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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

A-46

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-46

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 27 April 2021

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 27 avril 2021

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Clerk: Julia Douglas

Président : Gilles Bisson
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 27 April 2021

Mardi 27 avril 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): It is 9 o'clock. I declare this session open.

I see MPP Bisson has joined us. MPP Bisson, please identify yourself and your location.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Gilles Bisson, Kamiskotia Lake.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We are meeting to conduct a review of intended appointments.

We have the following members in room: MPP Martin. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Bisson, MPP Coe, MPP Nicholls, MPP Pang, MPP Stiles.

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording.

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning.

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

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. ALDO Di FELICE

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Aldo Di Felice, intended appointee as member, Ontario Media Development Corp.—board of directors.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We will start from where we ended last week and resume consideration of the intended appointment of Mr. Aldo Di Felice, nominated as a member of the Ontario Media Development Corp. board of directors.

Before I continue, I would like to ask MPP Kusendova to identify herself and her present location.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning, Chair. This is MPP Kusendova, and I'm calling from Ontario. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

The government had two minutes and 23 seconds remaining from the questioning time allotted from last week. After the government, we will go to the official opposition for their time for questioning.

Starting with the government, who would like to begin? I understand MPP Martin would like to resume the questioning? MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Mr. Di Felice, for returning for the continuation of these questions. Unfortunately, I wasn't here last time, so I didn't get to hear your other comments, but I have a question for you.

Ontario Creates is a provincial government agency that acts as a catalyst for economic development, investment and collaboration in Ontario's creative industries. I wondered if you could comment on how you might leverage your impressive professional network and experience to enhance the public or private initiatives of Ontario Creates.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Thank you very much, Ms. Martin. I really appreciate being here today and continuing this conversation.

As far as my particular skill set and connections, I think that promoting the province domestically and internationally is something that I am very suited to do; and I say that because in the course of the last 20 years—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice:—running an ethnic media organization, we're actually dealing with people around the world, from Asia, from Latin America, from Europe and from the US, of course. We've developed an extensive network of contacts that are broadcasters, producers, platforms, distributors, and I have a number of personal relationships that I maintain. So using the old jargon, I have a pretty extensive Rolodex.

But even previous to being involved with TLN Media Group, I was working for five years with a leading Canadian independent producer and distributor, where not only were we putting together the kinds of film and television production deals that Ontario Creates facilitates and encourages, i.e., collaborations between public and private sector entities—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Di Felice. Your time is up with the government.

We will move to the opposition. You have 15 minutes. MPP Stiles, the floor is yours.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Di Felice, for joining us this morning for a second time. I have a few questions. As you will perhaps recall from—I know you were sitting there for a lot of last week's committee hearings—one of the issues in the news, as I'm sure you're aware, certainly over the last three years, is there has been a lot of talk about

the Ford government's appointees to various boards, commissions and agencies, and how many of those have been partisan political appointments. Some of them have unfortunately resulted in a bit of a scandal for the government.

But this committee has existed for many years, and our role is, of course, to review those appointments. It's the role of the opposition here to not just interview you but to understand you—obviously, your capacity and what you bring to the role, because that's really important—and to really be, frankly, the voice of the public here, to provide that accountability and transparency that otherwise would not be there at all; it would just be rubber-stamping. It's not like this government is the first government to ever put in place a lot of their friends and donors. But it is part of our role here to shed some light and ask those questions that Ontarians demand answers to.

So I am going to ask you some questions now about your political or partisan connections or leanings, and then I'm going to ask you some more questions specific to Ontario Creates. I think my colleagues may also have some questions.

First of all, Mr. Di Felice, have you ever given any donations to the PC Party of Ontario or any PC Party of Ontario candidates?

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: First of all, let me thank you very much for that lovely introduction clarifying that this is not personal; it's just politics. It's the role of the opposition to ask the questions of everyone regardless of who they are, so I appreciate that introduction.

