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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

A-9

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-9

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 5 March 2019

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 5 mars 2019

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Jocelyn McCauley

Président : John Vanthof
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 5 March 2019

Mardi 5 mars 2019

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I call this meeting to order. Good morning, everyone.

The first item of business this morning is the following subcommittee report. Mr. Natyshak.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair, I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, February 28, 2019.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We've all seen this report in advance. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour? Opposed? It's carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. MICHAEL DIAMOND

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Michael Diamond, intended appointee as member, Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We have Michael Diamond, nominated as member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Mr. Diamond, could you come forward, please?

As you may be aware, you have the opportunity, should you choose to do so, to make an initial statement. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. For that questioning, we still start with the official opposition, followed by the government, with 15 minutes allocated to each recognized party. Any time you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

Welcome. You may begin.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Thank you for having me here today, and thank you all for making arrangements for me to be here. I was scheduled to be here earlier, but I was travelling that day, so I appreciate the opportunity to still present and speak with you today.

I'm honoured to be asked to serve on the board of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This fund is a great example of government working with community groups and organizations across the province to deliver great results for the people. I think it has been tremendously successful, and I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to volunteer in this capacity.

Doug Ford, whom I've known for nearly a decade and worked with during this time, has been driven by the motto of the Rotary Club: "Service Before Self." It is one of the reasons I am an admirer of our Premier. I'm honoured to be able to now put service before self, as well, and help, in a voluntary capacity, on this amazing foundation's board.

It is widely known that I served as campaign manager to the Premier during his 2018 leadership bid. I share his values of respecting taxpayers and delivering results for the people, and I look forward to working with the team at OTF through that lens, in delivering results across the province to great community groups and other organizations.

As a business owner, I understand working towards major goals, managing staff and working with others. I hope to bring that experience to my capacity as a member of this board. I've also been privileged to volunteer with a number of organizations, be it a fundraising and strategy adviser to a mood disorders foundation or being a current director of the Empire Club of Canada. I understand non-profits, I understand community groups, I have experience with board operations, and I look forward to serving, hopefully, in this capacity.

Again, thank you for having me today. I'd now be happy to take any questions.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. We will go to the official opposition.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Mr. Diamond, for appearing before us today. Congratulations on your imminent appointment.

Mr. Diamond, this committee and the appointments process has seen, in our perspective, a disturbing trend around—you're smiling already. You know what's coming.

Mr. Michael Diamond: I know what's coming next.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You do?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes. I've listened.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You've listened?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You anticipate my question?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I'm anticipating the question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, that would then reinforce the fact that there is a disturbing trend—that you would know that there is a question coming that is a question that I, unfortunately, have to ask of every deputant and every intended appointment individual before us.

Have you ever been a member of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Wow. Yes, I have.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Are you a current member of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes, I am.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever donated to the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party?

Mr. Michael Diamond: All donations that I've made to any political party in Canada are disclosed through the elections agencies that they've been donated to.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Have you ever worked on a campaign for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I have.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you have a personal connection with the Premier?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I've already mentioned that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do you have a personal connection with his chief of staff, Dean French?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I know Mr. French.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Are you in any way in any business relationship with any of the executives who work under or with Premier Ford?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I am not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You have no fiduciary responsibilities with any members of the government at all in any business capacity?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I do not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Diamond, you're a partisan; right? It's fair to say that you're pretty heavily involved with the party. In a democratic society, it's your right to do so. In your partisan capacity or through your ideological belief system, would you think it's appropriate for a government to nominate, pretty exclusively, partisan appointments through this process? Do you think they're being selective in who they nominate and in who they choose and put into these positions?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I'm not sure who else has been named to these positions that you're referring to, but no, I think that the prerogative of the government is to appoint people who they think can work towards delivering results for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You may not be aware of what the ratio is or of the percentage, but I'm going to ask the Clerks' office to give us some data on exactly what it is. I would say we're at the 90th percentile of appointments that have been either directly connected to the Premier or to donors or to failed candidates of the Progressive Conservative Party. It's interesting, because it's as if there are no other suitable candidates that could ever be found in the province that could fill these positions.

Stacking the deck and putting the cards in your favour is something that we expected and that we saw under the Liberal government, but we were told that it was going to be different, and we see that there is absolutely none of that. It seems like it's just a bonanza of appointments for partisans and for those who are connected to the Premier's

office. It's disturbing. I think it's an affront to the appointments process, and it makes a mockery of this process as well.

