I've had a real interest in health care, as I indicated.

Just recently, prior to retiring, I completed my term with the Canadian Mental Health Association. I was involved at all levels of that federation. I was a treasurer for the local branch for a number of years. I joined the Ontario

branch, was the treasurer, and then moved up and became the chair, and then the past chair. As the chair, I was appointed to the national federation and sat on that board for a couple of years. All the way through, though, I've really grown to realize that my experience as a chartered professional accountant has been a need that most boards require, and I was able to fill that and really felt rewarded with the time and effort that I put into it.

So here we are. I was contacted because I had submitted my résumé online to the public secretariat there and indicated that I had an interest in the LU board of directors. They reached out to me and asked me if I'd be interested to let my name stand, which I am, obviously.

Just to step back a bit: Since I retired, I really did not do a lot, and I missed it. I missed the people. I missed being involved with things. For about two years, I did a lot of golfing. I live on a lake, like I said. I did fishing. My wife is not a big traveller, so in the wintertime, we did little trips, but nothing—and I really felt that I needed something more. So I started to put my name out there. Lo and behold, within the last four months, I have appointments.

I was just recently appointed to the internal audit committee for health care with the Treasury Board Secretariat. I'm the chair of that committee. That's really interesting. I enjoy that.

I also was recently appointed to the port of Thunder Bay, as a board member there. That's just starting to take off. I have had only one meeting. I'm really enjoying that.

All of these boards require a lot of prep time. I have lots of time for that. They also require time for meetings. The port authority, I'm going to say, is maybe eight meetings a year; this board, I understand, is six; and the internal audit committee is only four meetings a year. I've got a lot of time to prepare and make myself available when needed.

So, like I said, I have a keen interest, and I have time available to give back and offer my experience to the Lakehead board of governors. I've taken a look at their financial statements, and I've seen a few things there that I have questions about, obviously. I have a bit of an interest now to try to find out more and certainly to help that board with their financial accountability and stewardship and managing their finances.

That's the end of my presentation. If there are any questions, I'll turn it back to you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Marcel. That's quite the picturesque story. And congratulations on your new grandchild. That's very exciting.

We will now go to the government side for questions. You have three minutes and 19 seconds. MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** I'd like to thank you for taking the initiative to help in committees, which will improve the life of people in the north in Ontario and help Lakehead University.

You have had a long career in accounting, financial management and community leadership. Could you please tell us a little more about your professional journey and what motivated you especially to put your name forward for the Lakehead University board of governors?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, I kind of indicated a little bit of that. In retirement, as I indicated, I was getting a little bit bored, and I missed people. So that's certainly something that I've been very interested in. I do have a keen interest in Lakehead University, like I said.

I did want to add that while I was a partner at Fitzpatrick and Partners and MNP, we would always interview and hire students out of the Lakehead University business program. Last year, my partner was nominated for an alumni award, and I helped put together his résumé. We took a look at our history, and there were over 250 graduates of LU that we had employed in our business, so I obviously know that there are great people who are coming out of there. Therefore, I've got that interest in giving something back to Lakehead University.

As far as my work history, I indicated a keen interest in health care. I know that Lakehead University—they don't have the Northern Ontario School of Medicine anymore. That was separated. But they still have a lot of health care programs. Nursing is very well respected in the community. I think I can add value to that. I also think that the direction of the university really needs to get back and get the business community in Thunder Bay involved in their operation. I think there's—

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

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** They've kind of gone off from that. I don't think they do as much as they can of that. I think there are a lot of economic opportunities for them. With the Ring of Fire coming on and with the engineering programs and all of that, that's the direction I would like to see it go.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Is there any specific area of your vast expertise that you think will be beneficial to Lakehead?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, my résumé shows that I worked in the Indigenous niche. I know that Lakehead has a lot of programs that they're looking at for Indigenous people. I think I have a good working relationship with many Indigenous organizations in northern Ontario. So I can add that value to the board of—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry to cut you off, but that's the time for the government. This committee makes me appear rude—just appear.

Now we're going to the official opposition for 10 minutes. MPP Gilmour.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you so much, Mr. Gagnon, for being here. You have clearly demonstrated that you do in fact watch our committee and know some of the questions that we ask, and I really appreciate the preparedness that you have come with. It's also clear that you've done a tremendous amount of work both in your professional life and in your personal life—and your commitment to Thunder Bay. I thank you for that.

Thunder Bay is one of my places of heart—my husband, his whole family is from Thunder Bay, and we're up

there regularly. So I'm grateful for the ways that you have committed to the community there.

**0950**

When you said that the secretariat had reached out to you, that you had submitted your information online, I wondered if you, prior to that, had had any conversations or if anybody had approached you and invited you to apply to this particular position.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** No, not this particular position. I had, in the past, applied to the northern Ontario school of business as a board member; when I was working, I applied to that. But other than that, no, until they actually reached out to me—it was the Ministry of Colleges and Universities—and said, "We see you have an interest. Would you be interested in pursuing a position with either of those?" In fact, they started out with Laurentian University, and I said, "Really, logistically, it doesn't work for me to be on the Laurentian board." Lakehead University—maybe they just didn't know that Lakehead was not in Sudbury, but whatever.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Right. Getting over Superior is quite a go.

We ask—and you will know this from your research; we always ask some general questions of all of our candidates.

Have you ever been a member of a political party?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I'm not a member—well, I guess I'm a card-carrying member.

Right now, I understand I'm a card-carrying member of the PC Party.

Back in about 2015, 2018, I was what they call the "bagman" for local Liberal MPP Bill Mauro, who would have been the Minister of Housing and whatnot. So I was a card-carrying member of the Liberals then. I supported Bill through his tenure with the Wynne government.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Have you donated to the PC Party in the last couple of years?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Oh, yes. They call regularly, and I do donate on occasion; I won't say I do it often. But I do donate on occasion.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** So far, everyone we've heard from this morning, coming before us, has donated to the PC Party in the last few years.

Just to be clear, you didn't receive a call from a PC MPP or staffer recommending you for this position?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** No.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Okay.

I loved your story about your connection as an alumnus and your career primarily in accounting, and as someone who has run a number of volunteer boards before, and board of directors—that job of someone with that financial background is really key and often hard to find. So thank you.

I wonder if you could speak a little bit about the Indigenous work that you have done, given that Lakehead and Thunder Bay, in particular—that is a place where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and calls to action are really a part of everyday living. I know that Lakehead University is planning the Gichi Kendaasiwin centre, which is coming in another year or so. I wonder what you bring to that, and what you may think, as a board member, your biases, your own internal places—what learning do you have to do, and what do you bring into that relationship?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, having worked with them over many years—you asked about my history. I started out as an auditor and accountant. I audited a number of First Nations communities. The federal government back in the day would appoint what they call "third-party managers" to go in for First Nations that were in financial difficulty. I was one of those that was nominated to do that, and I went in and turned one community around significantly; it was Long Lake 58, out in Longlac. We went from third-party management to co-management, and then I was able to hand the reins over to them so they could manage their own finances. All the way along, I trained them as to what they should be looking for and whatnot—so, certainly, an interest in financial management is something that I would hope becomes part of that programming. They did away with the third-party management program; they had what they call recipient-appointed advisers. Communities would pick a financial adviser to help them get back on track and get control of their budgets and whatnot. Really, what you're doing is educating them on what they need to do. I did that for a number of years.

I worked with a community, Cat Lake First Nation. Russell Wesley was the chief, and we became very good friends. I helped them through that process. They're still in a recipient-appointed adviser position, but that's their choice because they don't have the capacity to do some of the things they need a professional accountant to do—to help them with funding applications, managing their dollars, and all of those things.

So that's what I would like to see with this new program that's being developed—really focus on the financial management and educate them on what's needed. There are some really good people in these communities. They just need an opportunity to be educated and to come into a welcoming place, particularly since they're coming out of their community into Thunder Bay. So we want to make sure that that is all available to them and that they have the resources here, locally. There are lots of tribal councils—PTOs, they call them—that are available, like Nishnawbe Aski Nation, that are available to help these students locally. I'm really looking forward to that—

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you. Sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

I did want to know if you thought there were any particular truth and reconciliation calls to action that would be applicable to Lakehead, that the governing board should be aware of and moving into.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Specifically, no; I don't recall. But I do know that it's something that gets looked at regularly and it's something that we should consider always.

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

The other newer development for Lakehead is the STEM hub in Barrie that does the small businesses and

collaborations. It's another piece of the operation. I wondered: As you are looking at the financial stabilizations, as you're governing in two spots, what experiences from your background do you bring that could help with that hub development in Barrie and, in particular, ensuring financial stability for both locations?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** This is the first I've heard of this program. I'm not aware of it, unfortunately.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** That's okay. It was literally September 2026 that it began, so it is new.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Oh, it just began.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Yes.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, as a board member—we're always available. As far as governance goes, I'm not going to get involved with the operations, but certainly I can assist in administration, in the managing of that operation and reviewing the financial viability of the programs that are being offered.

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

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** That's all I can really say.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** We may not have enough time for this, and I don't know if my colleague will pick it up or not. Do you think Bill 33 has presented any serious threats to student unions, mental health supports, food banks on campuses?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** You're going to have to help me with Bill 33—

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

Point of order, MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I would like to remind the committee that we should ask questions relevant to the individual's qualifications.

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

MPP Gilmour, could you just elaborate on the relevance?

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Of course. The governing board is going to be interacting with the new legislation that any government puts forward. And needing to know how their students are going to respond to things like the crackdown on unions or the decrease in mental health supports, food banks, things like that on campus—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you. Sorry. Your time is up.

Over to the third party: MPP Smyth.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you, Marcel, for being here today. It was nice to hear your presentation.

**1000**

All you've done in your career, and your contributions—well stated. It was interesting how you retired for two years, and then—you can only do so much golfing and fishing, I guess. I get that.

So this is three boards now, right? You mentioned that. You've got three, and one has eight meetings, one has six, one has four. But you feel that in terms of time and commitment, it's not going to be too overwhelming, in order for you to do the best for each organization?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Absolutely. You have to understand that when we're in public practice, like we are, we're working 24/7. I was always available. In retirement, there's a hard stop to that. That's what I miss.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** And this is one way to seriously get connected again and feel connected to community as well.