In terms of political donations, I've made a number of political donations primarily to the Liberal Party federally, and I think to the Liberal Party provincially, too, but way, way back. Just looking at my own records, over the last 11 years, I think I've donated to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario—more aptly, local political individuals whom I respect, as opposed to the party itself—on three or four occasions over the past 11 years, since 2007. Those are the records I have.

But in terms of political donations, generally, I've been agnostic and not party-affiliated. I've donated primarily to Liberal candidates, not parties, people who I think stand for good governance and fact-based, progressive public policy-making. In terms of the questions you asked, if somebody took a look at the checklist, which I'm looking at right now, of different donations that I've made—as it happens, it happens to be mostly Liberals, and as it happens, it happens to be mostly federal Liberals.

In the course of my employment—I'm a media company, so we run into everybody. We've interviewed people. We've talked to them. We've seen them at different events. We get to know them. I've always found that the relationships that I develop, and anybody that I might donate to, ends up being personal rather than party-affiliated.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you mind me asking, of the currently elected Conservative Party MPPs or ministers you donated to—you mentioned it's local, so would you care to comment who those—

0910

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Yes, I think Michael Tibollo, who is somebody I've known for many, many years, is one of the candidates that I've supported. Because of his involvement in the Italian Canadian community, we got to know each other when he was president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians. He also ran a substance abuse rehabilitation entity that for many years, even prior to his being involved, we did an annual telethon for to raise funds, an organization called Caritas. So he's somebody I know and respect, and he's somebody to whom I have contributed, I think, twice.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Did you contribute to any other candidates that are currently elected in the Conservative government?

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: I don't think so. Let me just see if I can—no, I don't think so. Nobody else, no—that's currently an MPP or a minister.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay, thank you. Can I ask you, in applying for this role, did anybody contact you to suggest that this might be a good connect for you?

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Right. So what happened was that in early October of 2020, a person within Minister MacLeod's office—I don't really know Minister MacLeod, but I had been at a round table discussion just prior to the pandemic, which I was invited to, with about 20 other industry players. That's the only place I think I've actually ever met her, in a group setting. But I did attend a number of pandemic-related industry briefing calls on Zoom, and I guess I must have to come to the attention—we're pretty low on the radar, generally speaking. We're on the fringes of the industry. Because we're an ethnic media, people don't really pay a ton of attention to us.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Unfortunately.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Yes, unfortunately. I think that's going to change over time. But I did get a call in October saying, "Would you be interested in a position involving the Ontario Trillium Foundation?"

Ms. Marit Stiles: I see.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: I was directed to a website, to take a look at the website, and I said, "Actually not. I probably would be only interested, given the stage of my career, perhaps in an Ontario Creates board membership if that were to be available, and it looks like you don't have a lot of board members." Then, eventually, they contacted me and said, "Yes, you could do that," so I applied. That's sort of how it transpired over the past six months.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Can I ask you, more related to Ontario Creates, did you—I know it used to be OMDC. Does Telelatino receive any funding of any sort from Ontario Creates?

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: So not directly from Ontario Creates, but we apply to Ontario Creates for the tax credits that are administered. So we do receive tax credits administered, I think, by the CRA, but originally applied for, I think, through OMDC: provincial and federal film and television tax credits and interactive digital media tax credits. So, yes, as a normal course, we do that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: In my riding, we have—kind of related, but unrelated—Ubisoft, one of the biggest [*inaudible*] game producers and developers in the world. It's a very large facility. It's the second-biggest studio that they have in Canada right now, for a lot of their performance-capture work and such. I was just touching base with them, like I do quite regularly, and they were telling me that for their industry, moving to home—for example, for a lot of their developers—has worked out pretty well. Obviously, they're not doing too badly economically, in this pandemic—probably one of the few industries.

But I wondered if you wouldn't mind commenting a little bit, particularly in relation to your own corner of the universe and Telelatino: How are you managing? What are the supports that you would like to see from government in this pandemic, but also coming out of this pandemic?

