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

Tuesday 15 May 2012

## **Journal des débats (Hansard)**

Mardi 15 mai 2012

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

Chair: Bill Mauro  
Clerk: Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

## COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 15 May 2012

Mardi 15 mai 2012

*The committee met at 0905 in committee room 1.*

### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Good morning, everybody. Thank you for being here this morning in government agencies. I apologize for being a couple of minutes late.

The first issue this morning is to deal with the subcommittee report, May 10, 2012. Do have a motion? Mr. McDonell?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I move that the subcommittee report be tabled.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Okay. Any comments or discussion? All in favour? Carried. Thank you very much.

### INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

#### MS. JENNIFER FISHER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Jennifer Fisher, intended appointee as member, St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** The next item this morning is our first intended appointee: Ms. Jennifer Fisher, nominated as a member of the St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. Is Ms. Fisher here?

You may begin, Ms. Fisher, with a brief statement, if you wish. Any time used for your statement will be deducted from the government's time for questions. Each party will then have 10 minutes to ask you questions. Questioning will start with the government.

We'll open the floor and ask you to make your presentation now. Thank you very much for being here.

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

It's my pleasure to be in attendance today to discuss with you my order-in-council appointment to the board of governors of St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology. I'm in my third year of a three-year term as a board appointee on the board. I would like to expand on my experience to serve the best interests of the

public in a continuing role as a member of the board of governors of St. Lawrence College.

I am a public accountant with over 30 years of experience, and I'm currently a partner in a regional accounting firm in Kingston. In my practice, my client base includes a large number of not-for-profit clients. On my professional side, I've gained experience with the concerns and issues that are faced by the public and not-for-profit sectors. Financial, operational and HR matters are areas where I provide advice and support to my clients on a regular basis.

In 1997, I was awarded an FCA designation by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario in recognition of my contribution to the profession and the community. As you would see in my resumé, I have had a wide range of volunteer experience over a considerable number of years. My past volunteer roles have included being a member of the board of directors of the Kingston General Hospital Foundation, vice-president of the Public Accountants Council of Ontario, chair of the professional conduct committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, and treasurer of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce.

I am currently the chair of the finance and resources committee of the University Hospitals Kingston Foundation, which raises funds for the three hospitals in Kingston, and I'm also on the board of directors of the Providence Care Foundation, Kingston.

I'm currently the chair of the audit committee of St. Lawrence College, and for the past three years have been a member of both the finance and administration committee and the audit committee.

During the past three years, I have developed a knowledge of the college and strategic goals and seen the success of many programs and initiatives undertaken by the college.

Prior to my appointment on the board, I taught continuing education tax courses to students at the college. This has provided me with an opportunity to work with students on improving their knowledge and skill levels. It was also an opportunity for me to work with support staff, who provide administration support to students.

The college has just started the process to hire a new president and CEO. I believe that my experience with previous recruitment for both my professional practice

and in certain of my volunteer roles will be of assistance in the hiring process for the new president and CEO.

In summary, I believe that I've demonstrated commitment to the St. Lawrence College board of governors over the past three years and my professional skills would be an asset to the best interests of the public should I be appointed to the St. Lawrence board of governors.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Okay, thank you, Ms. Fisher. We'll go to the government side first, if there are any questions. You have about six minutes left.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Thank you very much for coming in, Ms. Fisher. Certainly, your three years of experience already on the board has given you, I'm sure, a number of insights into the workings of St. Lawrence College in particular. Could you just outline for us some of the challenges and also the opportunities that you see, perhaps generalizing from your experience at St. Lawrence College for colleges in Ontario as a whole?

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Certainly. One of the big challenges for colleges going forward, in my opinion, is trying to match the skill sets that are required by employers and industries out there and matching those with the needs of the students and trying to provide the students with the learning opportunities that best match their abilities to learn. That's one of the challenges, but it's also an opportunity.

0910

Another key opportunity that I see for the colleges right now is the training for second career opportunities for individuals—again, trying to match that skill set, that training base, with the needs of the public.

A big challenge, of course, is financial constraint, fiscal constraint. We have centrally bargained payrolls; against that, we have restrictions as to the funding sources for students with tuition fees and how the colleges can manage that.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** That's wonderful. We really have no further questions, given your experience and qualifications. I think you're ideally suited to the role.