You currently chair the Health Sector Audit Committee at Ontario's Treasury Board Secretariat. What lessons might you bring from that role to university governance?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** The way that committee works is, we are presented with presentations from the internal audit group on internal audit assessments that they do within the government. Obviously, some of those are education-based. I know I've seen in the past some problems with a college there in Kitchener. Recommendations that come out of those internal audits, that knowledge—just sharing that knowledge with me—would help me to make sure that the Lakehead board is doing the things that they need to do to make sure that they have financial oversight, they have good governance policies in place and procurement policies that are strong and proper authorization. It's all of those types of internal controls that you see when you're sitting at that committee, you see in other organizations—and I guess it doesn't have to necessarily be education, but you see it in a lot of organizations. You see where boards are falling down. So we try to avoid all of those pitfalls as much as possible.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** You've also had several leadership positions, as you mentioned, with the Canadian Mental Health Association, including as chair of its Ontario division. How has that experience influenced your understanding of that relationship between education and mental health and community services?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I don't know if there was anything that I really felt was eye-opening, other than their involvement with universities.

You have to understand, the Canadian Mental Health Association in Ontario—all they do is develop programs. They don't deliver programs. They train people, and I do know they're very involved with the colleges and universities in helping train and provide programs for students. As far as sports go, I know they're very involved. They have programs called take-back and whatnot—suicide and mental health for students or athletes who are on sports teams. Those kinds of programs that are out there—I guess that's what I learned about, and also the commitment of the people who work at Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario to make sure that those programs are delivered and reaching their intended audiences.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How would you assess whether university resources are being allocated appropriately between the academic programming, research, and students services and administration?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I'd hope that kind of information would be available to us. It's certainly something that I would be asking for if it's not already being reported. I don't know what goes before the board. Obviously, I look online; I could see the audited financial statements. Those

are consolidated, however, and you don't really see where the money is being spent in individual programs that you're referring to.

Certainly, I know that many universities focus a lot on research. That seems to be a big thing with universities; getting research dollars is big. But they may lose their focus when they start doing that—really, it's providing a good education and good programming for students. So I would hope that they would still have the resources available to develop programs—as well as mental health. Those resources need to be there. I don't know what is there at Lakehead University for that, but as you indicated, that would be an interest of mine—to find out what monies are being spent and allocated to that and what services are being provided to the students.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I guess one key thing would be asking you, who knows all too well about finances and operational challenges, what do you think are the most significant financial and operational challenges facing Ontario universities today?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I don't know if it's a bad thing, but the fact that the changes in immigration status and the number of international students who were coming into the country and the funding that was being made available to universities—they relied on that. I think, as part of that, they may have lost their focus as to the programs they were providing, and it was more about trying to get more international students, more money. When I look at the financial statements of Lakehead University, I think there's adequate funding there. They're turning a profit every year. So they shouldn't be missing that money. I don't know what they're doing as a result of missing those international students—or at least the amount of international students. I know a lot of colleges and universities are struggling because of those changes, but it appears that Lakehead University—maybe they've put some things in place to allow them to still succeed and do what they need to do. I do know that that was a challenge. I do know there were changes in OSAP and all of that. But it appears that the students are still wanting to come and funding is available.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you for bringing up the OSAP situation, which has gone far deeper than we could have ever realized, with the funding of private career colleges by this government. But the concern being the colleges and universities at risk, the dollars for the students there, with OSAP funding—and you're saying it looks, right now, like they're hanging on, but these changes just happened.

What do you think needs to be done to ensure that students are able to take advantage of universities like Lakehead, where they would want to go but might not be able to go anymore, down the road, because of these new changes with the OSAP funding and where our dollars as taxpayers have been spent—and now not spent so much on students to help them get that post-secondary education?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, I don't know. I think it remains to be seen as to what the effects of those changes will be.

Just based on my reading—I read a lot of newspaper articles and whatnot—there needed to be changes in the programming, talking about identification of students. The internal audit side of me says, "So what's the problem there? What was happening? Were people taking advantage of the programming? Were grants being given to students who maybe didn't qualify, but they altered their affairs to allow them to apply for that?"

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

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I do think students need to be invested in their education. It remains to be seen, I guess, what those effects will be on the student enrolment. But certainly, as far as the Indigenous goes—there seems to be lots of federal funding for Indigenous education, for post-secondary. So I don't think that would be an issue.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** And finally, what processes would you follow if you identified a really significant financial control weakness or risk to the university?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Well, I certainly would bring it up at the finance and audit committee and risk assessment—

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

That's the end of your session with us, Marcel. Thank you very much for the scintillating talk. You're welcome to stay. As you know, you can stay online—or off-line, I guess—and watch us and find out what happens with your appointment, or you can go out and enjoy that beautiful Lake Superior and send us some pictures and find out later. It's entirely up to you.

**1010**

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I'll stay to find out what happens with my appointment.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We have other people to interview, so sit back and relax.

Thank you, Marcel, for your time.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Thank you, everyone.

## MS. PATSY CLARKE

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition and third party: Patsy Clarke, intended appointee as member, Animal Care Review Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We're moving to our third intended appointee of the day, and that is Patsy Clarke. Patsy Clarke is nominated as a member of the Animal Care Review Board. Patsy is here in person. We love that.

Thank you so much, Patsy, for coming. That was a good dress rehearsal for you to see, with some online glitches. Thank you so very much for stepping up to make our province a better province. We're happy to hear from you today. As you know, you can take your time and share your story and experience with us, and your time will be deducted from the government side. The floor is yours.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** Good morning. Thank you to the Chair, the Vice-Chair and members for giving me the opportunity to appear before this committee.

My name is Patsy Clarke. I come before this committee to speak about my qualifications for an appointment to the Animal Care Review Board.

I am a first-generation Canadian. My parents immigrated to Canada for a better life for themselves and their children. My parents instilled in me and my siblings the idea of what was right, fair and just.

At a point in my life, I realized I wanted to be a lawyer. Looking for a sense of adventure at the time, I decided to move from Ontario and attend law school in Michigan. While in law school, I acquired an interest in tax law. I continued my knowledge of tax law by completing a master's of law in tax at Georgetown University.

After law school, I was hired as an attorney with the Internal Revenue Service, and I was later promoted to manager. As a manager, I supervised a legal team of seven attorneys and one paralegal.

After working with the IRS for over 16 years, last year my family and I came to the decision that it was time to move back home to Ontario.

While working at the IRS, one of the IRS's mandates was to get to the correct answer. I intend to continue to take that same position as a member of the Animal Care Review Board. As an attorney with the IRS, I took an impartial review of every case that was assigned to me and many times settled cases in favour of the individual because it was the correct decision in the case. I intend to take the same impartial approach as a member of the Animal Care Review Board, where the care, treatment and custody of animals are key considerations.

During my time with the IRS, in at least 50% of my cases the opposing party was an unrepresented individual. Many of these individuals had very little tax knowledge, and it was their first time being exposed to any type of courtroom experience. As a result, I learned how to distill complex legal issues down to a manner that was manageable for people to understand. As there will be unrepresented individuals before the board, I will continue to utilize this skill as a member of the board.

Even though my legal experience has been with tax, as a lawyer for over 16 years, I have the experience to quickly learn and interpret new legislation. In addition, I have extensive litigation experience. As an attorney, I had strict court filing deadlines which I continuously met. As a manager, in addition to managing the deadlines of the people I supervised, I was also tasked with meeting additional administrative deadlines.

With the Animal Care Review Board's mandate to meet certain target timeliness goals, based on my experience, I'm confident I can assist the board in continuing to meet their goals.

I'm licensed in both New York state and New Jersey. I recently completed my equivalency exams with the National Committee on Accreditation and currently intend to take the bar exams in Ontario next year.

My interest in working on the Animal Care Review Board comes from my care for animals, including my own rescue dog, and my commitment to public service. As a member of the ACRB, I may combine my love of animals with my desire to continue to work in serving the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and present my qualifications. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Patsy, for your impressive and very succinct details about your background.

Over to the government side: You have six minutes, 33 seconds, MPP Firin.

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Thank you for putting your name forward, and welcome to this committee.

Can you please share with the committee what sort of engagement you have in your community—volunteer work etc.—what you've learned from it, and how well it will inform your work on the Animal Care Review Board?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** One of the things I did do volunteering is, I worked with the United Way, preparing income tax returns for low-income individuals. I did that for a number of years. Again, that ability to talk to people one-on-one, who didn't have tax knowledge, and explain to them what was going on with their taxes—and also being able to ask them questions, to make sure that their taxes are done properly. That is a type of skill, again, that, when I'm on the board with unrepresented individuals—I understand questions to ask, to make sure that I get the proper information so that a proper decision could be made.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Thank you so much, Ms. Clarke, for joining us today, and thanks for putting your name forward.

I was listening intently to your background. I have to think that one of the most complex areas I can think of would be tax law and tax legislation. Ultimately, there's a lot that's prescriptive when it comes to animal welfare. I would say there may be a lot of subjectivity in it. Farm animals—I've got two cats, and that's the animal side that I know. So it's a different kind of complexity—because there's such an emotional attachment to not only the work and the possession of animals.

Given your background, how do you see bringing and using what you learned and demonstrated through the tax side to your ability to be fair and impartial at the ACRB?

**Ms. Patsy Carke:** As I said, working with the IRS wasn't about winning; it was about getting to the correct answer—and that was something that I took very highly in my day-to-day work. There were many times, like I said, when I settled cases on behalf of the individual because I realized that the government was incorrect. That is what I continue to believe in. That's what I will continue to do.

There is a lot of subjectivity, actually, in tax law, especially if you are going to litigation. The issue is, what can I prove before a court? You have to look at evidence that the individual produced, evidence that we have, and

you have to make a position of, can this be proven in court? There were a lot of times when, again, I had to take a subjective look at information. If someone was not represented, they may have information that—they don't even understand how that could help their case. Sometimes I had to look at information and be like, "Yes, this is helpful for them."

So that's, again, how I would continue working, as a member of the Animal Care Review Board.

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** What's the time?

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Two minutes, 46 seconds.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Tribunals can have a high caseload, and time management is so important, especially when you have to render decisions. Days, minutes—they all count, because we have to keep on top of things. And to deliver the targeted processing times, we need to keep ourselves organized.

How are you going to keep on top of your workload so that you can provide the kind of processing times that this tribunal requires?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** There are different methods I could use. It depends on what the situation is.

**1020**

Again, when I was an attorney, I carried a 40-to-50 caseload at one time. There were multiple tax court filing deadlines that were required, and I used different strategies, depending on what would work for that situation, to make sure that I met those deadlines. When I became a manager, it got even more stressful, because you're relying on other people to make sure that they meet their deadlines, and you're responsible for that as well. There were different strategies that I took, whether it was talking to people every week, making sure that they were up to date on meeting certain deadlines—for myself, things like Google calendars and other tracking methods that I used, like Excel spreadsheets, to make sure, again, that I met the deadlines.