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Well, I think one of the supports that I think everybody brought up about a year ago was that, over the years, the administrative backlog, for example, with applications—especially tax credit applications, which is the bulk of the funds that are approved for the OMDC, both for production services and film and television tax credits, and interactive, I think; that's the bulk of the spending. There had been an administrative backlog that had built up over the years where producers, generally, especially independent producers, were having a hard time—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Five minutes.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Sorry, am I finished?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, no. Continue. Just letting you know there are still five minutes left.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Oh. Anyway, there was an administrative backlog, and I think a lot of work has been done—I know that our people have told me that there were applications that were made a few years ago that finally did get approved, so there was a real effort, I think, to solve the administrative backlog of applications that are made with respect to tax credits. I think that, in particular, was the biggest point of concern among many people.

The other kinds of things that relate to programs, that we've never really tapped or not been involved in, but I know independent producers and distributors have—I've heard them talk about things like this, that multi-year arrangements as opposed to an annual application would probably be better suited to business planning. Events, for example—now, events aren't generally, I think, the mainstay of what Ontario Creates does, except maybe on the music festival side. But multi-year arrangements is the kind of certainty, I think, that event producers and producers generally—even people like Ubisoft—would probably be looking for, as opposed to annual rounds of competitive applications, where you only know that you're good for the next 12 months or for that one project.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, that's definitely the sort of thing. And you came out of Salsa on St. Clair as well, I noticed, so you have some—

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: Yes, exactly. As TLN, we started Salsa on St. Clair way back when the TTC was going to

rip up the middle of St. Clair to put up the streetcar. The business owners were very upset. Joe Mihevc, who was the councillor at the time, said, "We have to do something for the business owners." We came up with Salsa on St. Clair. It turned into a bigger thing than we imagined. We continue to support it. I actually then founded the not-for-profit that now actually manages it and has its own staff, but we continue to support Salsa on St. Clair.

Salsa on St. Clair is a good example of a cultural program that has been kind of sidelined and that had to reinvent itself. Because of the relationship with TLN and a television company, we were able to do a virtual Salsa on St. Clair on national television with bands from across Canada, as opposed to only in-person bands that are local. We did that last year and it looks like that's what the plan is for July of this year as well. We'll be doing a virtual four-hour gala presentation that's pre-recorded. Hopefully we can do better than the Oscars did a couple of days ago.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. That's for sure. Well, I want to thank you for that work. Certainly my community in Davenport, in my riding, we benefit from that as well. Many people that—Mr. Mihevc and others. It has been wonderful.

In a previous life, I was the national director of public policy at ACTRA for many years, and so I was involved in a lot of the push for some of those tax credits and, particularly, those multi-year [*inaudible*] how important that piece is.

Is there anything else that, I guess I could say, ethnic media like Telelatino, would particularly need in this moment? I do want to also add that I think that Telelatino and others have been such a critical piece of the communication around the COVID pandemic, which I don't think we recognize enough and how important that role has been—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Anyway, just to throw that to you for final comments. You've only got a minute left.

Mr. Aldo Di Felice: In my former life, when I was doing high-budget productions with Sullivan Entertainment, I was dealing with ACTRA, I was dealing with the WGC, I was dealing with the directors guild, dealing with IATSE. Over the last 20 years, the kinds of productions we do are—because of the funding arrangements, they're all what you would call "guerilla productions," so very low budget, but high quality. Technology has changed, and so you can actually achieve high quality on low budgets, and that's what we do in ethnic media.

0920

In terms of the funding programs, more recently, we do a lot of lobbying or complaining to the federal government, saying that the Canada Media Fund, for example, only allocates 1% of its funding to third-language programming, whereas 20% of the population, certainly in Davenport and certainly where I live—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Di Felice. The time is concluded for this portion. Thank you very much for your presence and for sharing your input with us.

Now we will move to concurrence for our intended appointees from last week. We will consider the intended appointment of Ranil Mendis, nominated as board member of the Social Benefits Tribunal. MPP Martin will move the concurrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Ranil Mendis, nominated as member of the Social Benefits Tribunal.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Martin moved the concurrence. Any discussion? I see none. Are the members ready to vote? Yes?

All those in favour? Okay. All those opposed? The concurrence carried. Thank you.