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Any others? Thank you.

Official opposition? Mr. McDonell?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Thank you for coming out today. Being from eastern Ontario, I've had a little bit of experience with all three branches, one way or another. Particularly, I'd say, in Cornwall and Brockville, one of their issues is, for young people coming up, access to degree programs. I know in Cornwall they've got a few of those. Do you see the way of making more of these degree courses available to areas that are a little further away from universities as something that can be grown through your experience at the college?

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Absolutely. The opportunity for students to move from taking their community college courses and having them applied to various university programs, degree programs, is a great opportunity for students. But being in eastern Ontario, the limited

number of universities that the students can attend—being able to take those courses at community colleges provides them with an easier access to a degree program.

St. Lawrence College now offers two different degree programs and is actively working with different universities on expanding that base. But this, in my opinion, is another way of providing students with a wide range of opportunities to expand on their academic levels and skill levels by having opportunities to work through the college programs to get their degrees.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Just a follow-up: I know that they have a number—they have, I think, nursing out of Cornwall, and they're affiliated with another school. They also have quite a few in Kingston, but, of course, Kingston has the capability of Queen's being there. So it's not as important as, say, in Cornwall and Brockville, that don't have access to a university nearby. But, of course, St. Lawrence being in Kingston as well, hopefully there would be some room to affiliate with Queen's or one of the other universities. I think you do it with either Thunder Bay or—

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Laurentian is the university.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** —Laurentian now to allow those programs to take place.

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** That's the intention. The other unique thing that we have with St. Lawrence College is that professors are able to teach on different campuses, so they're able to provide the same opportunities for degree programs at all three of the campuses. So it may be that a professor is teaching at, say, Kingston normally but is able to teach a course in Cornwall or Brockville and give those students that chance to be educated in that particular stream.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Okay.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Mr. Arnott.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** Those are good points, and I certainly want to express our appreciation for your interest in serving the people of Ontario through this important board.

The fact is, I have heard through the years from community college administrators that there need to be greater steps to encourage the opportunities for transferability of credits. I think that the provincial government needs to take some leadership on this, because isn't it true that some of the universities have been a bit resistant? There needs to be greater leadership, I think, on the part of the province to encourage the universities to accept this as an opportunity.

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** I think that the different administrations at the college level and the university levels are certainly in closer conversations. For example, in Kingston, the principal at Queen's University and the president at St. Lawrence College have had some very in-depth conversations and discussions, and it looks very promising that there will be some opportunities for a degree-program alliance between Queen's University and St. Lawrence College, which will be very appropriate, given the proximity. So at least St. Lawrence has ex-

perienced some great progress towards achieving that combination.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** The most recent Statistics Canada report showed that Ontario still has a very high—unacceptably high—rate of unemployment. The fact is, we, as a provincial Legislature, have to respond to that. We've called upon the government to bring forward a jobs plan. It's also true that there's a significant number of jobs that go unfilled because businesses tell us they can't find skilled people. To what extent is your college addressing that issue, and how are we working towards finding a way to better anticipate future job needs so that we can ensure that our young people are trained for those jobs in the future?

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** St. Lawrence College has a system of community councils that allows the general public and the industry leaders in the area to meet with the administration, so that has been a great addition. One of the other points that we've had is, we've had some recent programs that have been developed and have very successfully enrolled members, so I think we've made some good progress, at least at St. Lawrence, in that regard.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** The third party.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Good morning, Ms. Fisher. Thank you so much for appearing before us today. I represent a riding in southwestern Ontario—Essex—just outside of Windsor, and we're fortunate enough to have St. Clair College as our main college campus. You had indicated in your opening remarks about some of the challenges that you may be facing. I'll give you just a little bit of background. I used to work for the labourers' union, where we partnered with St. Clair College in the apprenticeship program, specifically the pre-apprenticeship program. It was quite successful. That partnership between labour and our colleges facilitated new entries into the construction sector to accumulate some credits at the college level as sort of an entry into the profession.

Are there any partnerships like that that are on the horizon, perhaps enhancing some current partnerships within the community or any emerging industries that the college may be focusing on?