Like I said, you do not want to miss a court deadline, so it was very important for me to make sure I met those deadlines, and I did. There was a heavy caseload there. It had to get done.

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

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** With the Animal Care Review Board, my experience with working on a number of cases, meeting certain deadlines—I'll be able to continue with that same skill when I do become a member of the board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** On to the official opposition: MPP Gilmour, 10 minutes.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you so much, Ms. Clarke, for being before us and putting your name forward, and your skills and your gift for this.

I'm wondering if you can speak to us a little bit about how you learned of this posting.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** Last year, when my husband and I were looking at moving back to Ontario, I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Again, I was licensed in the States, so I wasn't sure if I wanted to become licensed here in Ontario and continue being a lawyer or if I wanted to do something totally different or adjacent to what I had been doing when I was in the States.

I found a Facebook group for Ontario legal jobs, and last year someone posted something about how they applied to a tribunal position—I don't know who they were. I said, "What is this tribunal?" I knew nothing about that. I did some more research, and I've just been watching the website until I was able to apply. Then, at the time, I put my name forward. I got called for an interview, did a written assignment, and I'm here.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** So at no time did you speak to a member of a provincial party or anything like that?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** No, I did not.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Are you a member of a party?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** No, I am not.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Have you ever made any political donations?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I may have made one 20, 25 years ago. I can't remember for sure how much it was. I would be surprised if it was more than $10 at the time.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** That's fair.

I realized, in preparing myself for this, that the first statutory criterion for the appointment is experience, knowledge or training in the subject matter that the tribunal deals with. You know where I'm going to try to invite you to go a little bit, because at the moment, your application doesn't list any experience with animal welfare, animal husbandry, agriculture, veterinary matters. I'm wondering if you can tell the committee what experience from those areas you bring, or if you're seeing that as a piece of work that needs doing, or what you're planning to do to prepare for that.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I totally understand. I come from a tax law background, but I also know that there is going to be training involved, and I'm excited about that. I'm excited to learn something new. But at the same time, I've been a lawyer for 16 years. Cases have come before me where I don't know what the legislation is or what the tax law was behind it, and I've had to do my research. I am very comfortable with learning new things and being able to become—I don't want to say "an expert," but become comfortable with it.

In addition, even though I've done tax law—taxes touch on many, many different areas, so I've had to learn some family law, some constitutional law when I was dealing with my cases. I'm really comfortable with being able to learn new legislation, and I think I'm pretty quick with it.

Like I said, I'm also really excited about being able to learn something new, but at the same time being able to use the skills that I have had as a tax lawyer, being part of the board.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I noticed that you have done roughly 16, 17 years as counsel to the Internal Revenue

Service, so, again—correct me if I'm wrong on this—while there's an impartiality, you do represent the state in that. Then you spoke about how some of the people who came before you don't have any lawyers or experience. This board will be very similar. There will be an appellant, who's usually an animal owner. They're often self-represented. And then there is the respondent; that is the chief animal welfare inspectors—sort of the arm of the state. So it's very similar in that way.

You described, in your application—as being a final, impartial decision-maker on whether to settle or whether to go to trial. I was thinking about that. Those were decisions made on behalf of one party to the litigation, right?

So how will you make the shift from government advocate to neutral adjudicator? And what would you do to make sure, for example, that an unrepresented owner can trust that you haven't arrived with the inspector's perspective?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** While I was employed as a government attorney, I did not represent the individuals. Again, the mandate was to make sure that we got to the right answer, and to make sure that the unrepresented individuals understood—the worst thing you would ever want is for some case to settle, and then six months later, the unrepresented individual reaches out to the court and says, "I don't understand what I signed," or, "I didn't think this was my settlement." That was something that I was very cognizant of, and I made sure that any type of agreement that the unrepresented individual agreed to, they understood. If I didn't think they understood, what was available was—there were law schools there that could assist people. Many, many times, I would tell people, "Go to the law school. Talk to them. Don't just take my word for it." Sometimes I would even be like, "Do you know what? Let's go to court. You can talk to the judge yourself, and you can ask them the questions"—because I did not want for anyone to have any type of question of what they were settling.

Again, while I worked for the government, I had to be impartial. Part of being an attorney—you have your own responsibilities that you have to do as a barred member, and I took those very seriously. As I tell people, "You work for the government. You get paid the same, whether you win or you lose the case." So I had no financial or any other reason to propose that a case should be settled a certain way, just because I thought it should be. It was about getting to the right answer.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I want to touch on some of this legal training and practice, because it has been entirely in American tax law.

This board operates under the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, so the decisions can be reviewed under the framework, for example, of the Supreme Court of Canada.

I wondered how you would describe your familiarity with Ontario's statutory framework both for animal welfare and the principles of Canadian administrative law.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** When I was deciding what I was going to do when I moved back to Ontario, I did register for and I took the required exams in legal research and writing that were required for the National Committee on Accreditation and passed them all. Of course, that's not the same thing as going to an Ontario law school, but they are pretty robust, three-hour exams that had to be taken. So it allowed me to learn some of the administrative law respective to Ontario. I also had to take a legal research and writing course there. That was interesting, because it showed me the differences between legal writing in Ontario and what I did before. I was able to take that and again, pass that as well. As of now, I am considered of an equivalent qualification with an Ontario law school, that, again—I am able to now write the bars in Ontario.

**1030**

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I understand that.

I think I would be more comfortable with this government's appointment, say, a year from now, when you've passed the bar. At the moment, as a lawyer, you couldn't represent the animal owner before the board today. But the government is asking us to approve—

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** —that you decide on their case at this moment. So there's a bit of a gap there—in assuring the knowledge is there once the bar is passed. I appreciate that you've done all that work. I'm just curious about the government's decision on this.

I saw that you were at University of Ottawa. The tribunal tracks French and bilingual applicants separately. You listed only English, but do you have any working French—I saw your face. Do you have any working French at all that can be applicable to this?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** No. I wouldn't say I'd be comfortable to have any type of discussions in French—

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

Over to the third party: MPP Smyth.

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

I just want to talk about the animals for a minute. We talked tax and law and all this—you have a background in law, the legal field. We know all that. But what is it that made the Animal Care Review Board something that you wanted to work on?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I have had two rescue dogs in my lifetime—right now, I'm about to, hopefully, get a third one—so I've always had a heart and care for animals and for making sure that their voices could be heard.

I understand the Animal Care Review Board doesn't just do pets; I understand it also does other rural animals—but at the heart of it is to make sure, again, that animals have a voice to be heard.

With the mandate of the Animal Care Review Board, making sure that the welfare of animals is a priority—that is something that I feel very passionate about. So the opportunity to be a member of the board is something that I'm excited about.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Is there something about animal care and welfare that really concerns you, when you

consider animals in an agricultural perspective? And talking about the mandate of the board—so what do you worry about in terms of animals being treated properly?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** The main thing I'm concerned about with animals is that—for me, it's the overall treatment of animals. It's not saying you have to have just your pet and it has to live in your house and you have to give it everything it wants—but there has to be, I think, some sort of level of care for every animal, regardless of if it is, let's say, a cow on a farm, a chicken on a farm. There's some sort of dignity that is required for every animal. As humans, we are the caretakers of animals. That is, I think, a high priority for us, especially when animals can't speak. They're dependent on us. I think it's really important that, again, there is some basic level of compassion and a level of treatment that is required of every single animal.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Have you visited any farms since you've come back to Ontario, in the agricultural context, and seen how farms work and considered areas that work well or areas that you would watch for when it comes to animal welfare?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I have not had the opportunity to—unless you're talking about a pumpkin patch where I went this weekend and saw some farm animals there. I have not had the opportunity to actually visit a working farm since I've come back.

Some of the work I did do, while it was tax-related—I did have cases with people working on a farm. Farm workers were coming and doing some farm work and had to get some of their taxes done and didn't understand how things worked, and I was able to help them with that.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** We hear "Animal Care Review Board," and not all of us know what exactly it is responsible for. Can you tell us some of the types of matters it's responsible for reviewing?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** The animal workers can issue notices to individuals—for example, that they feel that maybe their animal needs to go to a vet for some reason. The animal owner can appeal that. It can also take someone's animal for whatever reason—they feel that there's abuse or something like that. The animal owner can also appeal that. In addition, if the animal worker feels that the animal needs some certain vet care and they have the animal taken to a vet and there's a cost for that, the animal owner can appeal the cost of that vet care.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** In what kind of context are you talking?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I'm sorry; what do you mean by what kind—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What kind of animal might you be talking about?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** It could be a dog. It could be a cat. It could also be a farm animal. If someone saw that the animal was in a certain type of medical need, the priority is for the welfare of the animal, and so again, vet care would be required. The animal worker could be taking that animal itself for the vet care, and again, there could be a cost in that. The animal owner can appeal that cost for whatever reason—maybe they didn't think that their animal had to go to the vet. So that's something that would be before the board.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Is there anything that you would be, top of mind, thinking about to watch out for in this capacity, on the care board?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** "Top of mind" for, you mean—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Animal welfare.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** Can you clarify for me "top of mind"?

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** If you've investigated the role, the types of cases you might be considering, given you're caring for animals—what you could be watching out for, that could be subject to neglect, concern, or a real threat to an animal's welfare, that you would really have eyes on in your capacity, in this role, and watching out for and understanding and being able to decipher, in a way, what is in best interest of animal welfare.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I can say what I think, but I'm not sure what—I can have my opinion on that, let's put it that way. But with respect to certain things to look out for, of course, I will get more training on that. But general things, looking for the welfare—is the animal injured? Does the animal cower when someone comes near it? There are things like that that, again, in my opinion, I would be looking out for. But I'm sure there are many other things that I will be able to get training on and learn more about, to make me a better member and to be able to be look out for other situations.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What do you see as the most important qualities of an effective tribunal member? And how would you demonstrate impartiality when you are hearing emotionally charged animal welfare cases?

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** I think what's probably the most important is to be able to be clear, to be concise when you're talking to the individuals who will appear before the board—also to be able to ask questions that are what you want to get answered, to be direct in that way.

I understand it's going to be charged. Again, as an animal lover myself, I understand that. But at the same time, you do have to take a step back—and you do take a step back. As a lawyer, you have to remove your own personal opinion about a situation. That's what I'll have to do. I know I'll be able to do it. That's just something that you have to do, you have to learn to do. I'm not concerned about being able to do that.

**1040**

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Patsy, for coming in. As others have been able to do, you can stay in the room while we go through the other interviews and find out results, or you can go about your day and find out later. We really appreciate you coming in.

