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Intended appointments

1st Session
44th Parliament

Thursday 5 November 2026

Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Journal des débats (Hansard)

A-27

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44e législature

Jeudi 5 novembre 2026

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Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 5 November 2026

Jeudi 5 novembre 2026

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the sweetest standing committee at Queen's Park, the Standing Committee on Government Agencies—so please live up to the name today.

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

At our last meeting—and thank you, MPP Gates, for chairing that meeting so well—

MPP Wayne Gates: I heard that guy did a good job last time.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): —I heard through the grapevine—MPP Fraser moved a motion. We will now resume that debate.

Is there any further debate? MPP Fraser.

Mr. John Fraser: I would just like to remind the committee that, simply put, the motion is for Jeff Lang to come before the committee for about an hour to discuss the closure of WSIB offices outside of Toronto, forcing families to leave their communities to come to Toronto.

I did say, imagine if that happened to any of us—if our boss said to us, "You don't have a job unless you come here and live here with your family." We have to come here, but we get to go back to our families.

The reality is, about a hundred people have accepted to do that. There are now 400 employees—full-time employees—who no longer work for WSIB. What that means is, people who get hurt at work wait longer for fairness—a lot longer. The people left at work—there's a lot of moral injury when you can't serve people fast enough, who don't have enough money to pay the bills. It's wrong.

Here's the thing: At the same time that we're closing regional offices, Mr. Lang is touting the use of AI. We should know about that too, because what it looks like to me is, these are really layoffs—they're layoffs so people won't come back. They know that people aren't going to move to Toronto. They know that it's impossible. They know that it's too expensive and unaffordable for people to come from a community like Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and live here, apart from all the strife that it causes a family.

Here we have a government that is hurting honest, hard-working people who are trying to serve honest, hard-working people who got injured while working hard. I don't think it's a lot to ask to have Mr. Lang come here and speak to all of us about why that is happening, because the decisions that have been made are hurting people—honest, hard-working people—both at the WSIB and injured workers.

I'll yield the floor to anybody else who wants to make a comment.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Further debate? MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: I just want to say that I support the motion. Jeffery Lang, the current president and CEO of WSIB, needs to be brought to this committee. He was reappointed to the role on January 28, 2025, through an order in council, the day before the election was called in 2025. His appointment was never reviewed by this committee.

First, let's talk about his compensation, which is incredible. Jeffery Lang is paid $440,000 per year. His severance, if he is ever removed from that role, is worth one year of salary, which is another $440,000.

When we bring two people here per week, you would think that his appointment was worth one of those two slots sometime in the last couple of years.

The problem with Jeffery Lang—he is also about making decisions. He fired—fired—566 staff across the province who provided service to people receiving WSIB who were injured on the job.

Jeffery Lang attended and spoke at a conference on AI on October 1, where he talked about using AI for workers' compensation, which means he'll eliminate more jobs. Here's a quote from Jeffery Lang during that conference: "WSIB is deploying AI at an extraordinary scale, beyond the reach of many top-tier insurers." That's two months after 466 workers were fired out of nowhere.

At the same time, WSIB is signing contracts with companies to summarize their claims. WSIB awarded a $7.3-million contract to Owl.co, an AI company that's not here in Canada, for a claims summary tool subscription in February 2026.

This is what happens when you appoint people and you don't make them appear at this committee and question them. You get decisions that don't pass the sniff test.

One worker who was fired said WSIB was pushing AI down on people's throats—think about that in your workplace. It makes me want to ask this government if they plan to continue replacing public sector workers with AI.

Again, it's about jobs: 700,000 people don't have a job today—and we're getting rid of more; if they do, they should ask the public whether that's what we want, because I'm sure that most Ontarians don't want to see that happen.

At the same time, we're still practising deeming in Ontario. An injured worker can lose their employment, and then WSIB tells them that there's another job that they think that worker can do and decreases their loss-of-earning benefit, even if that worker can't even actually do the job.

When people are injured on the job and they need compensation, they deserve to be treated like a person by a person. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and not like they're just like a number.

So I'm supporting this motion. Jeffery Lang should come to this committee and answer to what he's doing to WSIB.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Further debate? MPP Vaugeois.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Under the leadership of Conservative appointee Jeff Lang, the WSIB's decision to close 10 regional offices and centralize operations has resulted in the loss of hundreds of experienced front-line staff across Ontario, weakened service for injured workers and employers, impacted communities and concentrated decision-making power and jobs in the GTA.

The WSIB is responsible for administering Ontario's workplace insurance system and managing billions of dollars collected from employers—not taxpayers—to support workers injured or made ill on the job.

Jeff Lang is in the process of closing all Ontario regional offices, resulting in the loss of over 700 jobs when he's done with it.

Northern offices and northern staff have already been eliminated, directly harming the population base of our communities and leaving thousands of injured workers without caseworkers who understand the unique challenges of accessing health care in the north. Northern French-speaking employees have also been eliminated.

During the 1990s, the WSIB reduced compensation rates for injured workers based on the premise that the WSIB had an unfunded liability. However, when the WSIB was restored to financial health, workers' rates were also supposed to be restored. The unfunded liability was resolved years ago. Yet instead of improving supports for injured workers, the WSIB, under Jeff Lang's leadership, has given employers billions of dollars in rebates taken directly out of funds held in trust for people harmed while doing their jobs.