I don't know if that gives you any concern, if at any point you may want to sound the alarm that, hey, maybe there's somebody more capable, but certainly on the New Democratic side we're concerned and disturbed with what's been happening and how it's been progressing. It's our job to highlight that and to show the government that this is not a safe landing spot or a place for a golden parachute for failed partisans or for politicians. It's something that—

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Mr. Chair, is there a question here?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I can ask whenever I want or I can keep going; it doesn't matter. This is the way it works. My question, actually, would be directed to the Clerk.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Do you have a point of order, Mr. Roberts?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair, if there is a question here.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, I'm formulating it. It's happening as I'm speaking. It's sort of stream-of-consciousness stuff, so I'll get to a question.

My question is to the Clerk: Through you, Chair, I'm wondering if the Clerk can provide the committee with the total number of applicants for all positions that we've seen through this process. I'd like to know the raw number of how many people have applied.

Here is my question to you, Mr. Diamond—

Mr. Michael Diamond: Thank you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You said that you were asked—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Excuse me, Mr. Natyshak. Is that a request?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it is a request.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): So could I test the will of the committee, if the committee would agree to ask for that information?

Mr. Roman Baber: You can't possibly measure what you're asking for.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You would know who applied for the process through the Internet, through the application process. I just want to know how many people have applied—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'm not asking for debate, just if it is the will of the committee.

Mr. Roman Baber: No.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Okay.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Fair enough.

Mr. Diamond, you said—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Natyshak, that could be treated as an individual request.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, okay, thank you very much, Chair. How much time do I have left?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Jocelyn McCauley): About 10 minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ten minutes? That's a lot of time. Great, I'm just getting warmed up.

Mr. Diamond, you said that you were asked to fulfil this position, or to apply for the position. Who were you asked by?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I had a conversation with a member of the staff in the minister's office, Stephanie Dunlop, who leads the appointments. It was shortly after—I guess it was in November. It was the first Tuesday in November at a social gathering. We were just talking about her new job and she mentioned this was one of the files that she was working on. I said that it sounded interesting and she informed me that if I were interested, there was an application process online.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So it was an informal conversation? She said—

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes, it was a run-in at a social gathering.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And do you believe that through that application process, your application was submitted just based on your own individual merits and your experience, or do you think that there was any preference given to you as a candidate because of your affiliation with the PC Party of Ontario?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I believe that whoever reviewed and vetted these CVs saw that I applied and can contribute in a valuable way in this voluntary capacity.

0910

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So you were the best of the lot? Your résumé stood out ahead of everyone else's?

Mr. Michael Diamond: To the opinion of someone.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Don't be bashful. I mean, go ahead. Tell us how great you are. Tell us how you merited this position.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Is that the question? Earlier, I think you referred to me as a failed partisan—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, gloat. This is an opportunity to make your case.

Mr. Michael Diamond: I think that through my diverse experience of working with many businesses, industry associations, non-profits and community groups in Ontario, I will bring a good perspective to this organization. I'll also share the Premier's mantra of respecting taxpayers and delivering results for people in fulfilling those duties.

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Baber.

Mr. Roman Baber: For the member to suggest and to encourage the witness to go ahead and gloat, in my respectful submission, is unparliamentary.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That is not a point of order. Continue with your questions.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair, I think I've stated my case on this one. I appreciate the candour from Mr. Diamond. I'm going to cede the rest of my time to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Good morning, Mr. Diamond.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Good morning.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I assume that in applying for this position, you value the work that's done by the Trillium Foundation.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes. I think it's a very well-run organization and very successful.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You're aware of the cut to their budget recently?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Some \$15 million from about a \$150-million budget. Do you agree? What do you think of that?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I think that families and individuals and companies and governments and agencies across Ontario are realizing that it's quite possible to provide the same level of service and the same support for your community with less. It's the situation that Ontario is in, frankly, and it's the situation that many families are in. It's something I personally had to do. I don't think a reduction in budget will necessarily have to mean lower results for people.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So you're fine with the \$15-million cut to their budget?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I think that it's a fact of reality.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Are you fine with the fact that it happened mid-stream through a fiscal period—not to the following year's budget, but nine months in?