**Ms. Patsy Clarke:** Thank you so much. It was a pleasure.

## MR. DINESH PARAKH

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Dinesh Parakh, intended appointee as member, Consent and Capacity Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Now we're on to our next intended appointee. Dinesh Parakh is nominated as a member of the Consent and Capacity Board. There he is, virtually.

Hello, Dinesh. Welcome to our friendly little committee. We are appreciative that you are putting your name forward to serve and help make the province a better place.

You're able to share your story, with relevant experience to your role that you're applying for. Each party will have 10 minutes to ask you questions. Whatever time you take for your presentation will be deducted from the government side, and that's okay; they are fine with you taking the time that you need.

The floor is yours, Dinesh.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Good morning, members of provincial Parliament and members of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. My name is Dinesh Parakh. I respectfully appear before you as a candidate for appointment as a lawyer member to the Ontario Consent and Capacity Board. I do appreciate the opportunity to appear before you virtually from Niagara Falls, Ontario.

I was born in Buffalo, New York, and I grew up in small towns and cities in Ontario; specifically, Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, Ontario.

I earned my bachelor's degree from Yale University, with high honours, and my master's and law degrees from the University of Toronto.

I previously worked for the Canadian International Development Agency, which is now part of Global Affairs Canada, and as a junior diplomat with the United Nations World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, both based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Since 2008, my primary vocation has been working to promote clean energy, renewables and energy efficiency, as a manager with the federal government.

I've also practised criminal law on a part-time basis for about eight years—and I'll come back to this later.

I have lived in Niagara Falls, Ontario for most of my life, and I have deep ties to the community. I've been married to my wife, Deepali, for over 27 years, and we have two children. Our daughter is a resident physician in Toronto specializing in internal medicine, and our son is doing his PhD in physics at Stanford University in California.

My strong interest in the interface between mental health and the law stems primarily from my work as duty counsel, from 2008 to 2016, in weekend and statutory holiday bail courts. A large proportion of my clients—I would hazard roughly half—had mental health or addiction issues, which made me acutely aware of the needs and challenges of these particularly vulnerable groups.

My interest in mental health deepened through my work as a board member with the Niagara Falls Public Library from 2020 to 2023—a perhaps not-too-obvious role. But public libraries actually function as a critical resource for those experiencing homelessness or struggling with addiction. Quite often, such individuals have mental health issues layered on top of other issues that they're struggling with.

I'm currently a board member with Project SHARE in Niagara Falls, which is our local community food bank. Project SHARE serves vulnerable clients, many of them, unfortunately, struggling with mental health and addiction issues.

I want to also highlight my ongoing interest in safeguarding our democratic processes. I've been a member of the Niagara compliance audit committee since 2018. This is an appointed committee to review alleged violations of the Municipal Elections Act. I've just been reappointed for the 2026-30 cycle.

I've gained additional insight into the unique problems of Indigenous clientele, both from the criminal law perspective and in my work with the federal government, where I helped to develop distinctions-based approaches to better serve Indigenous families and communities. Mental health issues amongst Indigenous Canadians further complicate the often difficult socio-economic conditions that they face.

Finally, mental health hits close to home for me. My niece has experienced serious mental health issues since she was child. So my involvement is not merely academic.

With regard to the Consent and Capacity Board, I have developed a solid understanding of the mandate and work of the CCB, primarily through three avenues: discussions with a colleague and acquaintance who has been a senior lawyer member on the board for many years, and who encouraged me to apply; secondly, though observation of hearings of the CCB; and also, a rather rigorous application and interview process.

My criminal legal work and my years of experience in difficult field conditions with Global Affairs and the United Nations, and also in managing large teams of people, have honed my skills, resilience and ability to handle any situation I'm faced with.

I am calm, confident and capable in dynamic, high-pressure, high-stakes environments.

I take my professional responsibility very seriously, and I am acutely aware of the vulnerability of clients who appear before the Consent and Capacity Board. Being a board member is a role with gravitas, and I would never shirk my duty and responsibility to serve this clientele to the absolute best of my ability. There is too much at stake.

I expect to soon be transitioning out of full-time employment and am committed to the CCB for the long term—at least the next 10 years.

I look forward to applying my legal skills, work and life experience to advance the important work of the Consent and Capacity Board and those it serves.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to take your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Dinesh, for that very fulsome background and experience.

We're now moving to government side, and they have five minutes. MPP Sabawy.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** It is very impressive to hear the amount of qualifications and expertise and skills you have.

As you know, the government has allocated $3.8 billion to help with mental health and addictions. That would give a good capacity to solve lots of issues which we have been seeing in the mental health and addictions sector.

My question would be, how do you plan to contribute to the board's objectives in ensuring that matters relating to individuals' autonomy, capacity of people to make decisions related to their health and treatment, and safety of the public are balanced?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the question, member Sabawy.

Yes, I agree with you; certainly, a lot more resources are needed in this space. I know, through my research and the interview process with the CCB, that the caseload has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, from around 2,000 hearings a year to almost 10,000 a year now. It has grown really, really dramatically.

All I can say, I think, is that I am very capable, I am committed, I am professional, and I understand the seriousness of this committee.

Right now, I'm transitioning out of full-time employment, so I won't be able to give the CCB full-time service—but I don't believe that's the way that the CCB operates. I hope to increase my involvement, as I transition into full-time retirement, over the years and serve it to the best of my ability. There are a lot of hearings to be done, and I'm confident I'm going to be able to conduct those in a very fair, professional and persuasive way.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you, Dinesh, for coming in today and sharing your background.

How do you feel your extensive experience in interpreting the law, and your work history, will help you in relation to adjudication of the cases that will come before you and help to diminish that outstanding workload that the board has already?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the question, member of provincial Parliament.

I have not been primarily a practising lawyer for most of my career, but I think that actually serves as a strength, because I do have the legal experience, but I also have other very interesting experience in the community, internationally—working with the federal government, working in policy. So I think those skills, those experiences and abilities that I bring will make me a very effective member of the board.

I do understand the Ontario legislative framework. I do understand the Ontario mental health law framework. I don't pretend to be an expert, but I hope to become an expert through the training that is offered by the board. And I have no doubt in my ability to acquit my responsibilities in an excellent and professional way.

**1050**

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** One minute and 27 seconds: MPP Dowie.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Thank you so much for putting your name forward and sharing with us your diversity of background, and especially your passion that really shone through in your statement.

I'm hoping you might be able to share any additional information that you would like us to know about your candidacy.

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

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the question, sir.

I believe I canvassed my main messages in my opening statement, in terms of what I would bring to the committee, what my background is, why I would be a good member—a lawyer member—of this committee.

I'm actually looking forward to getting back into legal practice. I finished law school, and I decided to join the Canadian civil service, the foreign service, immediately afterwards. So I've just sort of been in and out of the law for the last 25 years. As I'm coming close to retirement from the federal government, I am actually really looking forward to getting back into law. I respect and value the legal system tremendously, and I know I can make a very solid contribution to advancing the legal framework in Ontario and the mental health law framework in Ontario.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you so much for coming in. It has been really interesting to listen to you, and I deeply appreciate the commitment that you have to both your work and the community around you. It's very clear that you have thought through this decision, and I'm glad that you've put your name forward.

I'm hearing you talk about how you are going to be a lawyer member, not a public member, of the Consent and Capacity Board.

So I was just curious, in your work—not, probably, on duty counsel, but in criminal law or other spaces—have you ever represented a client or participated yourself in any proceedings involving involuntary psychiatric detention, treatment capacity or substitute decision-making?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the question.

My legal work was restricted primarily to duty counsel work in criminal courts in St. Catharines, Ontario. I was working full-time for the federal government at the time, so I was doing that only on weekends and statutory holidays—WASH court. So I would say I don't have experience in the second part of what you mentioned, in terms of specific hearings regarding mental health. But as I mentioned in my opening remarks, unfortunately, a very large portion of the clients I represented in bail court had mental health issues. I always did my best as duty counsel, as their lawyer, to ensure those concerns were noted on the remand form and those individuals received whatever care and attention was possible in the bail court framework.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** You mentioned having some discussions with a senior lawyer on the board; observing the board yourself; the rigorous application process. Where do you feel you are now in preparation and training, and what do you believe you still need to complete to be able to be a competent adjudicator in this?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I feel fairly confident right now. This process has been ongoing since February, so I have been sort of steeped in it, to a certain extent—reviewing a lot of legislation, attending hearings. To be very frank, I think if I attended another five or 10 hearings, I would be in a very good position to be a contributing member. I believe that the board does have a training process, which I'm looking forward to, where they ensure that members are properly trained—and it can be nothing but, because, again, these are very serious matters that are coming before the board. If I didn't show up properly trained, I would inform the board that I think I need a little bit more so I can do my job properly.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** They are, as you said, very serious matters coming before the board.

I wonder what you think the responsibility of a board member is to ensure that a patient's rights are protected independently of the treating physician's recommendations.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** That's a very good question.

As you're probably aware—you're a member of this committee—the board's mandate is fourfold: to protect the safety of the individual is first and foremost; then protecting the safety of the community; third is the dignity and autonomy of the individual; fourth is preserving the ability of the patient to have treatment when required. There's a certain hierarchy there. Dignity and autonomy are important, but not more important than public safety and also safety of the individual. I think my role as a board member, and specifically as a presiding lawyer member, is to accept the evidence and the facts; apply the law to those facts, in conjunction with the other members of the panel and the board; and provide the best possible outcome, the appropriate outcome based on the evidence that's presented.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** You spoke a little bit about your full-time employment and your plans to transition.

I wonder if we can talk a little bit about being an employee of Natural Resources Canada, with those substantial management policy responsibilities. Also, you're serving on the Niagara compliance audit committee, and you spoke of the board of Project SHARE.

The Consent and Capacity Board reports that its caseload—and again, you mentioned the 2,000 to 10,000—is growing, and there's this requirement of complying with the statutory timelines for hearings, for decisions.

How many days a month would you realistically be able to be available to conduct Consent and Capacity Board hearings at this time?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** That's another very good question.

I'm aware of the time commitment. This is something I discussed extensively with the senior lawyer member I know, and also during the interview process. I am confident that I can commit one day a week, which is the minimum requirement for the Consent and Capacity Board; I hope to do more than that.

Also, just to note, I am in the transition period—I may be taking early retirement soon, or I may be moving to a part-time schedule soon as well.