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** We have solar. Kingston is unique because we are quite close to—part of our geographical area is Wolfe Island and the wind tunnels and windmills that are there. That has been one of the programs that a course was specifically developed for to accommodate those students who wanted their skill level improved so that they could be working in that industry. That's one of the partnerships that was developed.

Certainly the labour council is very involved with administration on developing needs for their labour groups, so I think we have—I'm trying to think of some of the others. We've had some interesting partnerships with the Irish Institute, so we've had some international affiliations as well—so using those opportunities to develop some ways of learning for our students.

Some of the other partnerships with labour, though, have been—I'm trying to think of some of the others. Obviously in Kingston we have a very large penal institution, so there have been a number of police foundation and correctional services-type training that has been expanded at the college.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Thank you.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Good morning, and thank you again for being here. I was just quickly wondering if your previous experiences would lead you to bring other options to the board and what you'd like to see come forward in new options, because we do have a huge job shortage. So what kind of other things would you implement to help that?

**Ms. Jennifer Fisher:** Certainly the connection with Queen's University and the opportunity to have professors from Queen's University and professors from St. Lawrence College working together on developing new programs. I'm not sure if I can offer anything more. I'm thinking more around just being very aware of what the community council ideas are that are coming forward, because those community councils are in all of the campuses, and they allow the administrators to hear direct feedback from industry leaders as to what's needed—so the enhancement of that.

**0920**

Centres of excellence is a key area for the college, wanting to determine which areas we can put St. Lawrence College on the map as far as being a leader. The St. Lawrence College KPIs have exceeded the province's standards—the province-wide averages. So we are also able to use that information to determine from employers and students and alumni what areas would want to be improved on—so using that data to bring forward new program ideas.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Thank you very much, Ms. Fisher.

MRS. ELIZABETH WITMER

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Elizabeth Witmer, intended appointee as chair, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Your second intended appointee this morning is Elizabeth Witmer, nominated as chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Ms. Witmer, could you come forward, please? Good morning. Just to let everybody know in the audience, as well as committee, that the bells are ringing: I think we'll go maybe to about the five-minute mark, which will give us—I think that says 20 minutes on there. So we've got 13 or 14 minutes before we'll recess, assuming we're not done, to go in for the vote and come back and clean this up.

So, good morning, Ms. Witmer. Welcome. Thank you for being here this morning. I'm sure you're aware of the process. You'll have 10 minutes. Any time you use will be deducted from the government's time. Thank you for

being here, and then we'll go through to our questioning. So, good morning, and you're welcome to begin.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and certainly members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I will make an opening statement, and after that obviously I would welcome your questions.

First of all, I want to say how honoured I am to have been nominated to be the chair of the WSIB. I do look forward very much to ushering in a new era for the WSIB that would provide fair funding and stability for injured workers and also have a positive impact on their lives and the lives of their families, as well as providing stability for the employers.

I see it as a period of time where there will be extensive consultation, collaboration and transparency with all stakeholders as we move forward to deliver on the recommendations of the Arthurs report.

Why do I think that I am qualified to lead this organization? Well, I would reach back as far as my roots. I'm proud to say I'm the daughter of immigrants who came to this country when I was four years old, and I can tell you that my mother and father have worked hard. First, they laboured in the sugar beet fields of Alberta. My father worked in construction, in a dairy and as a custodian, and I believe that gives me insight into certainly many of the stakeholders with whom the WSIB interacts.

I also believe that I have the skills, attributes, experience and expertise to assume this position based on past work experiences that I have had.

I began life after graduation as a secondary school teacher first and then as a trustee and chair of the Waterloo regional school board, then Minister of Labour, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Minister of the Environment, Education and Deputy Premier.

I believe that all of these experiences, as well as the challenges that I faced in those different positions and was able to overcome with the assistance and in collaboration with others, will assist me in the task ahead at the WSIB.

As chair of the school board, I was involved in negotiations with all the employee groups, such as teachers, custodians and secretaries, and I can tell you that we always arrived at mutually agreeable settlements after very amiable and respectful discussions and deliberations.

I was proud to establish school advisory committees at each school in order that the views of parents could be considered in decision-making. When full funding was introduced for Catholic schools, I initiated the establishment of a committee between the public and Catholic boards to facilitate the rollout and ensure that the concerns and challenges of the day could quickly be addressed and resolved and not impact on students and the learning environment.