Adding insult to injury, Jeff Lang has boasted that the WSIB is integrating AI into its operations at an unprecedented rate, allowing him to replace hundreds of workers. It is then no small irony that the WSIB is desperately trying to hire, right now, temporary employees to address two-to-three-hour wait times, nearly 6,000 unassigned claims and 75,000 queued activities. In other words, because of management decisions, service is being denied to people when they are most in need of compassion and support. This suggests poor management and/or political interference.

The motion before us calls on Jeff Lang to appear before this committee to demonstrate that recent job cuts and office closures have been supported by evidence, sound governance, effective oversight, prudent financial management and, most importantly, that service levels for workers made ill or injured on the job have not as a consequence been reduced.

0910

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I support this motion. We need Jeff Lang, this appointee by the Conservative government, to come before us.

A review of WSIB is essential. Here's why: In 1913, this province, over a hundred years ago, made a promise to workers. Workers gave up their right to sue employers for workplace injuries, and in return, they were promised prompt, no-fault compensation for as long as their disability lasts. The promise was that injured workers would never become destitute or be treated as adversaries, but would instead receive secure medical care, rehabilitation, real wage replacement. But for the past three decades, this province has been systematically limiting, eroding and outright betraying this promise. It began in 1998, under the Conservative government of Mike Harris. This is not ancient history for our committee, because those betrayals continue to this day. What did Harris do? He reduced the benefit for lost earnings from 90% to 85%, even for people only making minimum wage. About a fifth of injured workers were barely getting by to begin with at the time, and this change relegated them to poverty—promise made, promise broken.

But wait, there is less. Mike Harris made the de-indexation of benefits even deeper. Injured workers already living in poverty watched their tiny buying power fade even further—promise made, promise broken.

But wait, friends—yes, there is less. Even with the reduced, non-indexed pittance allowed by WSIB, that could be clawed back through the practice of deeming. "You can't work at the construction site anymore," says the board. "Fine. But you can be a parking lot attendant, can't you? There are no parking lot attendant jobs available? It doesn't matter. We'll pretend that there are, we'll pretend that you got hired, and then we'll deduct the pretend dollars from your real benefit," which leaves this benefit more pretend than real—promise made, promise broken.

But wait, there is less. In 2012, the Liberal government ordered the board to eliminate its unfunded liability and promised it would not be done on the back of injured workers. But injured workers tell you that the targets were met by cutting benefits whenever it could point to a so-called "pre-existing condition." For 15 years, the Liberals also left those Harris 85% cuts in place. They left deeming in place—promises made, promises broken.

But wait, there is still less. The practice of deeming is so contrary to any notion of fairness or justice that when I actually try to explain it to people, they think I'm making it up. "It can't be right," they say. Do you know who else thinks that it isn't right? The Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal. We had members coming before

us just last week. Deeming is one of the reasons the tribunal overturns WSIB decisions about 70% of the time—70%. If it's overturned—well then, hey, what's the problem for the worker? The problem is that the WSIB's deeply unfair clawbacks go into effect immediately, but it takes years for the injured worker to come before the tribunal—promise made, promise broken.

Chair, I have only scratched the surface of why we need this review so desperately. I am in favour of this motion.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I have to say, I find it remarkable, first off, that we have to even sit here to debate whether the CEO of the WSIB should appear before this committee. I genuinely find that astonishing. We're talking about an organization that is responsible for supporting injured workers across Ontario—people who have been hurt at work, people who have lost their ability to earn an income, people who are relying on this organization at some of the most difficult moments in their lives. This organization has announced the layoff of hundreds of jobs, the reductions of jobs, the closure of regional offices and major restructuring of how it operates across this province.

Somehow, we're sitting here today debating whether the person running this organization should come before this committee of the Legislature to answer some questions. Why? What is so unreasonable about that? What is so controversial about asking the president and CEO to come here to explain what's happening and answer questions from elected representatives? I want to remind everybody that that's what this committee is here to do.

As my colleague mentioned, this committee—was appointed and affirmed without any oversight from this committee whatsoever. We are the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. We are here to examine provincial agencies, their operations, their accountability and the decisions that they make. This isn't some obscure issue that we're hearing—this is about the lives of Ontarians. This is an agency that people depend on when they're injured at work; it is something that affects the livelihoods of so many. And I would suggest that this committee should absolutely be examining these decisions.

So I want to ask the government members across directly: What is the problem with hearing from the CEO? If the decisions are justified, let him explain them. If the restructuring is going to improve services, let him explain how. If there is a business case for eliminating these positions and closing these offices, please let him present it. Why are we so reluctant to hear from the person who is responsible? I can tell you that the people impacted and their families affected by these decisions don't have the luxury, as my colleague has been saying, of just simply moving on, and neither should we. These are real people. We know exactly what's happening. We've heard about the numbers, the layoffs, the impact in the communities.

I don't want to lose sight about something else that is very important, and that's not just about the employees and the families impacted; this is about the injured workers who depend on WSIB—because what happens to them? What happens to someone who has been injured at work who's trying to navigate a system, a claim, who's waiting for an answer about benefits, who needs help accessing treatment or rehabilitation? What happens when the person who has been handed the case is suddenly gone? What happens when the experienced employees are replaced, moved, or expected to take on additional work? The system essentially collapses, people are left waiting, and nobody benefits from this.