My vision for my role on the board is to be properly trained and start off with one day a week, but soon—not too long from now; within a year or within two years—being able to do up to two or three days a week. I don't think we can do more than that, because the caseload is just so high—the sheer amount of documentary evidence, and then writing reasons for a decision. I believe that the chair, during the interview, said, "If you have more than three days a week, we kind of say, 'Wait a minute. How are you going to do that many?'" My plan is to be very involved and to ramp that up over time.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I know that Natural Resources Canada has a code of values and ethics, and it requires employees to disclose outside employment through its conflict-of-interest process. I was wondering if you have already gone through that and disclosed this proposed paid appointment; if you have, has the department identified any potential conflict of interest or conditions that are going to be related to this appointment?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** That's another great question.

First of all, just to correct for the record, I am now with Environment Canada. The reason for that is because until July 31, I was with Natural Resources Canada, but my entire team and division has moved to Environment Canada. That was during the application process. Anyway, we're now with Environment Canada—same job; same role.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Got it.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** That is actually next on my agenda—to disclose that to the conflict-of-interest powers that be; I have not done it until this time because of the uncertainty of the appointment. I wasn't sure about the steps, and I didn't want to prematurely divulge this to senior management. Those are concrete steps. Even when I joined the Niagara compliance audit committee, even when I joined the board of Project SHARE, I disclosed fully and ensured that there was no conflict. I do not anticipate any issues with conflict of interest. I can also state to this committee that if, for some strange reason, a conflict is found or if I do not have approval to do both jobs, my preference will be for the Consent and Capacity Board, given that I'm in this transition out of my full-time role.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I want to talk about the individuals who will be coming before you.

Since about 2020, the board, like many of the tribunals, has adopted a digital-first approach. We have been hearing of challenges for individuals in rural areas or with low Internet or other issues.

I wonder what challenges you believe virtual hearings might present for individuals coming before this board.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** On one hand, virtual appearances are a tremendous opportunity. I didn't have to battle traffic and come to Toronto today. I can sit in the comfort of my home, and I don't have to be frazzled before going before the committee. I think that those same advantages apply for hearings all across Ontario.

I think, overall, it is a far more efficient experience if you can do hearings virtually; it's efficient for all parties involved. There are going to be challenges. There are areas of Ontario that don't have high-speed Internet. There are Internet outages and things like that. But at the same time, in an in-person hearing—someone could be stuck in traffic, as well. I'm confident that the administration of the board is cognizant of these issues and that they're always working to improve them and resolve them. That's not to say that there won't be issues.

**1100**

If there was a hearing and we weren't able to proceed because of an Internet issue, I would simply contact the administration and ask that it be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity.

So we just have to balance those.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** How would you assess whether a virtual hearing is appropriate for a particular patient?

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

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** My understanding is that all appearances are virtual at this point. I do not believe that the CCB conducts in-person hearings anymore.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Can you tell me what you think the most significant challenge facing the Consent and Capacity Board is and how your experience might help address that?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I know we don't have much time, but I would say two things—one is capacity. Again, given this massively increased caseload, they need lawyers; they need psychiatrists; they need public members, so I'm happy to put forth myself to serve.

I've been in a service role my entire life, with the government, working on different levels: provincial, municipal, federal, and international.

I think the other big and important issue is that—in January of this year, there was an article in the Globe and Mail about how Canada had the highest rate of forced psychiatric hospitalizations of any country in the world, and I was rather shocked by that. So I think this is a larger issue for the board; it's not for me, as a member, in particular—but these are things going forward.

So, capacity—and, certainly, why does Canada incarcerate so many people against their will compared to other jurisdictions?

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

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

It's fascinating to learn of your background and your interest in this board. I want to talk a bit more about that—and you just hit on a really important issue. How does one come to say, "I want to work on the Consent and Capacity Board"? What is a motivation here and your goals in taking part in this really important process?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the question.

I actually registered on the PAS website earlier this year because, as I've mentioned a few times, I'm in a transition process. I was thinking of taking an early retirement, and I may still do that. So I'd actually registered very early in the year, or late last year, I believe. This appointment came up, and I sort of serendipitously met this senior lawyer member through another context. We're both Yale University alumni, so in that context, I had spoken with her. Even though I was getting the notices—I was looking at the human rights tribunal, and I was looking at the Landlord and Tenant Board. She said, "Why not consider the Consent and Capacity Board?" I looked into it and I said, "Bingo. This is something I can do and I would like to do."

MPP Smyth, my main motivation is to have something productive to do in retirement, to be very honest. I don't want to work full-time, but I'm not ready to be retired fully. So this is something that I could do for two days or three days a week and, I think, make a solid contribution to the province—and also ensure that my wife doesn't go crazy because I have nothing else to do.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** That is so true. That's a good one.

As you prepare to take on this role, likely—because you've mentioned that you have been watching some of the hearings. What have you observed, and what are you seeing as areas of improvement or concern that you think you can make an impact on?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I don't feel confident in expressing a viewpoint on that at this point. I have witnessed a few hearings. I think I need to learn a lot more before I'm able to comment on the nature of the hearings and what can be improved. I have seen a tremendous amount of competence from the members who are running the hearings, from the legal side, the lawyer, presiding members, and the psychiatrist and public members. So I believe that the board has a solid cadre of members. But at this point, I can't really comment on what could be improved—I'm sure there will be areas, and I will not hesitate to bring those to the attention of the chair and the vice-chairs if I do see those. I did that when I was duty counsel, as well—when I saw something, I wrote to the Ministry of the Attorney General, saying, "I'm duty counsel. People don't have their phones. They're locked up. They don't have cash bail. You have to do something about this." So if there is something wrong, you can be sure that I will bring it to the attention of the powers that be.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** You talked about the Globe and Mail article and the high number of people forced into incarceration, hospitalizations. Tell me what intrigues you about that. Are you troubled by that or more curious—how it struck you?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I think at this point, without knowing enough about the subject, apart from that one article, I would be more curious than troubled. I'm not going to assume that there's an error in the system or pro-

cess. Again, there are a lot of very intelligent people who have developed these processes over many years. That's not to say that there's not room for improvement, but I would like to learn more.

I would like to know, why does Canada incarcerate more people against their will than similar jurisdictions? And then, based on those reasons, I could have an opinion as to whether or not that's appropriate or not.

Again, I think as a member of the board, my role is relatively limited; I'm not involved in making policy—that is the job of yourself and all the other members of provincial Parliament. But as I mentioned, I certainly won't hesitate to share my views and express my opinions where I feel it's merited.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What is your understanding of the board's role in protecting individual rights while also addressing matters involving consent and that decision-making capacity?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** As I mentioned a little bit earlier, there's a hierarchy of what the board responsibilities and the mandate are, and at the top of that is individual safety, protection of an individual's safety. The people who are appearing before the board often have very serious psychiatric illnesses, so protection of their own safety is paramount; protection of public safety is second; and their dignity and autonomy, while very important, is third. So I won't be making decisions to promote dignity and autonomy if there's a clear danger to public safety or to the safety of the individual. Again, it's just a balancing act.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** There are conversations going on, currently, about people having involuntary treatment when it comes to mental health or addiction issues. I'm not sure if you're aware of that conversation that's going on with municipalities and health professionals right now. Are you aware of that conversation—

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Very tangentially.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** My question is, could you see that conversation maybe influencing decisions that might be made or discussed by you or others on the board, and that kind of public conversation about it—the pitfalls, whatever might be perceived as advantages etc.?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** You're very right; we do have those conversations.

I live in Niagara. We do have a fairly high rate of homelessness and addiction issues here. I saw that in the courts. I see that through my role on the various boards that I'm part of. I see that when I drive in the downtown areas of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

I think it's important to be aware of the conversations that are happening. But my job, as a legal presiding member on the Consent and Capacity Board, is to apply the law to the evidence that's before me. So it's good to be informed. We need to know what's happening. But those are not the things that influence the hearing. The hearing is influenced by the evidence that's presented before you and the legislative framework, and I would restrict my interventions and my conduct to that route.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I'm wondering, how would you approach a hearing where you see that the evidence presented by a health care professional differs significantly from the position expressed by the individual whose capacity is being assessed? Have you seen anything like this in the hearings that you've observed thus far?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I have.

Again, I think the answer is very simple—and I don't mean to sound sort of bad about it: It comes down to the quality of the evidence. The individual should have every opportunity to present evidence on his or her behalf. They do all have opportunity to have counsel, and hopefully they avail themselves of that opportunity for counsel. The psychiatrists who are members and who submit the form 3s and all those things also have opportunity to have counsel. So it's really just a question of assessing the quality of the evidence and which evidence is more reliable and it's more—that can be acted upon. And it's not always going to be the psychiatrist—sometimes the individual will bring up a very critical point that a relatively inexperienced psychologist didn't understand or recognize.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I was going to say, how do you ensure that your decisions are impartial and grounded in law and evidence rather than your own assumptions about a person's circumstances?

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Assumptions are dangerous in this type of thing, MPP Smyth. Insofar as possible, we don't make assumptions—we go based on evidence, and we apply the law to that evidence, and if there's insufficient evidence, we will ask for more evidence.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What training would you consider essential to ensure that you remain current on the legal principles and the procedural requirements relative to the board's work?

**1110**

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** My understanding is that the Consent and Capacity Board has a rather extensive training program, including continuing education.

I am a member of the Law Society of Ontario, formerly the Law Society of Upper Canada, and I am required, as part of my membership, to be taking continued professional education every year.

If I'm a member of the CCB, my professional education would be focused on mental health law issues.

So I think the combination of what I'm required to do on my own plus what the board provides—and also, if I feel not confident in a particular area, I'm going to put the time in myself, to make sure I really understand it.

Again, these issues are too serious to be left to chance. They're too serious to be left to the whim of an individual.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** Thank you for the questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Dinesh, for your great conversation with us. I appreciate it. You are now done your interview section. You can stay online and observe—we have a couple more people to interview, and then we will deliberate on the results of appointments—or you can go about your day.

**Mr. Dinesh Parakh:** I will actually leave this meeting, but I'm going to watch online. I'll go back to my job and listen in the background.

Thank you to all the members again.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Marvellous multi-tasker.

Thank you very much for your time.

## MR. GEORGES RAAD

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Georges Raad, intended appointee as member, St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Our next intended appointee is Georges Raad. He is nominated as a member of the St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. He will be appearing virtually.

Welcome. Good morning. Thank you very much for coming and applying to be a member of the St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. I'm not sure if you know the drill for how it works at this committee.

First of all, we're very appreciative that you put your name forward, and we're happy to hear from you.

You have time right now to give a little presentation and essentially brag about yourself, then each party will have 10 minutes of questioning. Your time—whatever you take—is removed from the government's time, and they are definitely okay with that.