In 1990, I was honoured to be elected MPP for Waterloo North. I replaced the Liberal MPP, Herb Epp, who had done a great job, and many people at that time indicated that their support for me was based on my track

record as a trustee and chair and on the non-partisan and collaborative approach I took to getting the job done. I'm going to take that same approach as chair of the WSIB. I plan to work in collaboration with others, and I plan to consult widely, and I plan to make sure that all that I do is transparent to the public.

After being the trustee and moving into the MP role, I became the Minister of Labour. I would tell you my focus, first and foremost, was always on safety. I was impacted very strongly by a visit from Paul Kells and his family early on in my tenure, who told me about their son, who, during his summer job and first few days in the workplace, unfortunately died after an accident. It became apparent, as the Minister of Labour, that we needed to promote workplace safety for students in the workplace and we needed to give them the confidence that they could refuse unsafe work. So, much of my time as Minister of Labour was focused on workplace safety, encouraging young people to understand their rights, and their right was, they could refuse unsafe work. Perhaps if Paul Kells's son had been able to do that, he would be with us today. But I will tell you, that visit had a strong impact.

I am passionate about safety and a healthy workplace, and that continues to this day. That is certainly the reason why I considered this position. I would continue, if approved today, to put that focus on safety and a healthy workplace and prevention of accidents, and also educating and raising the awareness of workers—all workers, of all ages. And there is much, much more to do.

As Minister of Health, I was proud to build bridges with stakeholders, to strengthen our health system and improve access to it. We initiated family health teams; cancer, cardiac and more MRIs close to home; the first universal flu vaccine; and the list goes on.

I would say to you, I've never felt that I was able to accomplish anything in this life without the support and the collaboration of others. You don't do anything alone, and it does require a lot of consultation.

As Minister of the Environment, I recognized the impact of the coal plants on human health, and working again with my staff and others, we introduced a plan that enabled Lakeview to be closed. All of the others would be, too, if the plan had been followed, by 2014, and I'm proud that we closed Lakeview.

As Minister of Education, my job was to rebuild the bridges with teachers in order to restore harmony, and I tried to do so. I also developed programs to support students at risk, early literacy and numeracy. My goal was always to help those students achieve success and self-confidence and be the best that they could be.

More recently, as education critic and health critic, and in response to the pleas of students, parents and teachers, I undertook research and consultation for almost three years to develop a policy to raise the awareness of bullying and hopefully prevent it. That was found in Bill 14, which I now know has been, obviously, renamed and is in committee at the present time.

I would just conclude by saying I believe that my life experience, who I am, the values of my parents, my experience leading different ministries and the school board, my experience working with a very diverse range of stakeholders from all walks of life and backgrounds, and also working across different levels of government do, I think, put me in a unique position of chairing the WSIB.

I also believe that my general knowledge and understanding of the WSIB will assist me in that commitment. As well, I am committed to ensuring the development of appropriate procedures and policies to ensure accountability, strong governance and transparency for the public.

I would end by simply saying I would very much look forward to the opportunity to chair the WSIB. I have always had a strong passion for public service. I was a teacher first. Then I served as a school board trustee and MPP. Now, after 32 years of public service, I would like to be able to continue that in the role as chair of the WSIB. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Thank you, Ms. Witmer. That has pretty much used up all of the government's time, so we'd be beginning—we're under 10 minutes—with the official opposition. But I think we should break now, recess, come back and begin with the official opposition. For the audience, we will recess now for the vote, and we will be back immediately once the vote has concluded. Thank you.

*The committee recessed from 0931 to 0947.*

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Okay, thank you, everybody. Welcome back to government agencies. As mentioned, Ms. Witmer used up most of the 10 minutes, so the government will not have any time for questioning. We will now begin questioning with the official opposition and Mr. McDonell.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** It's great to see you back, Elizabeth. I'm going to say that, as one of the new members here, I really appreciated what you brought to our organization, the help you provided us and the stability you provided to the whole caucus as well and the advice you were able to give us.

I know that you've probably been receiving briefings on the WSIB. Is there a proposed direction that you would like to see or any changes you think are waiting to be had?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. McDonell, for the kind statement and also for your question.