Again, it brings me back to the actual motion: We're asking for Jeff Lang, the president and CEO of the WSIB, to appear before the committee.

I want to call the vote and have it recorded as well, please.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Is there any further debate? Are the members are ready to vote? A recorded vote has been requested by MPP Smyth.

Ayes

Gates, Gilmour, Smyth.

Nays

Anand, Bresee, Dowie, Lahey, Pierre, Sabawy, David Smith.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): That loses. Thank you to our visiting members for coming in.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Our next item of business will be the adoption of a subcommittee report dated Thursday, October 29, 2026. Could I please have a motion? MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, October 29, 2026, on the order-in-council certificate dated October 23, 2026.

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

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. HAYLEY OSSIP

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Hayley Ossip, intended appointee as member, Ontario Trillium Foundation board of directors.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now move to the review of intended appointees. Thank you for your patience while we dealt with other business.

Our first intended appointee today is Hayley Jenna Ossip. Hayley is nominated as a member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation board of directors.

Have a seat, Hayley. There's also more water with cups at the side if you need it. Thank you so much for being

willing to serve and help continue to make Ontario a better province. We would love to hear your story. You can take all the time you want. Each side has 10 minutes to question you. The time you take to present will be removed from the government side—and they're fine with that—and then we'll go from there. The floor is yours. Welcome.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Good morning, Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding my proposed appointment to the board of directors of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I welcome the opportunity to apply my experience in business, law, corporate governance and community philanthropy to OTF's mission of building strong, vibrant communities across Ontario. As the mother of two young children, that mission really resonates with me, and I would be proud to contribute to the province's future.

0920

I'd like to highlight a few aspects from my background that I believe are particularly relevant to this appointment.

I was born and raised here in Toronto, where I still live. I earned my BA with honours in political science from the University of Chicago, where I also participated in the Chicago careers and business fellowship, completing several MBA-level courses at the Booth School of Business. I then returned home to study law at the University of Toronto, up the street, and was subsequently called to the Ontario bar.

I began my career at Gilbert's LLP, practising primarily intellectual property litigation along with some corporate and commercial work.

In 2017, I joined my father and his investment partner Martin Goldfarb in establishing Almada, a private equity firm. I also continued to provide legal counsel to our affiliated businesses.

At Almada, I've had the opportunity to evaluate investments across industries, worked with management teams to scale businesses, and supported growth and job creation across Canada. I've served on several portfolio company boards. Two investments in particular illustrate the experience I would bring to the OTF board: Environmental 360 Solutions and Dymon Storage.

We provided the seed capital to E360, an Aurora-based waste management company that grew into a national business. I served as legal counsel on its first nine acquisitions before joining its board and chairing the corporate governance committee. In that role, I led the development of a code of conduct and ethics for the board and senior management. I remained a director until our fund exited. I'm proud that the company reached a billion-dollar enterprise value. I see their yellow trucks across Canada, and I'm very proud of that.

We also invested in Dymon Storage, an Ottawa-based storage and real estate development company, supporting its expansion into the GTA. I currently serve on its board, contributing to strategic oversight and evaluating growth opportunities. Through Dymon, I've also seen how businesses can build lasting relationships with local charities. Dymon has long-standing partnerships with organizations, such as the Ottawa Mission, providing financial support, fundraising assistance and other resources. Whenever they open a new location, they really care—and it comes across to all employees and everyone who works there—about the communities that they enter.

These experiences have given me insight into the needs of organizations at different stages of development, from initial funding through growth and maturity. I see parallels with the OTF's seed, grow, capital and sector grant streams. While the objectives of not-for-profit organizations definitely differ from those of the commercial enterprise, responsible capital allocation, sound financial oversight and evaluating impact are important to both.

Working alongside Martin Goldfarb, whose distinguished career has focused on public opinion research, has reinforced for me that effective strategy begins with listening to and understanding people. Whether in business or in the not-for-profit sector, understanding the different needs and priorities of the communities we serve is essential to making effective decisions.

Outside of work, I have pursued volunteer leadership opportunities where I can make a meaningful contribution.

Since May of last year, I've co-chaired the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto's Next Gen initiative, developing strategies to engage Jewish community members under 40 in philanthropy, volunteerism and community leadership. I work with fellow volunteers and organizational leadership to develop engagement and fundraising strategies to present to UJA's leadership, helping it grow its donor base and provide programing relevant to our generation.

If appointed, I'd welcome the opportunity to help strengthen OTF's effectiveness. I want to play my part in making Ontario a place where my children and future generations will continue to want to build their lives. I believe my multidisciplinary experience and millennial perspective will bring a valuable voice to the board.

Thank you again for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing your questions.

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

Over to the government side: You have five minutes and 23 seconds, MPP Lahey.

MPP Susan Lahey: Through you, Chair: Ms. Ossip, thank you for your opening remarks.

Your professional background combines investment management, corporate strategy, legal education and business development.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation has an important responsibility to strengthen communities across Ontario through responsible investment in the not-for-profit sector.