Welcome. The floor is yours, Georges.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you regarding the proposed appointment to the St. Clair College board of governors. My name is Georges Raad. I'm a marine surveyor and business owner in Windsor, Ontario, with 25 years of experience in surveying and an extensive background in marine engineering and management.

Throughout my career as chief engineer and marine technical superintendent and surveyor, I have managed budgets, overseen safety and regulatory compliance, and prepared independent assessments. These responsibilities require sound judgment, objectivity and accountability.

My education includes a bachelor of maritime studies from Memorial University of Newfoundland and a marine engineering and surveying diploma in the motive power technician program at St. Clair College in Windsor.

As a former student, I appreciate the college role in preparing people for rewarding careers. And as a business owner, I understand the importance of strong connection between education and employers.

Community service is also important to me. I serve on the board of the finance committee at St. Peter's Parish Maronite Catholic Church in Windsor. I have volunteered with the Optimist club in Windsor, supported the Integrative Canadian Group Organization and food bank activities, and organized Christmas events for children in my community.

I am seeking this appointment to give back to the institutions that contributed to my education. I would bring practical experience, a willingness to listen and learn, and a commitment to student success and responsible financial oversight.

Thank you for considering my appointment. I would be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Georges, for sharing that with us. You're super succinct.

The government has eight minutes and four seconds. MPP Sabawy, you have the floor.

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you for your interest to serve the community and be part of this board of governors.

I have had experience, as well, to be part of that—inspection and surveying cargos in marines. I've been on board ultra-large crude carriers with multi-million barrels, cargos—and I know how challenging is this.

I would like to ask you a question, because of the economic situation we know. We are currently focusing on Ontario post-secondary institutions, ensuring that students are graduating into in-demand labour market fields, where they can pursue rewarding careers and advance both the local economy and Ontario's economy. Can you talk about the importance of ensuring strong partnerships between colleges and local employers?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for the question.

I would say strong partnerships between colleges and local employers help a lot, to ensure that students develop needed skills to go to the workplace.

As a business owner, I understand the value of the graduate who brings both technical knowledge and practical experience. I've seen that at St. Clair College. When you put hands on whatever you learn, it's not only theory in class—you go and put your hands on whatever you are registered for.

These partnerships can shape the programs and create more opportunities for placement, apprenticeship and employment through our community here in Windsor. They also give insight for the industry needs—they give more focus on what industry needs, in terms of what programs to open at St. Clair College, and helping students also build rewarding careers. They can enrol in programs that make their future bright.

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

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Good morning, Georges. Thanks so much for being here. It's great to see you.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Good morning. It's great to see you too.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** You bring such great experience for something that I think is really an embodiment of how we can do better with Ontario's economy.

For example, you're in the marine sector. We're surrounded by water in Windsor. And yet, a lot of the technology that you work with has to be imported from elsewhere. Surrounding us are greenhouses—or importing

technology from elsewhere. We can and should be the champions in these fields.

I wanted to get your thoughts on how the college can play that role, to ensure that—as heavy users in certain industries that are not necessarily the innovators today. How can we step into that role and export the tremendous knowledge that we have in southwestern Ontario to the broader economy, through St. Clair College and our community college system?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for your question.

As a business owner, I learn very realistic—of the budget, spending and all that. In order to transfer all this to St. Clair College from our business, it's going to be a review of all the information that we have on hand and something like that. My approach would be technical findings, consult people and identify where savings are possible to make the economy better.

**1120**

Does that answer your question?

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Just a quick follow-up: Yesterday, I met with some of our local labour leaders. They indicated that in certain sectors, they're saturated. In other cases, there's a lot of demand, but the educational programs don't exist. Low student enrolment comes to mind. So we have a disconnect between the interest of the students in registering for a program that has an eventual outcome, which is a high-paying job, and the actual attendance. The unions and employers want those students in, but they're not enrolling at the college, and therefore the program is not sustainable. I was hoping to get your thoughts on how to bridge that gap and get to a place where we can connect those students to an industry that is waiting for them.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** First of all, we have to listen to the students on what they are looking for, and also the industry and what they are looking for. We can get information from both parties to merge them and create a program. We can direct the students, to let them know that this program is more rewarding for them and better for the economy and such in our areas. Listening is the key for students—and the business owners too.

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

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

Drawing on your past managerial and volunteer experiences, can you share a moment when you helped an organization navigate through a difficult decision?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for the question.

In my role as technical superintendent, I had to balance the vessel maintenance budget between budget and safety. As you know, operating in a safe environment is going to cost money sometimes. Decisions about repairs require careful considerations of these costs and operational demand. You have to balance both of them together in order to navigate through crisis, I would say. My approach is to review technical findings, consult with involved people and identify—

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

**Mr. Georges Raad:** —where possible, without compromising safety. That experience taught me how to approach these situations, how to save the company from a crisis coming.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you, Mr. Raad, for coming before us. It's a pleasure to learn a little bit about you. We're really grateful that you've put your name forward.

We ask a few very common questions in the committee that I would love to start with.

In terms of your own relationships, have you ever been a member of any political party?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Yes. I'm a member of PC Ontario and the CPC.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Can you tell me if you've ever donated to the PC Party, and how much in the last few years?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Yes, I've donated to both parties—I would say approximately $4,000 to $5,000 for both parties, a couple of years ago.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** When you first heard about this St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors role, who was it that brought it to you?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Actually, as an alumnus of St. Clair College, I wanted to contribute my experience to the institution and give back to the college where I went, so I notified the minister's office of my candidacy, and they facilitated by staff.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I'm wondering if, as you step into this role—you've spoken about some of the experiences from your career that would be helpful. I'm wondering what steps you've taken to familiarize yourself with college governance as opposed to the governance of a business.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for the question.

To transfer my skills as a business owner in the marine sector to the college, first of all, I have to listen to the students, my colleagues who have been in the same role for a couple of years before me—listen to them and make sure that whatever skills I have I can develop and interpret whatever situation, what input data I collected, and transfer it to the welfare for the students and the college.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** In your own words, how would you describe your understanding of the role that you'll be stepping into if you're confirmed today? What is the role?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** My understanding of the role is it's to oversee the budget and make sure its money from the taxpayer has been spent well, without any misuse, to create the best environment for the students.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I think, included in that best environment, maybe, would be setting strategic direction and defining the mission of the college as well as fiduciary oversight for the college. Would you agree?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Yes.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** What I'm thinking about when I think about St. Clair and I see that they're facing significant financial pressures, like many of our colleges, with the loss of international students—we have a deficit of

somewhere between $5 million and $6 million and a decrease in $47.8 million compared to the year before. We're also dealing, at this time, with changes to the OSAP grants that make post-secondary education less affordable and harder to attain for some of our students. In addition to that, with Bill 33, there are some questions around institutional autonomy, student representation, and the future of student services like food banks, mental health supports and student unions.

As a prospective governor, how will you ensure balancing the college's budget with its challenges and its deficits, making sure that it doesn't come at the expense of the students the college exists to serve?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for your question.

I would advocate for the college's needs while recognizing financial sustainability is a shared responsibility, also, between the college and the community and the government—and employers with the community organizations.

St. Clair, I would say, is a good college here in the area. Also, there are other financial ways, other than OSAP. The government has stated that OSAP is not sustainable anymore. So there is, as I remember, a program—it's the Ontario Learn and Stay program, as I remember. There is also the enhanced Student Access Guarantee program. Also, the students, I believe, should see post-secondary education as an investment for them, and they should also invest—it's not like take it easy and not to invest in themselves.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** We've seen, though, that Ontario has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment. We're seeing many students talking about how the effects of OSAP have put them in lifelong debt.

If you could identify one concrete action you'd take as a board member to ensure that students experiencing things like food insecurity—you can't learn if you're hungry—or financial hardship or mental health, because these are the things that Bill 33 puts at risk. How would you ensure that they don't disproportionately affect students, in the case of St. Clair College's financial decisions?

**1130**

**Mr. Georges Raad:** St. Clair is a publicly funded institution, and the government is paying a lot of money—I believe that a few years ago they paid about $6 billion for all colleges in Ontario.

There is also a program, as I remember, at St. Clair College for students who are in need. They can apply, and they won't turn them down. As a prospective governor, I would ensure that this program is up and running properly and not to be abused by students who are well funded by their parents.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** For example, you are on the board; you're facing a deficit—what specific financial information would you expect the administration to provide you with before you would approve cuts to things like programs, staffing, student services? What would you be looking for from the administration so that you could make that decision?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** To get a complete budget on income, from registration and expenses to repair. As for maintenance and all that, we can take a look deeply at that and see if we can postpone any maintenance that's not very urgent, to send the money towards the students in need—which is much better, maybe. Again, we cannot deduct money from the safety of the college towards the well-being of the students, because this will cause more trouble down the road.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Okay.

Again, in light of the changes that this new legislation brings in, how you would ensure that students have a meaningful voice in the decisions affecting the services and organizations that they rely on at St. Clair?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Excuse me. What changes did you mean?

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Bill 33 has changes governing student fees and institutional accountability, and students are looking for a voice in that. I'm wondering how you might meaningfully engage that voice, as a board member.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry; before you answer, there's a point of order from MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** The questions should align with the individual's qualifications at this time.

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

Over to the third party: MPP Smyth.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** I think there are a few areas there.

I just want to clarify a question from my colleague—talking about OSAP and concerns about OSAP funding and the changes in the funding. Did I hear you say that OSAP isn't sustainable anymore?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** The government said it was not sustainable. So that's not my wording. I heard it on the news many times.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** And do you agree with that sentiment about OSAP?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** I would say the system has been abused by some people. That's why, maybe, it's not sustainable. When I attended the college, I applied for OSAP, and I was in need at that time—I was with two small children, so I used it. It was very helpful to me. But from what I hear, in the last years, the system was not sustainable.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** The money that has gone to private career colleges—you've heard about that also in the news, about the funding of private career colleges disproportionately given to those colleges now under question. And yet, you're talking about OSAP being abused by some students. The whole funding model is turned upside down, so others aren't able to participate in post-secondary education.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** I haven't heard about this. Sorry.

*Interjection.*

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

**Ms. Laura Smith:** The questions should align with the individual's qualifications at this time.

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Ontario's colleges right now, especially in relation to funding, enrolment and student affordability?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** I would say it needs to take into consideration whatever monies government can have and whatever the college can do with the local business owners and community—look into what can be done for better programs for the students, in order to continue.