I really do think that at the current time, the WSIB is undergoing a transformation. It is certainly becoming a more modern board. I think it's endeavouring to do everything that it can, with the leadership of the past chair, the new president and those who are employed there, and certainly with the support of the government, to ensure that it provides fair funding to the injured workers. Also, when injured workers sustain their injury, they're endeavouring to get them back to work as quickly as possible and to reintegrate them into their workplace,

provide them with the support that is necessary. So I see this happening much more efficiently and effectively moving forward into the future.

At the same time, they are endeavouring to provide more in the way of technology and support to injured workers and the employers and to put the entire organization on a more sustainable basis. That's necessary if we're going to be providing the injured workers and their families with the support they need.

I think much of the next five years is going to be influenced by the Arthurs report, and at this point in time, that's a very exciting future. I think, certainly, Arthurs has done extensive consultation and collaboration. There has been a lot of transparency. He has reported back to the stakeholders every step of the way. I would hope that as we take a look at his report and his recommendations that, under my leadership, that would continue, that we would keep in close touch and consultation and collaboration and provide that ongoing transparency as we look to chart the new direction for the WSIB—always keeping in mind what it was intended to do, and that was to provide compensation to the injured workers in a no-fault workplace.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Ms. Thompson.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** Thank you for being here today, Elizabeth. I certainly appreciated the experience that you outlined in your opening comments. Without a doubt, your years of experience have left a positive impression on all who have dealt with you.

Reflecting on your years of being an MPP within the PC Party of Ontario, you've left a great mark on Kitchener-Waterloo, from the Grand River Hospital to the research and technology centre affiliated with the University of Waterloo. You've had many achievements.

I was wondering today if you could remark on some of your proudest achievements in terms of what you delivered for KW and how those experiences will shape and impact your responsibilities as chair of the WSIB.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, I guess as an MPP—I was proud to serve for 22 years. I've always had a motto. My motto is that each day I hope that I can improve the life of another person, somehow, in how I conduct myself and in how I approach the problem that I'm presented with. I would say to you that although there is a lot that obviously is public, some of my happiest moments as an MPP were actually spent helping other people quietly behind the scenes in my constituency office. My focus always has been to help other people.

I think I had a lot of success with different people who came before us who were having trouble with government agencies. I'm sure you've experienced that, too. Initially, when I began, we had many, many people come who were injured workers and were not getting satisfaction in dealing with the board. We had people, obviously, who came because of other situations where they had trouble dealing with government agencies. So my job was to help them find a solution.

I would say to you, I've always moved forward in response to the needs of my community. As they say, an

MPP's job is to be responsive. When my community wanted more health services, we worked together. I worked together with regional council and others in order to be able to provide that cancer service and cardiac service.

I would just remind you, Ms. Thompson: In politics or whatever you do, you can't do it alone. If you don't consult, if you don't collaborate, you can't achieve very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Mr. Arnott.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Elizabeth, congratulations on your appointment. I want to express my unqualified support, and I do believe and would agree that you are uniquely qualified to fulfill this important public service as chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, having served as Minister of Labour with distinction, Minister of Health, Minister of the Environment, Minister of Education and Deputy Premier, obviously.

When you announced that you were retiring from provincial politics and we sat the following Monday, I think it was unprecedented that all three party leaders, at the very first available opportunity, paid tribute to your outstanding service. Of course, our leader, Tim Hudak, said, "We will be eternally grateful to Elizabeth Witmer for her leadership, her dedication, her guidance and the incredible service...." He went on and on.

Premier McGuinty said that you were "the genuine article; a politician with a heart for public service; a leader who cares for those around her; a dedicated, passionate, articulate, thoughtful representative of her community...." He goes on and on.

Of course, the leader of the New Democratic Party, Andrea Horwath, was very positive as well, saying, "Liz served her constituents with honour and, I'm sure, earned their gratitude, which I'm sure is why they continued to return her to this place election after election...." She said in conclusion, "On behalf of New Democrats, I want to thank Elizabeth and her family for having taken on a job over the last couple of decades that is often a thankless job. Thank you, Liz."

Again, it was, I think, unprecedented that all three party leaders spoke so favourably about the work that you've done as an MPP as well as the person that you are.