Can you share with the committee why you believe your experience makes you well suited to contribute to the OTF board and where you believe you could add the greatest value?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: As a board member, I see a lot of parallels between the roles on a corporate board and the roles on a not-for-profit board. At the end of the day, we have a duty to taxpayers, as I would to shareholders in a private sector enterprise. The goal is to evaluate performance, evaluate investments, and ensure sound financial stewardship and corporate governance.

I've worked with businesses at an early stage through their growth, so I'm familiar with dealing with small grassroots organizations as well as larger ones, and the needs and evaluation of both.

What I bring is a comfort with handling financial statements and other documents; corporate governance, which is a big deal—obviously, it's bigger in the not-for-profit sector, when our goal is to help people and make a real impact; it's more than making money for other people—and law. So I bring those skills to the table.

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

Mr. Ric Bresee: Ms. Ossip, I'm quite impressed with your volunteer activities and your engagement in a variety of things.

I'm coming back to your involvement in Environmental 360 as it provides an interesting example of participating in the growth of an organization, from its very earliest stages through the significant business expansion and that institutional investment side of things. What lessons do you think you've taken from that experience about organizational growth, scalability etc., and how would those lessons be applied to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and work in strengthening Ontario's not-for-profit sector?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: That was a very special experience for me, to be involved from the very beginning. When we started the company, they didn't have a single truck—it was a founder and a dream. He had originally been a garbage truck driver himself who had had some success in life and wanted to start his own company; this was his second time around doing it. We provided the seed capital, and then we started to grow the company. We would start with one location and then build around it, developing a vertically integrated waste management company.

There's a lot of excitement about acquisitions; there's a lot of excitement about growing further, but one of the things that you have to do when you're building a company is, sometimes you have to stop and you have to look at what you're doing and you have to look at your own operations and you have to figure out when you have to look internally and make yourself better before you can go out and be more acquisitive and present yourself to the outside world. So there's a lot more reflection.

Serving on the board, I learned about the importance of a constructive board and management relationship. You need a lot of trust and open communication, so challenges are open; they're raised; they're discussed. As you know, a wide range of expertise and opinions is what helps things get better and grow.

Also, through all this, I've learned about dealing with finite resources. Sometimes the answer is not to grow more, but to figure out, with what you have, how to use it better.

The OTF has a budget. It's a big number in my mind—

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

Ms. Hayley Ossip: There's always a sense that there could be more, but at the end of the day, working with what you have is really important.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Being a member from Mississauga, I'm working with many diverse communities and diverse organizations.

I understand you are in the investment community, where there's considerable emphasis on measuring performance, establishing benchmarks and understanding whether an investment is delivering its intended results. The OTF has a somewhat different mandate, where success is measured not simply in financial terms but through meaningful social, economic and community outcomes.

How would you approach measuring the effectiveness of OTF grant investments, and how would you balance the need for measurable results with the realities faced by smaller community organizations?

0930

Ms. Hayley Ossip: As someone who is passionate about figuring out how to help the community, I was very interested in how the OTF does this already, so I reviewed its business plan and I learned about some of its measurements of impact that it already has in place—

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

To the official opposition: MPP Gilmour.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you, Ms. Ossip, for being before us.

I see that you are a regular contributor to the Conservative Party, including contributions to York Centre, specifically. Your family members are also big donors to the Tory party. Your father, Alon; your sister Lori; your uncle David; your uncle Marc; your grandparents Martin and Myrna—they're all big donors to the Tory party. It seems to be a bit of a family affair—oh, and your cousin Jared, as well. You're all big supporters. Collectively, you've all given about $50,000 over the past few years. Does that sound about right?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I haven't looked at the figure, but—

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I've got the documents here, if you want to look.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I believe you.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: It's about four pages here.

Oh, sorry; your husband is also a repeat donor.

So you and your family, going back at least three generations now, show very strong support for the Progressive Conservative Party. Of course, there's nothing wrong with that. But I am wondering how you see that level of partisanship affecting your role. You can't claim that you're just a citizen stepping up to the job, because you're clearly here because the party wants you to be. I'm wondering what that says to you.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I have co-chaired fundraisers for Michael Kerzner; I did it for two years. My dad and I hosted them. Michael Kerzner has been a very vocal voice in the Jewish community at a time when our community has felt increasingly isolated. He has been speaking up for issues that are important to us. Donations are a form of political speech, as is voting, as is volunteering. I am proud that we have been able to support him in this way and the work

that he has done to tell the world that we are Jewish, we are proud Canadians, and we want to live in this country and be a part of the fabric.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I appreciate that strong sense of support. Certainly, as someone who has worked in the interfaith world for a long time, I understand that piece. I was really more looking at how that then affects that strong, passionate attachment to that partisanship. But I can leave it there for now.

I noticed that you're the vice-president of Almada. You've spoken about that. That's a private equity firm. It's essentially your family's investment firm, correct?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: No, we take on external investors.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: So it starts as your family's firm, but you have external investors as well?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: We are 50%—we have got passive investments otherwise, but this is an outward-facing company.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: You're also listed as chief operating officer at the Ossip Group of Companies.

You're a principal at OS Fund, which is another family investment vehicle, correct?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Yes.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: And then you've served on the board, you were saying, of Environmental 360 Solutions, which was founded by that family investment firm—

Ms. Hayley Ossip: By Almada, yes.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: By Almada and by Donato Ardellini, who is, coincidentally, another Tory donor and friend.