Mr. Michael Diamond: It's no surprise to anyone who has observed Ontario for the last 15 years that hard decisions are required right now.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I have a real issue with someone applying for a position like this and being fine with a \$15-million budget cut in the middle of a fiscal year. Are you aware of what kind of impact that will have on the programs that are provided or—

Mr. Michael Diamond: I look forward to learning when I join the board of the organization. If things are done properly—and I think they can be—there doesn't have to be a reduction in services to people.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Diamond, are you aware of what the remuneration is for this position?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Zero. I will not be getting paid anything.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The communities that are working on their Trillium applications right now—do you feel any remorse for those communities and those organizations that have put a lot of stock and effort into their application process, knowing full well that this government is cutting, essentially, a lifeline to their programming? Does that affect you at all?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I think there's still a tremendous amount of support to be distributed across the province to worthy projects.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As my colleague stated, with a \$15-million cut, would you agree that that will inevitably result in less support—

Mr. Michael Diamond: No. I've stated that several times. I don't think it has to.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So what you're saying is less money going out of the Trillium Foundation is going to equal the same amount of support as previous—

Mr. Michael Diamond: It absolutely can. There are certainly ways to reduce overhead costs.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So for an agency that received \$100,000 last year, receiving \$10,000 this year is the same amount?

Mr. Michael Diamond: I look forward to joining the board and reviewing these budgets.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

Mr. Michael Diamond: I look forward to joining the board and reviewing these budgets, but I definitely think that results do not have to be contingent on a sum.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: When they put budgets together and plans together to request funds, they do that quite effectively. From my experience, when agencies and organizations apply for Trillium funding, all their I's are dotted and T's are crossed. They request the sum of funding that they need to continue those programs. You're saying to us that they'll be able to do as much with less and you're okay with that—

Mr. Michael Diamond: I believe people across Ontario have been learning that, and that families have known that forever.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Again, as a member of the organization now, that will be the new mantra, "The Trillium Foundation: More with Less"?

Mr. Michael Diamond: No. The mantra of the Trillium Foundation will be "Supporting Healthy and Active Communities across Ontario."

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes. Well, I know there are several agencies in my area of Windsor-Essex in south-western Ontario that are relying and planning on having funds that continue. As you know, Trillium funding is typically annual and given to organizations that have already had Trillium funding and a proven track record, and to hear that coming from one of their new board appointees—it's going to shock them. I'll certainly be keen on letting them know that this is the new direction that the government is taking and that their appointments are taking.

I cede my time, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. No further questions from the official opposition?

To the government: You have 13 minutes and 30 seconds. Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. I suppose, given this morning seems to be the morning of Shakespearean soliloquies, I might start with a short preamble here.

I was a little taken aback by the opposition suggesting that you might not merit this position because, frankly, looking at your CV, I see somebody who has a long history of public service. I think sometimes those of us who are in politics sometimes forget that being involved in politics is a public service in itself. It takes a great deal of sacrifice, and I truly commend you for that work, on top of the community work you're doing as well—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chair?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Natyshak, point of order?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm just wondering if there's a question here from Mr. Roberts.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That's not a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, sorry. All right. Sorry.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Please continue.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Just a preamble, indeed. I'll make sure I get there quickly. In fact, I think we've arrived at the point now.

I'd just love to hear a little bit more about your community service background, because I see you've done some work with Mood Disorders Society of Canada. Tell us a little bit about some of your experience in the community.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Yes, absolutely. It's really a family thing. I remember the evening in 1989 when Justice Minister Doug Lewis called my house to ask my mother to leave her career in law to join the Superior Court. It was something she couldn't say no to; although, economically, my family may have been better off had she turned that down. But it was an honour of a lifetime for her, and that really set the course for both my brother and me in giving back to our community.

The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario is a particularly important one to me. I do suffer from dysthymia and depression, and it was an organization that was there for me when I needed help. To be able to go and raise money and provide them with strategy advice and government relations advice has been a true honour. They are a wonderful organization, and it's really great to see that this government is investing in mental health support in Ontario.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I really appreciate that. I believe I can speak for fellow members on the government side in saying thank you for putting your name forward to serve on this. It's a non-paid position, and we need people with a proven commitment to public service to try and step up to these positions. I really appreciate you stepping forward, and I think you'll have quite a lot to contribute to the Trillium Foundation.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Next? No further questions—oh, Ms. Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Sure. Thank you again for appearing before us. I know you have a very busy schedule with everything that you are involved in.