I was doing some research before I came here this morning, and I was interested to see that you're following a number of former elected members of provincial Parliament who have then, in turn, served as chair of the Workers' Compensation Board, as we used to call it, and now the WSIB: Lincoln Alexander, a former Conservative member of Parliament from the Hamilton area who served as chair of the WCB, as we called it in those days, appointed in 1980 by the Davis government; Robert Elgie, who was a long-serving Conservative member of provincial Parliament, was appointed by Premier Peterson in 1985; Odoardo Di Santo, who served here as the Downsview MPP for about 10 years and then was appointed by the Bob Rae government as chair of the

Workers' Compensation Board in 1991—and I think I was actually at the hearing when he was brought forward to answer questions; and then, of course, Steve Mahoney, whom we served with in the Legislature from 1990 to 1995, who in turn served in the House of Commons and then became the chair of the WSIB. So you have big shoes to fill, obviously, and I know that you recognize that.

One of the most important issues facing the WSIB as we go forward, I believe, is the unfunded liability, because employers are concerned about how that's going to be paid down. Injured workers are concerned too, because if the money is not there, obviously—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Mr. Arnott, I'll just let you know you have about one minute left to wrap up.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I was just getting started, but thank you very much. I'll stop.

What are your thoughts on the WSIB's unfunded liability and what we need to do to confront it?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** That was the issue that came to a head as a result of the report by the auditor. That was what triggered the Arthurs report. Obviously, we need to take a look, and he has recommendations and the government has already indicated their support for a couple of them regarding funding sufficiency.

Fair funding is absolutely necessary if we're going to meet the needs of those workers who are injured on the job, and also the needs of their families. Of course, the employers who pay the WSIB also need to know that the organization is on a strong, firm footing. So I look forward to making sure that we can continue to provide fair funding as it applies to both injured workers and the employers.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** We'll now turn it over to the third party. Mr. Natyshak.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Good morning, Ms. Witmer. Thank you once again for agreeing to appear at the committee today. I echo the sentiments of my colleagues here in thanking you for your long and storied history as a representative for Kitchener-Waterloo. We all know the contribution that you've made to that region and, of course, to this Legislature, so thank you once again for your time.

Much has been made about the nature and the timing of your appointment as the chair of the WSIB, as I'm sure you can appreciate. I'd like to know a little bit more about that process that ultimately led you here before us today. Could you tell us when you were first approached for your interest in becoming the chair of the WSIB?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well—

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Sorry. Ms. Jaczek, on a point of order.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I believe, Mr. Chair, through you to committee, that if the committee decides to call the appointee or a nominee to appear, it is limited by the standing orders to examining the individual's qualifications and competence to perform the duties of the



office sought, so that questions to the applicant should be limited to that line of inquiry.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Ms. Witmer, if you're comfortable answering, it's entirely up to you. The point of order that Ms. Jaczek has raised is in order. The members of committee are required to maintain and keep their questions focused on your qualifications to serve in the intended appointment position. But we'll leave it up to you; if you choose not to answer, then that would be fine as well.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** On the same point of order, Mr. Chair: If the standing orders specifically state that the questions are to be exclusively based on the qualifications, how is it that it's appropriate—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Well, I appreciate that, but I've been advised by the clerk that it is entirely up to the invitee if they want to answer or not.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I will speak to my qualifications. I would just like you to know that, certainly in recent months, I've been approached by several people in the private sector to lead organizations in the private sector, all which I declined. I was also encouraged in the past few months by many other people who came from different parties, different walks of life, to consider putting forward my name as a nominee for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

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I would say to you that, initially, although I was excited about that opportunity because of my passion for public service—and that would allow me to continue to serve the people in the province of Ontario—it wasn't something that I thought I would do. But as time went on and my personal situation changed and my life changed and the health of some of my family members changed, I realized that perhaps a change in lifestyle was important. I came into politics very carefully considering my family. In fact, the first time I was asked to run as an MPP I declined because I didn't believe it was the right time for my family and for me personally—

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Ms. Witmer, thank you. I've got to move on to some other questions. Were you asked to consider or did you consider any other positions other than the WSIB after deciding to leave politics? Were there any other areas of interest? Of course, you've got a wealth of experience. Was it specifically the WSIB that you had focused on, or were there any other areas that potentially you considered?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I would say to you—I'll come back to what I said before—I was presented with several other private sector offers. But I would say to you it was people encouraging me to consider this particular position that excited me. I did enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to, I hope, raise the awareness of the need for health and safety in the workplace. I've put a lot of time and effort into making sure that we focused on prevention of injuries in the workplace—