Your family has this major financial investment in Environmental 360. You're there, I'm guessing, to keep an eye on the family money, on the investment there and the investment of the others. I'm just curious if you've had a job that wasn't part of this family enterprise. I didn't see anything on the record. I'm just trying to get a picture of the full gifts right now that you bring right now to Trillium.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I started my career in law, where I practiced at Gilbert's LLP. And then I was in IP litigation.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Part of why I'm asking, just to help you and help the committee understand where I'm looking for fitness, is that in this appointment you're going to be engaged with non-profit, charitable sectors, focusing on the needs of individuals with far less than members of the family you're serving and part of. I'm just trying to find some evidence in your career that you've got some prior experience with this sector. I don't see it in your volunteering. Am I missing something?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Yes. First of all, let me just say I have had an amazing opportunity to learn from one of the best in talking to people. Part of growing businesses is you have to talk to people from all different backgrounds and all different walks of life. That is one of the things that I am very proud of. I've worked with Marty Goldfarb for years, who was Pierre Elliott Trudeau's pollster, and he has taught me a lot about—if you talk to people, you learn about their interests, you learn about what they want, and that has always been a core thing in how we grow businesses.

Also, human compassion is something that—it sounds stupid to say, but I pride myself on being able to listen to people, understanding their circumstances and empathizing.

I'm very aware that I grew up in fortunate circumstances. My family immigrated to this country, and I'm very proud of the impact they've made—I'm reminded every day, because my family emigrated from South Africa, where they were not comfortable with the moral situation in the country. They wanted to get out of there so their kids would not be called up to fight for something they didn't believe in. And from there, they've made a really great life for themselves in Canada, and they're able to provide it for me. As the child of those immigrants, I'm reminded of that every day.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: You understand, I only have the documents I have, so part of our work here is to ask those questions.

You're saying that you've had conversations with individuals and that that leads you to feel ready to take on this role.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Yes.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to just switch a little bit to a piece around conflict of interest that I want to lift up and see what your thoughts are. Through your family and the investment vehicles, my understanding is that there are extensive real estate interests. I'm wondering if there are any rental properties in that. Would that be fair to say?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Mostly in America.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Okay—mostly in America, but there might be some here.

What I'm wondering, for example, is if you've considered the burden that you're going to have to bear in order to ensure that you aren't acting in a conflict of interest, because it's a complicated situation. I'm sure you're thinking about the conflict, and it would probably be vanishingly rare; most of the properties are in America. But the administrative burden that you're going to have to shoulder is potentially fairly massive.

I want to give an example. Under the Ontario Trillium Foundation's rules for capital grants, an applicant for a capital grant has to provide proof of ownership or a five-year lease. If that applicant operates out of a property owned by one of your companies—for example, a partner like Starlight or True North Commercial REIT—there may be a conflict of interest perceived, and you would need to recuse yourself. That would mean that every time you face an application, you are going to have to cross-reference with the location against your family's entire property registry—dozens or something of corporate entities. And I just want to make sure this is a burden you're prepared to comply with, should you take on this role.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I would just like to correct the record a little bit.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Please.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Any shares that we might have in Starlight would be public company shares that we have no control over. I believe my dad is a director on one of the related REITs, but that is in his individual capacity, and I've had nothing to do with that.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: This is a great example of what I mean—

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I'm trained in—

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Sorry—I just want to pause because I have three more minutes.

This is the kind of example I'm thinking about. This is not something that you could hand off to an aide, because that would breach duty of confidentiality—so I'm looking that we have your commitment from this committee that you will uphold the standards and do those conflict of interest—

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Of course. I wouldn't be here if I didn't feel comfortable doing that.

MPP Alexa Gilmour: Thank you. That's all I needed to hear. I appreciate that.

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

MPP Alexa Gilmour: I want to pause there. I really do appreciate that the service you're wanting to provide does you credit. At the same time, we're looking at a situation where the Ontario Trillium Foundation is a charitable sector that has our taxpayers' dollars going into it—it seems to me a potential conflict of interest around the vast number of places that your organization is in.

0940

I'm a little bit hesitant at this point. I think you're going to have a challenge on your hands should you go ahead with this position. I hope that you will rise to meet that challenge.

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

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you, Ms. Ossip, for being here today and wanting to put yourself forward for this kind of position, which is really important.

We celebrate the Ontario Trillium Foundation grants in our communities over and over again. We understand the need, and we understand how important it is, how the decisions are made.

I think what my colleague is getting at is, because the Ontario Trillium Foundation distributes public money to organizations right across the province, we just want to understand and see that you can ensure that grant decisions are made entirely on merit and community need rather than on any political relationships, affiliations or any priorities of the government of the day.

Can you explain to us how you feel that, given the background—and again, there's nothing wrong with where you decide to give—you can be sure that you're able to either recuse yourself from certain decisions or maintain that impartiality?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: First off, let me say I'm a resident of St. Paul's. This is a strange way to meet your member of Parliament. It's nice to meet you.

I think my training has taught me a lot about that. I'm trained as a lawyer. I've taken certificates in corporate governance. I'm very aware of the need to be impartial. I don't think my ideas about free speech, small government, any of that, has any role in the compassion that is needed to take part in the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: We know of your vast experience in private equity and investment management. How would you approach evaluating smaller grassroots organizations that might not have the same kind of financial expertise, administrative capacity or resources that you see with larger, established organizations?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: This is something that I've thought about. It's something where I'm excited to learn from the board.