I believe the government funding for the colleges is way generous, from the numbers I have seen on the news, in the paper.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Do you believe St. Clair College is under any financial pressures? Do you know if they're under financial pressures?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** I haven't heard that they're under pressure, but I heard that they cut some of their programs, which was not related to financial pressure. That's what they were saying on the news here. It was from weak enrolment in that program, so they had to cancel it, but not because of financial pressure.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Well, it is under some financial pressure, like many colleges across the province. So my question to you would be, once you sit on that board, as you're going to be likely appointed, how are you going to address that situation? How do you see that St. Clair College is going to be able to balance these financial pressures with the need to maintain accessible programs and strong student supports?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** As mentioned before, there are a couple of ways: the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant, and enhanced Student Access Guarantee.

As students, they should also invest in themselves. I'm not saying not to seek help from government, but with whatever situation now, it's better to tighten up the belt a little bit. We'll help the students as much as possible. I'm not saying not to help the students—no. I understand the need of helping the students; I've been there. But there is a way to find a middle way for helping the students in need.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Can you describe for us your background in marine engineering and business ownership and how that prepares you to serve on St. Clair College's board of governors?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Marine engineering and surveying need deep investigation for the situation—what is it?—and making sure whatever decision you're going to take is going to sustain the safety and the continuity of the ship, working in a safe environment. I'll transfer these to St. Clair College: the listening, the deep investigation of the issue, making sure the budget is right and not taking anything lightly. Let's say, "Listen to other people, not only to what one side is saying." Listen to other people—make sure—and make educated solutions.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** What would you say would be your top priority as a member of the St. Clair College board of governors, and how would you measure your contribution to, hopefully, the college's success?

**Mr. Georges Raad:** First of all, I would like to encourage students to enrol in high-rewarding career programs, to make sure that they are getting top dollar for whatever they spend at the college—and make sure that, myself, I review the budget decision and ensure public dollars are also spent properly on the students.

**1140**

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you very much for your time today.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Georges, for coming in. You're welcome to stay on the line—we have another person to interview, and then we will deliberate on appointments—or you can head about your day, your other schedule, and find out later. We appreciate you applying to be on the board.

**Mr. Georges Raad:** Thank you for having me. I think that I will log off. Have a good day.

## MS. HELENE ANNETTE EVANS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition and third party: Helene Annette Evans, intended appointee as member, Animal Care Review Board.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We are now moving to our last intended appointee.

I have to say congrats on your hard work today, and your tenacity.

Annette Evans is nominated as a member of the Animal Care Review Board. As you can see, Annette is online.

Welcome, Annette. Thank you very much for coming to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. You have as much time as you want to rave about yourself and share your story and experience. Everyone has 10 minutes to ask you questions, but your time of presentation will be removed from the government time, and they are perfectly okay with that.

Thank you for stepping up to serve in Ontario. We are all ears.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the standing committee. Good morning, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and discuss my interest in the Animal Care Review Board and what I believe to be the experience and skills I possess that would be an asset to the ACRB.

Originally from the east coast, Ontario has been my home for close to 30 years, and I currently live in the city of Toronto.

I am a long-time public servant. I'm a lawyer by profession, and the entirety of my legal career was spent as a federal crown with the Department of Justice. I retired after almost 30 years with the Department of Justice, close to two years ago. The majority of my experience with the DOJ was as a litigator providing legal services, including in administrative law, to the Canada Revenue Agency, with the last few years of my tenure with the DOJ in management, as a deputy regional director and senior counsel.

In the lead-up to my retirement, tribunal work was top of mind for me as something that I was keenly interested in post my legal career with the DOJ. It's not something that I would have been able to pursue while employed with the Department of Justice.

I believe that tribunals play an important role in our justice system. They are often the first point of an individual's attempt to resolve a legal matter that can also have a significant impact on their personal lives. In the case of the ACRB, its decisions can impact livelihoods as well as family dynamics.

Even in the context of providing legal services as an advocate for a government department, I understand the importance of acting in the public interest when taking legal positions on behalf of a government body.

I have worked on complex, high-profile litigation cases, as well as project files, with significant experience interacting with self-represented litigants and parties.

I'm comfortable working independently as well as on large teams.

I've also been involved in professional development and training with the Department of Justice. I recognize the importance of being and staying informed on the relevant law and procedures applicable to the work that you are doing and the venue in which you are working in.

I believe my legal experience and personal values of fairness and justice, which I have always been committed to, will allow me to make balanced and principled decisions through thoughtful deliberation in the application of relevant facts and the law to any case that may come before me. I strongly believe that I can be a very effective adjudicator. I have active listening skills. I have significant experience with legal writing, applying the law to the facts. And I have the ability to be compassionate about the impact of the decision while still ensuring that justice be done and that justice is seen to be done.

Those are my comments. I welcome any questions from the standing committee.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

Over to the government side: You have seven minutes, five seconds. We'll start with MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you for joining us, albeit virtually, and thank you for your service. You've put a lot of commitment into the work that you've provided for the country.

I want to touch on something that wasn't discussed. What sort of engagement have you had in your community, whether it be volunteer work—and how will that inform you in your role at the Animal Care Review Board?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** I've been fairly active with some volunteer work that I've been involved in.

I just recently finished my tenure with the Oakville Hospital Volunteer Association, and within that organization, I was the chair of their governance committee. Previous to that, I was a board member—as well as on the governance committee of the Oakville Parent-Child Centre.

I am a volunteer mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters' cultural mentorship program.

And I'm currently a board member and chair of the governance committee of an organization called Akoma, which provides residential services for youth who have special needs, as well as attempts to address some of the affordable housing concerns that exist in the province of Nova Scotia, which is where I'm from, originally.

It's very important that we participate in organizations that can help better the community as a whole. Those particular organizations that I've been involved in have drawn on my ability to help govern these organizations—but also taking into account the community and the services that they are trying to provide to the community, and sort of striking that balance in ensuring that the organization is being run sufficiently and efficiently, as well as providing the services to the community.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Madam Chair, through you to the candidate: Thank you for appearing today.

We know that the tribunals of Ontario, in general, have very high caseload volumes. Can you tell us what your experience in managing heavy backloads, heavy caseloads is and—I'm sure you've already thought about it—how you're going to manage that kind of workload?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Thank you for that question.

Throughout my career with the Department of Justice, I was a litigator, as I mentioned, and there was always a significant backload of cases. In the first probably five or so years of my career, I was a junior lawyer, but I was appearing before the Tax Court in these matters that we referred to as informal procedure cases. They were before the courts, but very similar to, I would say, Small Claims Court cases. Those still are the majority of the cases that appear before the Tax Court of Canada. They are oftentimes individuals, self-represented people, who are disputing their tax bill. So there was always a large number of those cases. When we would, even as a junior lawyer, have to appear in court, we were oftentimes managing, hearing five or seven cases in one day.

With the Department of Justice, we were encouraged and trained to be able to manage a high caseload while still ensuring that we were representing our clients' interests sufficiently and that we were properly prepared before going to court.

Obviously, utilizing time management skills, any sort of calendars and programs like that that consist in keeping yourself organized, keeping yourself on track and making sure that you're getting through your cases taps into an access-to-justice issue as well.

As much as we would sometimes complain about our caseload, it's important that people get their cases heard, and heard in a timely manner. So that would sort of balance into that, as well, in trying to manage what would be a very heavy caseload.

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

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

How will your previous work experience assist you in being a fair and impartial adjudicator on the ACRB?

**1150**

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** As I mentioned, I was a litigator. The Canada Revenue Agency, for the most part of my career, was my client, so any work that I would have to do would be in their interest or on their behalf. However, I was also a public servant, so I always had to ensure the actions I was taking on behalf of the DOJ or on behalf of the CRA were in the public interest, and that the positions that we were taking were fair. We couldn't rely upon, let's say, information that we may have come across that the other side was not aware of, just as an example.

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

**Ms. Helen Annette Evans:** In some instances, we may be put in a situation where we become aware of something that may assist the other side, but we were not permitted to withhold that, because it would not be in the public interest to take that position. So it was a bit of a balance sometimes, where we would have to make sure that we were advocating in the best way possible for our client, but also acting in the broader public interest.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you, Ms. Evans. It has been a pleasure to hear your answers thus far. Thank you for putting your name forward after serving the community in your professional career so well.

We have a few questions, but I think I want to start here: You retired from the Department of Justice in 2025 and then applied for the position in June 2026. I'm still curious about the animal side of this—what drew you to animal care review in particular, and maybe a little bit about how you learned about the vacancy.

**Ms. Helen Annette Evans:** I think I mentioned in my opening comments that tribunal work, the idea of being on a tribunal was something that I had a general interest in, previous to my retirement, so it was something that I intended to pursue to some degree—at least to explore it and see if it was something that I truly was interested in.

I can't say exactly when, but at some point after my retirement, probably within a year, I created a profile on the—I think it's the secretariat's website, to be alerted of any potential openings for tribunal positions, and there were a few that I came across, two of which I had particular interest in, and ACRB was one of them. So I didn't just apply to a whole bunch of tribunals to see who I would hear from. It did have a particular interest for me—I can't state any certainty exactly why. I am a pet owner. My grandfather owned a farm a long time ago. He passed away before I was born, so I didn't see the farm in operation, but I always heard about it from other family members. I don't know if any of that played a role. But it definitely was something that I was very much interested in. The idea of assisting in the process related to animal welfare just appealed to me. So I'm keenly interested in the work.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** You would know, having begun this process, that the very first statutory criterion is experience, knowledge or training in the subject matter that this tribunal is going to deal with. And from what I've heard so far and from your application, there are the three decades of tax litigation, board governance work—but just to be clear, apart from the stories about the farm and being a pet owner, what experience, if any, do you have with animal welfare, animal husbandry, agriculture or veterinary standards?

**Ms. Helen Annette Evans:** I don't have any professional experience in that capacity.

The experience that I would be bringing is the ability to analyze facts, apply the law as it exists to those particular facts and write clear and reasonable decisions. That's the experience that I think would help me on the ACRB.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Can I ask you, then, what would you do before your very first hearing to close the gap in that lack of experience?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Well, my understanding, from the earlier interview I had with the ACRB, is that they have a very robust on-boarding and training process, so that is something that I expect would help fill that gap.

Also, prior to me applying but also in anticipation of my interview, I read a significant number of ACRB decisions and some JRs of those decisions. I will continue to do that on my own to ensure that I'm up to date on the relevant and current issues and legislation, to ensure that, assuming I'm appointed, there are no gaps before I actually start the work.

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

Is it correct that you've been appointed to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board as well? Did I get that right?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** That is correct.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Do you hold or seek any other public appointments at this time?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** No, just those two.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** The board has to schedule a hearing within five business days; they hold the first hearing within 10.