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** You had mentioned—sorry to cut you off—that people had approached you. One of those people who have been indicated is a gentleman

named Rob Prichard, who was essentially the broker between matching you with the position at the WSIB—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Mr. Natyshak, please. I'm going to ask you to maintain adherence to the standing orders and to ask your question specifically focusing on Ms. Witmer's qualifications to serve in the position, please. I've allowed you to interrupt her twice. I understand—

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Well, we're time-limited here, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Fair enough. That's why I gave you some latitude the first two times. I'm asking you now to please adhere to the standing orders. Thank you.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Fair enough. We'd like to know a little bit about the nature of the compensation that you'll be receiving, because it differs from the original post of chair. Was the salary that we understand that you'll be receiving negotiated?

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair: You just asked him to adhere—now, he has been subbed in. He's a new member. Perhaps he's not familiar with the rules—

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Oh, I mean—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Please, no back-and-forth, Mr. Natyshak.

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** But the Chair has clearly ruled that the member must adhere to the standing orders.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** I'm sorry?

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I'm trying to listen to you, Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Yes, and we will ask you for the last time: Please keep your questions focused on Ms. Witmer's qualifications to serve as the intended appointee as the chair of the WSIB.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Okay.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** You are using up your own time here, not the government's time or the official opposition's time. So it is your time that you are using in this debate.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Ms. Witmer, you've mentioned the Arthurs report that was just tabled. The Arthurs report expands on potentially some uncovered sectors and ensuring that the unfunded liability is not balanced on the backs of injured workers; that's its main thrust and focus. Do you intend on pursuing that type of agenda, ensuring that the unfunded liability is not burdened by the workers of this province, as has been the case in history and as Mr. Arthurs pointed out? What are your intentions in terms of following through with the recommendations under the Arthurs report?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, I would say to you I am very thankful that, hopefully, at the start of my term, I have the benefit of the Arthurs report, because he did engage in a very thoughtful consultation with all the stakeholders. I would plan to move forward, before I make any decisions, with further consultations and also

transparency and collaboration in order to determine where we would go.

As I say, my focus is to ensure stability for injured workers and their families, to provide them with the fair funding that they need and the benefits that they deserve when they're injured, obviously, to assist them into returning to work as quickly as possible. But I look at this as an opportunity for further consultation, and I think that's what Arthurs did recommend. That's what I would do. I'm going to visit the local offices, and I'm going to meet with all of the stakeholder groups. I hope to do that in the course of the summer, if I am appointed, because I want to hear from those individuals first before there are any—any—decisions made. I would say to you: There will be absolute transparency. People will know what we are doing before we publicly announce it.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Ms. Taylor.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Thank you, Ms. Witmer, for being here with us this morning. I know it's kind of tough, but I'm sure you can understand that it's necessary from our point of view.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I've sat on that side.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is: This was previously a part-time position; what is it that you believe makes this job a full-time position? What is it that can be done differently to ensure that it's worth the salary that is now coming forward, compared to what it was previously? What is it that you're going to do differently to make sure that it is the workers and that the job is going to coincide from the part-time to, now, a full-time?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I think if you take a look again and you hearken back to the Arthurs report, it really is a very comprehensive review of the system—although there are some areas that he didn't touch that, perhaps, we need to do further consultations about. I see the job, at the present time, as massive, requiring a full-time undertaking. I know the current chair recommended that it be a full-time position because of the magnitude of the review and the consultations that are going to be absolutely necessary if we're going to be able to implement them in a way that takes into consideration the viewpoints of all of the stakeholders, whether that's the injured workers or the employers.

It is a massive undertaking, and that's the reason for the full-time position.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Okay. Thank you—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** We're right against it. I'll allow you one final question.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** From the onset, was this offered to you as a part-time position, or was it just straight out directed to you as a full-time position? We know we're underfunded, so we're trying to get to the reasoning of, now, where is it going to fall back to?

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Yes, this is a full-time position, and it was based on ensuring that the comprehensive review undertaken by Professor Arthurs could be successfully implemented after extensive consultation and collaboration and on a focus on transparency—much

in the way that he did his job. I think that received very strong support from all of those impacted.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Just to be clear: It was offered to you as a full-time position?