Obviously, there are a lot of resources open to people applying for grants. There are a lot of differences between organizations that operate in Toronto, where there's a lot more private sector funding available to charities, than there is in rural and small municipalities. I would love to see how they stack up on who gets awarded grants and who doesn't.

I personally would have a bit more tolerance for risk, giving funding to a small grassroots organization with an amazing project that serves an important community, an underserved community. I would love to see what they're already doing, and to see what work needs to be done.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: How would you identify and, say, manage situations where the commercial interests of organizations that you've held senior positions at, like Almada or the Ossip Group of Companies—those organizations could, say, overlap with applications or funding decisions that come before the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I find that a little remote.

Dymon is an amazing organization that I work closely with. I serve on the board. They love any charity in their neighbourhood. They want to help out.

But if there's any sign of any potential conflict, I would recuse myself.

In that vein, I've already looked up what organizations fall both under the UJA umbrella and also have received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I'm willing to do the work. I'm willing to do everything I can to maintain the integrity of the organization and the integrity of my own standing.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You mentioned in your remarks off the top that you really want to strengthen the OTF's effectiveness. What did you mean by that, and how do you see yourself being able to do that?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: With finite resources and so many amazing causes out there, I work with companies to make them more efficient and to make sure that money is going to the most important projects; I would love to see the same with the OTF and to have a role in the oversight of that.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You also mentioned that you think your millennial voice and your valid experience on the board will help. Explain about your voice—the millennial voice—and how you think it can help.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: At times, there are a lot of youth projects around. I'm getting a little old to be under the youth umbrella now, which is strange to me.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: It happens very fast.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Yes. But with the UJA, I see that there are certain initiatives that they think are doing great marketing to attract younger people to programs, younger

people to act as donors. Sometimes there is a mismatch, and sometimes that isn't how we see things.

Just generally, in good, open dialogue in the public square, you need a variety of opinions, backgrounds and voices, and I would provide that.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: How much research have you been able to do on Ontario Trillium fund recipients? Are there any organizations that you see that you're keeping a closer eye on, or anything that speaks to you? And how much familiarity are you getting with the process before you start in this position, presumably?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: I've done a lot of reading. I've met with some people on the committee. And I'm passionate about doing anything for children, frankly. I know it sounds a little trite, but when I was approached for this, my son was around three months old, and I was holding him, going a little crazy in that newborn bubble, trying to remember the person that I am outside of that world.

All the organizations that help kids, especially those that don't have the same opportunities as my kids—that's what I'm passionate about these days, and I look forward to being exposed to anything that I can do to help them.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You mentioned being approached about this position. How did you find out about the opportunity?

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Dani Peters, who serves as the vice-chair of the Ontario Arts Council, reached out to me. I had spoken to her in the past about some municipal volunteering, and she thought of me for this.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much, Hayley, for your time today and for sharing your background and experiences with us. You're welcome to stay in the room—we will be interviewing another intended appointee—and see first-hand the outcome, or you can go about your merry way on this July day and find out later.

Ms. Hayley Ossip: Thank you so much for your consideration and for your time. I'll hear from you soon.

MS. MAEVE BIGGAR

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and third party: Maeve Biggar, intended appointee as vice-chair, Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Next up is Maeve Biggar. Maeve is nominated as vice-chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

You just got to see a dress rehearsal of how it goes. You have all the time in the world to share your background with us, and everyone has 10 minutes to question you, minus the deduction of your time. Thank you for putting your name forward and agreeing to serve.

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Good morning, everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. My name is Maeve Biggar. I live in Toronto with my husband and my two children.

I hold a Juris Doctor from the University of Toronto faculty of law and a bachelor of arts degree, honours, from McGill University. I was called to the bar in Ontario in 2015.

I have practised exclusively in the field of labour and employment law throughout my legal career. I was drawn to labour law because it's a complex area of practice that has a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of working Ontarians.

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I completed my articles at a firm called CaleyWray Lawyers. It's a boutique labour law firm that represents union clients. I remained at this firm for approximately nine years, serving first as an associate and later as a partner. During that time, I represented a wide range of union clients across various sectors, including health care, construction, telecommunications, transportation, hospitality, the public sector and others.

I have extensive advocacy experience before a variety of tribunals and adjudicative bodies, including, of course, the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal, and labour arbitrators. Through this work, I developed a strong understanding of the legislative regime for labour relations matters in Ontario, as well as the practical realities that face both employees and employers.

In 2025, I transitioned from private practice to an in-house counsel role at the Ontario Nurses' Association. I chose to join ONA because of my extensive experience in the health care sector and my interest in the labour relations issues that affect health care workers. At ONA, I developed highly productive professional relationships with my colleagues as well as the health care employers with whom I routinely worked.

While my practice has primarily involved representing unions, I developed a strong appreciation for the employer perspective. Throughout my career, I have worked closely with employers and their counsel to resolve complex workplace disputes. I've built a reputation in the labour community as a practical and solutions-oriented lawyer who approaches disputes with fairness and professionalism. I'm skilled at identifying common ground, facilitating constructive dialogue and helping parties achieve pragmatic resolutions. I'm confident that these skills will serve me well as a vice-chair, if appointed.