I'm just wondering about your ability to balance the two tribunals, each with their own hearing schedules, being available on short notice for both of them. What have you been thinking about in terms of making a plan for that?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** The HSARB appointment is part-time. This one that I'm seeking here is part-time. I'm not currently employed in any other capacity. So I have no doubt that I'll be able to utilize my time management skills sufficiently and ensure that I'm able to contribute effectively to both tribunals.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** You've spoken a little bit about the 30 years of working with the Canada Revenue Agency and representing the government there—sort of against taxpayers, though; you spoke about how you'd have to share certain knowledge with the individual.

This board is also—the respondent here is the Chief Animal Welfare Inspector, very much an arm of the state. Then you have the appellant, who is usually an animal owner. They often have no lawyer—this is maybe their first experience of a tribunal or something like that.

After this career spent on the government side of the table, what are you going to do to make sure that—I don't know—an unrepresented farmer or a pet owner believes and experiences a neutral hearing? Both believing and experiencing are important in that.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** That is extremely important.

Even when I was litigating cases on behalf of the CRA, I was always very mindful of the impact of the positions that my client was taking or what the ultimate decision made by the judge had been and the impact that it was going to have on the individuals. Oftentimes, these were just families or people who didn't understand, let's say, the tax legislation or perhaps received some bad advice, and then they would be left with a very large tax bill that I had no doubt would have a significant impact on them, their family and potentially their livelihood. That was never lost on me.

In particular, in the cases where I was dealing with self-reps, but even just in general, I've tried to show compassion in the way that I would deal with people and handle their particular cases.

It's very important—and I learned this, or I have experience with this, dealing with a large number of self-represented individuals I've worked with over the years. People want to know that they had a fair shake, that they had a fair hearing, that somebody's listening, and that somebody cares about the position that they take.

**1200**

Sometimes we will need to make decisions that are difficult, in consideration of the impact that it would have on, let's say, that individual pet owner. We still need to apply the relevant facts to the law and be independent and be impartial. But that can be done, I think, in a way that at least lets the individual know that we've heard them; we've given them the opportunity to share any information that they have. We do our best to write a decision that clearly explains why the decision had to be made. As an example, in a case where perhaps—

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you.

The committee has just heard from another nominee to the same board, who's also a career government tax litigator without any experience in animal welfare.

I'm just wondering if you were given any sense of whether the government is looking for tax lawyers for subject matters in animal welfare, when you were speaking to them.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Sorry, whether they—I have no—

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Do you have any sense of why the government might be looking for tax lawyers to fill this tribunal?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** That, I can't comment on. I don't know what their intentions were. Certainly, nothing was communicated to me to suggest that they were looking for tax lawyers.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Well, we have two nominees today—two career government tax lawyers—with no animal welfare experience, but certainly very compassionate and compelling answers.

I want to thank you for coming before us today.

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

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you for being here today. I really appreciate your 30 years with the Department of Justice.

Your résumé is obviously very impressive. Let's talk about it in the context of the Animal Care Review Board and the mandate there.

How do you see your federal legal experience really preparing you to adjudicate matters in the animal welfare framework—admittedly, not the experience there, but tax experience, which is interesting. How do you see your experience translating and impacting adjudicating matters when it comes to animal welfare?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** It's not so much the tax experience that I think is helpful; it's the litigation experience. It just so happened that the subject matter of the law that I was practising in was tax. But as a litigator, you are constantly put in situations where I would have to write or prepare notices of appeal or facta, other legal documents, that are, I think, similar to writing decisions that would be required of the ACRB. I have a lot of experience weighing facts, deciding what's most relevant or not; lots of experience assessing the credibility of witnesses, obviously, as an advocate—but nonetheless, I think that those skills would certainly transfer well, as an adjudicator.

In terms of the lack of experience in animal welfare, I think that is a gap that I will be able to close relatively quickly. Being a litigator means being able to pick up any piece of legislation and work with that legislation. Obviously, I have significant years of applying tax law, so that would come a bit quicker, after having practised in it for so long. But I have no doubt that I will be able to pick up and work effectively on the issues in the area of law around animal welfare and what the ACRB does.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So what does the gap work look like?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** I think, for me, the training that the ACRB will provide, I can only assume, will be sufficient to fill that gap, but if for some reason it was not, then I would do that myself. I would do the research. I would read the case law to ensure that I am familiar with how that works. But I have significant experience reading, reviewing and understanding a variety of case law, so I don't think I'd have much trouble filling that gap.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** The legal knowledge and experience you have could obviously play in and be applicable.

I'm just trying to zero in on the animal welfare aspect of it—understanding animal welfare, how it works in this province, what constitutes that kind of welfare, and how you would adjudicate that specifically. I don't know enough about animal welfare that I could—I know what I don't like and do like to see in terms of how animals are treated. But if I were to put myself forward to be on that board, I would sure want to know all of what the expecta-

tions are and what we're looking at and what the context is in this province right now.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** The PAWS Act—I think that's the acronym; I believe it's called the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act. I think there are also standards of care related to animal welfare in Ontario. I've reviewed that legislation already, just in preparing for the application and the interview. I'm not going to suggest it's not significant, but it's not a very large piece of legislation. So I have no doubt that I will be able to bring myself up to speed very quickly, and ensuring that—that would be the approach that I would take.

I would never want to go into a case or a hearing feeling like I don't understand the law that's applicable. I will make sure that I'm at that point—that I have filled any gaps that may exist before I start hearing cases or writing decisions that will have a significant impact on either one party or the other.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How would you assess a case where an animal owner's account would conflict with the evidence provided by an animal welfare inspector or, say, a vet?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Where the account of an amount owing against the pet owner conflicts with the evidence from—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** An animal welfare inspector or a vet.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** I think there's a process in the legislation that provides for a review of an account that is issued. So, throughout that review process, if there is evidence to suggest that an error was made, there is an opportunity for the amount that is owing under the account to be adjusted. It should be adjusted to be removed, I believe. There are a few different powers I recall reading—I'm sorry; I won't be able to recite them specifically. But I do know that there is a process for accounts to be reviewed, and the numbers can be changed if there's evidence to suggest that they were inaccurate when initially ordered.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How would you ensure that individuals appearing before the board are treated fairly and have a meaningful opportunity to present their cases?

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** This is very, very important. I think it's talking to the individuals—in particular people who are not represented—in a way that ensures that you are listening to what they are saying and that you care about the impact that the decision may have upon them. It's asking them questions to ensure that they understand the process, that they understand the questions that are being asked of them, that they are being asked—if there's that one sort of final question: "Is there anything else you wish to share or you wish to put before us?" That is very important—that people feel like they have a full opportunity to both argue against whatever the position may be against them, but also to put forward any information they feel is supportive of their position, which will provide that additional understanding. That opportunity to be heard, I think, goes a very long way, even in a situation where a decision may go against that individual.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** As you explained, you had positions with the Oakville Hospital Volunteer Association and others. What lessons do you think that you have learned from those worlds that you could bring to the Animal Care Review Board?

**1210**

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Lessons? Well, I think that, for the most part, in addition to my professional career, those experiences have provided opportunities to learn to work with other individuals who perhaps may have a different perspective or opposing views—views in opposition to what you may think or feel. I think that they provided lessons in working in a collaborative sort of environment where there may be one particular goal that the organization is trying to get to.

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

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** You may have a variety of opinions or thoughts or perspectives on how to get to that goal, and you have to sort of work together and drill down and come up with a position or a path or steps to take to move that goal forward.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Annette, for your time and your stories today. You can stay on the line—we are now at the point where we're going to deliberate the appointments—or you can just go about your merry way and find out the results later. We do appreciate you putting your name forward.

**Ms. Helene Annette Evans:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to appear.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now consider the concurrence of all six intended appointees.

First is Maximilian Massimiliano. Could I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Maximilian Massimiliano, nominated as member of the Cambrian College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** What a day. We started with this individual who didn't believe it was relevant to disclose that he was buddy-buddy in pictures with the Premier, with ministers, that he's a large donor to the party, and that he is listed on his socials as the PC candidate in Sudbury—to not disclose clearly shows he doesn't understand conflict of interest.

I have to ask the government members to consider their vote and what it says to the people of Ontario about their own understanding about conflict of interest and patronage appointments.

And I would ask that this is a recorded vote, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

Bailey, Dowie, Firin, Sabawy, Laura Smith.

**Nays**

Gilmour, Smyth.

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

We will now consider the next intended appointee, Marcel Michael Gagnon. Could I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Marcel Michael Gagnon, nominated as member of the Lakehead University board of governors.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** A recorded vote has been requested. Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

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

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

Next, we will consider the intended appointment of Patsy Clarke. Could I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Patsy Clarke, nominated as member of the Animal Care Review Board.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** A recorded vote has been requested. Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

Bailey, Dowie, Firin, Sabawy, Laura Smith.

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

Next, on to the intended appointment of Dinesh Parakh: Could I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Dinesh Parakh, nominated as member of the Consent and Capacity Board.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

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

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Another unanimous vote. That carries.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Georges Raad. Could I have a motion, please? MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Georges Raad, nominated as member of St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Recorded vote, please, Chair.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** A recorded vote has been requested. Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

Bailey, Dowie, Firin, Sabawy, Laura Smith.

**Nays**

Gilmour, Smyth.

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

We will now consider the intended appointment of Annette Evans. Could I have a motion, please?

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Helene Annette Evans, nominated as member of the Animal Care Review Board.

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

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Are the members ready to vote?

**Ayes**

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

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** All those opposed? That carries.

That concludes our business today. The committee now stands adjourned until next week, when I see we all are back on October 29, 2026. Thank you.

*The committee adjourned at 1216.*

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

**Chair / Présidente**
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon (Beaches–East York L)

**First Vice-Chair / Premier Vice-Président**
Mr. Robert Bailey (Sarnia–Lambton PC)

**Second Vice-Chair / Deuxième Vice-Président**
MPP Wayne Gates (Niagara Falls ND)

Mr. Robert Bailey (Sarnia–Lambton PC)
MPP Billy Denault (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke PC)
Mr. Andrew Dowie (Windsor–Tecumseh PC)
MPP Mohamed Firin (York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston PC)
MPP Wayne Gates (Niagara Falls ND)
MPP Alexa Gilmour (Parkdale–High Park ND)
Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon (Beaches–East York L)
Hon. Matthew Rae (Perth–Wellington PC)
Mr. Sheref Sabawy (Mississauga–Erin Mills PC)
Ms. Laura Smith (Thornhill PC)
MPP Stephanie Smyth (Toronto–St. Paul's L)

**Clerk / Greffière**
Ms. Vanessa Kattar

**Staff / Personnel**
Ms. Lauren Warner, research officer,
Research Services