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Thank you, Miss Taylor. I'm sorry, I gave you a little bit of extra time there already.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** I gave you a little bit of extra time there already; I'm sorry.

Ms. Witmer, thank you very much. We appreciate you being here this morning.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Chair, clearly we haven't had enough time. I'd like to move that an additional five minutes be given to each party to ask Ms. Witmer more questions, for a total of 15 minutes.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Any discussion?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Quite honestly, Mr. Chair, I do not feel this is necessary at all. We've had an extensive review of Ms. Witmer's qualifications and competencies. I think we're going to be opposed to any additional time.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Anything from the official opposition? Okay, we'll call a vote on it. All in—sorry, Mr. Arnott. You have a comment?

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** I asked all the questions that I need to ask, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Okay, so we need to vote on this, then. All in favour? Opposed? It's lost.

Okay, Ms. Witmer, thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

I will now move to concurrence. We'll consider the concurrence of the intended appointment of Jennifer Fisher, nominated as member of the St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors. Ms. Jaczek.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Jennifer Fisher, nominated as member of the St. Lawrence College of Applied Arts and Technology board of governors.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed, if any? It's carried. Thank you very much.

I will consider the concurrence of the intended appointment of Elizabeth Witmer, nominated as chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Ms. Jaczek?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Elizabeth Witmer, nominated as chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed, if any? It's carried.

Thank you very much, and congratulations to both of the appointees.

#### COMMITTEE BUSINESS

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** We do have another order of business to discuss. We have a motion moved by Mr. McDonell. Mr. McDonell, I think you are required to read this into the record.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Pursuant to standing order 122(a), the Standing Committee on Government Agencies (herein referred to as “the committee”), seek the authorization of the House leaders of each of the recognized parties of the House to be permitted to adjourn and meet from place to place in the province of Ontario between the dates of June 11 and September 7, 2012, for the purposes of:

(1) Hearing from stakeholders, witnesses and agency officials within the mandate of the committee and of the specified agency reviews undertaken by the committee in accordance with the approved review schedule and in destinations approved by the subcommittee on committee business; and

(2) Undertaking field visits outside of meeting times within the purpose and scope of the agency reviews at the destinations approved by the subcommittee on committee business;

That the subcommittee on committee business shall convene at the earliest opportunity to identify locations in Ontario for the committee to travel to undertake its business and that the approved subcommittee report be immediately circulated electronically to all members and be deemed adopted forthwith by the committee.

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** Thank you, Mr. McDonell.

Is there any discussion on the motion? Mr. McDonell?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Just to say that the idea of the last paragraph is that the committee would decide what locations they’d want to be meeting in.

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield:** It’s just an issue of clarification. The subcommittee, you identified, would be the folks who would come together and look at the different locations. Is that the suggestion in your motion?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Yes.

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield:** So would the subcommittee come forward with suggestions and then the commit-

tee would have the opportunity, or the subcommittee would make the decisions?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Traditionally, I’m not sure. Is it that the subcommittee would—

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** The way it’s worded, it sounds like the subcommittee will have the final decision and not come back to the whole committee. That’s the way this is worded, so if you would like to amend that or vote on it as it is, then—

**Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield:** It’s just normal practice for a subcommittee to report back and then it be adopted, so I would just make the amendment that the report back be adopted by the committee. I don’t anticipate, but I was just thinking it might be a better way for a discussion.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Sure.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair (Mr. Bill Mauro):** What the clerk is recommending is that the last part of the last paragraph, starting with “and” on the last line—“and be deemed adopted forthwith by the committee”—that that would be deleted. That’s the proposed amendment. If there’s any discussion on the proposed amendment—we’re all fine with that. All in favour? That’s carried.

Then on the motion, as amended: any further discussion? Seeing none, all in favour? That’s carried as well.

Thank you very much. I think that wraps us up.

I should say as well that the clerk has just handed me this, just for the third party specifically, I guess, Mr. Natyshak: It is not a standing order that the questions need to be focused on the qualifications of the appointee, but it is the convention and the tradition of the committee. O’Brien and Bosc—have I pronounced that correctly? All right. I apologize for that.

Thank you very much. We’re adjourned.

*The committee adjourned at 1014.*

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