The role of the vice-chair requires many qualities beyond subject matter expertise, including sound judgment, impartiality and a commitment to a fair and efficient dispute resolution process. These are qualities that I've sought to demonstrate throughout my career and will continue to uphold as an adjudicator.

Labour law is both my area of expertise and my passion. I would consider it a great privilege to serve the public as a vice-chair at the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for sharing that with us, Maeve.

Over to the government side: MPP Dowie.

And I would remind everyone that we have a hard stop at 10:15, so you might want to tighten up your questions—six minutes, 36 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Chair, the government side will not be asking questions this round.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm not sure I can tighten up my questions since this is the only time I get to speak up here.

I'm not surprised that my colleagues on the Conservative side have no questions for you. I'll leave it at that.

Have you ever donated to a political party?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: No.

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

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Not in Canada. I am a dual US-Canadian citizen, and I am a registered Democrat in the United States—but not in Canada.

MPP Wayne Gates: Did you get to vote in the election?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: I can vote, yes, with an absentee ballot.

MPP Wayne Gates: Good. It was a fascinating night down there.

Ms. Maeve Biggar: It sure was.

MPP Wayne Gates: It's amazing what people do when they can work across party lines and do what's in the best interest of residents and families and communities. I think we're all celebrating the decisions made down in the States—particularly this country.

You've worked, really, for unions in your legal career, representing workers in labour relations matters. What has your experience taught you about the challenges that workers face when attempting to exercise their rights under collective agreements?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Well, I would say that the labour board does an excellent job of protecting workers' rights under the act. There is a robust system for the ability of unions to file unfair labour practice complaints if they feel that there have been any breaches of the legislation. The labour board takes those matters very seriously.

So I would say, on the whole, I think that the system appropriately protects the rights of workers, and I'm proud of the work that I've done in upholding those rights and ensuring they are respected and protected.

MPP Wayne Gates: I had a question—something about the Ontario Nurses' Association. As we know, we have some challenges there. You don't have to answer this, but I think I'll throw it out, and hopefully you will. How do you feel that nurses are being treated today—how they're feeling on the job? And what would be some of your suggestions to get more people into nursing and make sure they're treated with respect and dignity, not only in the collective agreement process, but every day at work? What they do at our hospitals is amazing. I can't say enough about our nurses. How can we as a government—I'm not government, but how can we, as legislators, try to make nurses understand how important they are to us, our parents and grandparents?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: I would say that in my experience working with nurses, it's an incredibly demanding job, and it requires great skill and dedication, focus and sound judgment. Those demands can be exacerbated by the particular situation at their health care employers, if there are issues with staffing or things of that nature.

I think ONA does a robust job of advocating on behalf of their members for the positions that they feel are important. They do a lot of the advocacy work. That's not something that I did at ONA. The legal team is separate from that arm of the union, so I certainly don't purport to speak on behalf of ONA with respect to the goals they have tried to achieve in the realm of public policy.

It's really not my place to make any particular recommendations to the government. I'm not an elected official to the Legislature. But I will say that I have a tremendous amount of respect for health care workers and how hard they work—

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm not sure they're getting treated with the respect and dignity they currently deserve and have earned, by the way, and it's my way of saying thank you—because, as a lawyer, you obviously talk a lot to nurses, you've talked to a lot of people, and I just wanted to let everybody know how I appreciate everything they do every day under very, very tough circumstances. That was really what the question was about, and I took that opportunity to use the question to say that.

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Fair enough.

MPP Wayne Gates: As you know, in some cases, certification of unions can be delayed and some employers will attempt to impede the right of workers to organize.

How can the board make sure that its certification processes are timely and the rights of workers are not undermined by unnecessary delays?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: In my experience with the board, certification applications are treated as applications that must be dealt with expeditiously. Any attempt at delay tactics for illegitimate reasons are appropriately addressed by the vice-chairs.

As a vice-chair at the board, as I hope to be, I intend to use proactive case management strategies to ensure that the parties are upholding their obligations and also so that the matter can be heard in a timely fashion. It's very important that those types of applications don't drag on for years. Also, on the part of the vice-chairs, it's important that we're issuing our decisions in a timely fashion. There's no specific time frame for issuing a decision as a labour board vice-chair, but I have the reputation of being an efficient lawyer, and I plan to bring my efficiency to the board as well.

MPP Wayne Gates: Just a question, off the cuff, around some of the things I've been hearing over the past couple of days—have you ever been to Niagara Falls?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: Did you enjoy it? Do you find it beautiful? Did you enjoy the wine, the falls itself, the beauty of the parks—

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Yes.

MPP Wayne Gates: There were some negative comments about Niagara Falls yesterday, and it has pissed me off, quite frankly. It's one of the most beautiful places in the world, a place where 13 million people come and visit every year, and having comments made that it's not—

maybe I'm just partial to Niagara Falls because I represent them. But hearing from somebody who has been to Niagara Falls and is agreeing that it's a wonderful place and you enjoyed your time—it's really good to hear, so thank you for saying that.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes, I'll move on. I'm good.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Sorry. As much as we all love Niagara Falls, we're talking about the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

MPP Wayne Gates: I get it. I appreciate it. Thanks, Chair. You're absolutely right. I just threw it out there.