I just wanted to go back to one of the comments you made in your opening remarks, and that's the premise of respecting taxpayer dollars. In my community of Barrie-Innisfil, a lot of people get upset that they've applied for Trillium funding and they've had it for four years, but they can't actually reapply. So what it does is it forces their business model to be creative and to say, "Well, the government has invested in me at the beginning of my venture, and then I kind of have to stand on my own two legs."

We're a community where if we need to fund something, if we need a new MRI machine, people get out there and they fundraise. They get the community together, they do runs, they do charity hockey games etc. A lot of things that I hear from my constituents is that while they understand the merits of the Trillium Foundation, they want fairness and they want the respect for taxpayer dollars brought back to these types of foundations.

With your experience, how do you plan to make sure that there is fairness brought back into such a—
0920

Mr. Michael Diamond: That's a great point. I think the first thing is that as much of the investment that the people of Ontario have made into the Trillium Foundation—because we have to remember it is their money—needs to be used for the public good, not for offices, not for salaries. That's why I'm very happy this is a voluntary position, because that will enable more of the resources to support community groups.

I definitely look forward to learning more and seeing if there has to be some overhaul in how funding is reviewed, and consulting with both successful and unsuccessful applicants to really get the right mix to ensure that those groups that need it have it while they need it, and hopefully will be on their own two feet in very short order.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: So, just kind of building on that, when you say that it is funded by everyone here in Ontario, a lot of people don't realize what organizations are getting the funding. So how can you speak to, sort of, the transparency and more public engagement awareness of how these things are granted?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Well, one thing: When I was approached to apply for this board, I did review their website. I didn't find it particularly easy to find a list in one place. You had to click through a number of pages to download something to talk about where these investments have been made, so I think that has to be really front and centre, making it accessible for the people of Ontario to see where this money is being spent. It also would be good for future hopeful grant applicants, because it would let them know who else has received this money, what's in line with their goals. So transparency is certainly very important and needs to be brought higher up on that website.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Without that, currently, there has been a previous Liberal government that could have made changes, but it seems to go on with that culture of elitism where the select few get this funding, and not everyone. Do you think that will help make sure that it's not just about the elite and the insiders club applying for this, but for everyone?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Oh, absolutely. This, again, is the people's money, so it has to be used for the people's projects. I was very happy—I spent a lot of time growing up in Kenora, and I noticed last year that a splash pad was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation in Kenora. It really might seem odd to people who haven't visited Kenora, because it is a town on a lake, but to get to the public beaches there, you require a boat. They're both on two islands. So this splash pad will allow locals or visitors without a boat the ability to cool down, have fun in the water. Projects like that are, I think, certainly very important.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Mr. Nicholls?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Chair. Good morning, Mr. Diamond.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Good morning, Rick.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Good to see you here this morning.

I want to fall back on a comment that my colleague from the NDP referenced this morning with regard to cutbacks. For me, it's refreshing for me to hear that you're not fazed by the fact that there are some cutbacks in the budgets for Ontario Trillium. The way I interpret that is that organizations that are applying for funding have to get real with their submissions. A lot of times, they think, "Oh, the government has lots of money, so let's inflate our proposals and maybe we get it." So I guess my question to you is—and, again, I know that Niagara Centre probably needs funding. Maybe Essex needs funding, or—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Chatham-Kent.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: —Chatham-Kent needs funding, absolutely. We all need funding, don't we? But what our submissions have to be is they have to be real. So I guess my question to you would be, in terms of follow-up on people who are awarded these grants, is there any follow-up that you're aware of or any procedures in place that could, in fact, ensure that the money that has been requested—money that has been given—is actually used for its intended purpose?

Mr. Michael Diamond: Well, that's very important and it should also not just be part of the follow-up, but part of the grant application process, to have a very concrete idea of how the investment by the people will be used to benefit the people. If a low overhead and if a cut to Trillium will mean that we need to ensure as much of the money that is available and contributed by the people is invested into projects for the people, I think so, too, those projects must be very efficient with the use of that money and that as much of the money that is contributed by Trillium has to be to fund that project.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Very good. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Diamond: Thank you.

Mr. Roman Baber: No more questions.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): No more questions? Thank you. Question period is over. Thank you very much, and you may step down.

We may now consider the intended appointment of Mr. Michael Diamond, member for the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Ms. Khanjin?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Mr. Michael Diamond, nominated as member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): If you could, could you please reread it. The mike wasn't on.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Sure. I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Michael Diamond, nominated as member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Ms. Khanjin. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour? Opposed? Concurrence is passed.

We are now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 0925.

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