Interjection.

MPP Wayne Gates: It's all good. Thank you.

I want to ask a question about construction workers. There were 684 construction industry grievance referrals in the 2024-25 OLRB annual report. What challenges do you see in enforcing collective agreement protections in industries where workers may move between contractors, employers and job sites?

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Ms. Maeve Biggar: I do have experience working on construction industry matters specifically. It's a unique legislative regime under the Labour Relations Act that is designed to reflect the unique nature of the construction industries, where work is done on a project basis. There's a fluctuating workforce—you might have multiple employers on one job site—and the standard labour relations regime under the Labour Relations Act doesn't really apply very well to that. I think the legislation itself is designed to address those challenges.

Section 133 referrals of grievances where the collective agreement is not being followed are dealt with, actually, quite expeditiously at the board. It's often a one-day hearing where you may only have the union show up and not the employer. So I think the board does its best to have those matters addressed quickly.

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate that.

Could switching to card-check certification help end unfair obstruction of the organizing process?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: I can't say that my personal views in terms of the appropriate procedure for certifying unions are relevant to being a vice-chair, where we take the law as we find it. I've worked with card-based certifications in the construction industry and also vote-based certifications in the non-construction industry. They have their pros and cons. It's ultimately up to the Legislature to decide what is the appropriate procedure, though.

I will say that I think a positive development with the board has been to have electronic votes. I think that it helps workers feel that their anonymity in voting will be fully respected.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: I'll get to this question quickly. I just want to say to the Chair, thank you for saying Niagara Falls is such a wonderful place.

As an adjudicator, how would you identify the difference between legitimate disagreements between two parties or bad-faith bargaining? Are there any factors in particular that you could share with this committee?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: The board has a robust area of jurisprudence on bad-faith bargaining, and it's all very fact-specific. I can't tell you that there are any general principles that apply in all circumstances; it's very much an assessment of the particular facts of that dispute.

MPP Wayne Gates: I just want to thank you for being here. I'll pass it on because I know we're at a time limit and we want to make sure we get the vote.

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

MPP Smyth, over to the third party.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you for being here today, Ms. Biggar.

Have you been to St. Paul's? Just kidding; we don't have a Ferris wheel.

This is a full-time position, so will you be leaving practice?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: Yes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You've had about 10 years as a partner at CaleyWray Lawyers, and your practice focused on—correct me if I'm wrong—representing trade unions in grievance arbitrations and proceedings before labour relations boards and tribunals. How do you believe that the experience you've had prepares you now to sit on the other side of those proceedings, as vice-chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: In all the legal disputes I have dealt with in my former life as an advocate, I'd go through the exercise of putting myself in the shoes of the adjudicator, to say, "How would I consider both sides of this dispute? What facts might I find compelling? What issues would I zero in on and really focus on?" That's an exercise that I've always enjoyed. It's probably my favourite part of preparing cases, so I don't think it's a far leap to do it as a vice-chair at the labour board.

In terms of my experience, I have strong dispute resolution skills. I've mediated many resolutions, which is an important skill set for a vice-chair. I'm a very efficient litigator, and I can bring the tricks and tips that I've learned as a litigator to the board to ensure that proceedings are heard and addressed in a timely fashion.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: You've taught labour law at U of T and also coached its National Labour Arbitration Competition team.

How has your academic and teaching experience shaped your understanding of the importance of impartiality and procedural fairness in adjudication?

Ms. Maeve Biggar: The work that I did as an adjunct lecturer at U of T law was to coach a team for a labour law competition where they actually have to argue both sides of the dispute on the same day, so they don't just get to be on one position. It's a wonderful exercise in teaching students how to do that role of—you need to look at the case from all angles, and you need to vigorously put forward your position on both sides, which is quite a

challenge. But from that coaching perspective, it was almost as if we were the adjudicator—to help them understand what an adjudicator might consider compelling, interesting and persuasive.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thanks very much for coming before us.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you so much for being super efficient, MPP Smyth.

Thank you very much, Maeve. That was fantastic. You can remain in the room or escape as soon as you can and find out later; it's up to you.

We will now consider the concurrence of the two intended appointees. First is the appointment of Hayley Jenna Ossip. Can I have a motion, please? MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Chair, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Hayley Jenna Ossip, nominated as member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation board of directors.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Could we please have a recorded vote, Chair?

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

Ayes

Anand, Bresee, Dowie, Lahey, Pierre, Sabawy, David Smith.

Nays

Gates, Gilmour, Smyth.

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

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

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Chair, I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Maeve Biggar, nominated as vice-chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

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

MPP Wayne Gates: Recorded vote, please, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): A recorded vote has been requested by MPP Gates from Niagara. Are the members ready to vote?

Ayes

Anand, Bresee, Dowie, Gates, Gilmour, Lahey, Pierre, Sabawy, David Smith, Smyth.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Unanimous. Fantastic.

MPP Wayne Gates: Say that word again. What was it?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Unanimous. Kumbaya.

Congratulations to Hayley and Maeve.

The last item of business is extending one certificate. The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the October 9, 2026, certificate is set to expire on November 8, 2026. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I am hearing a no.

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

The committee adjourned at 1009.

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