Now we will move to consider the intended appointment of Mr. Aldo Di Felice, nominated as member of the Ontario Media Development Corp. board of directors. Who will move the concurrence? MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Aldo Di Felice, nominated as member of the Ontario Media Development Corp. board of directors.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. MPP Martin moved the concurrence. Any debate? Any discussion? No? Are the members ready to vote? Yes? Okay.

All those in favour? Raise your hand, please. Thank you. All those opposed? The concurrence carried.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The next item of business is the subcommittee report, dated April 22, 2021. We have all seen the report in advance, so could I please have a motion? MPP Martin.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, April 22, 2021, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 16, 2021.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any discussion? Any discussion on the subcommittee report? I see none. Are the members ready to vote? Ready?

All those in favour, please raise your hand. Okay, thank you. All those opposed? The motion carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. ALAN SPACEK

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Alan Spacek, nominated as member, Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we will move to our review of intended appointments. Today we have Mr. Alan Spacek, nominated as member of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. As you may be aware, you have the opportunity, Mr. Spacek, should you choose to do so, to make an initial statement. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will 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.

You may begin, Mr. Spacek.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity. I am certainly looking forward to the challenge of supporting the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

Quickly, a little bit about myself: As I think you have in your briefing documents, I was born and raised in Kapuskasing. I had the privilege of being mayor of Kapuskasing from 2006 to 2018. I was also, during that time, president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities from 2010 to 2018, a municipal organization that represents 110 communities in northeastern Ontario, and we advocate for northeastern Ontario.

Certainly, in Kapuskasing, we have one major industrial employer, Spruce Falls. They're an integrated sawmill and newsprint operation and they could not survive without a very important piece of public infrastructure, the Ontario Northland railway. This mill employs 600 people directly and hundreds more indirectly as jobbers and wood fibre suppliers, and I can say that is the case for many northeastern Ontario communities that are served by Ontario Northland. It's a very important public asset.

Of course, in 2012, when the McGuinty government and then Minister of Northern Development and Mines Rick Bartolucci announced divestment of Ontario Northland, that was extremely troubling for us and, collectively, as a region, we fought that tooth and nail. Fortunately, in 2014, that decision was reversed under then Premier Wynne and Minister Michael Gravelle. As a result of that, Minister Gravelle formed an advisory committee for Ontario Northland, of which I was a participant, and that gave me some good insight into the organization and we were able to provide feedback to the minister. I think the rest is sort of history.

Fast-forward to today where Premier Ford and the Conservative government—Minister Mulroney, Minister Fedeli—obviously fully support Ontario Northland, as it should be, as a very important public asset, and we look forward to stabilizing this organization going forward and to also reinstating passenger rail service in northern Ontario. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Spacek. Now we will go to the questioning. We will start with the opposition. I see MPP Bisson raised his hand. MPP Bisson, go ahead. The floor is yours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Good day, Alan, and welcome to the committee. Good to see you again.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Full disclosure: I'm not going to ask you if you ever gave money to the Conservative Party—yes. I'm not going to ask if you ever ran for the Conservative Party—yes; actually against me. But you and I are good friends, and I have always respected the work that you do on behalf of northerners. It's been a good collaboration over the years. We've done some pretty good things together.

I've got a couple of questions, Alan, just probably more on the philosophical side of where the ONTC is and where it means to go. So you, like me, opposed the government when they tried to divest ONTC the last time, and I take it your position hasn't changed. Do you still believe this is strong public infrastructure that must remain in public hands?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Absolutely. Yes, I couldn't agree more. I'm very pleased to see that in the last provincial budget, the Ford government allocated \$5 million to finalize a detailed business plan to reinstate passenger services.

Recently, there was bus service expanded into northwestern Ontario, and I think it's fitting and appropriate that Ontario Northland serve all of northern Ontario. They certainly have the expertise operationally and technically to do that. Northwestern Ontario suffers from a lack of service from the private sector and, in some cases, they have no service whatsoever. So I think this organization is well positioned to serve all of northern Ontario and do it in a very responsible way with precious taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you've answered my second question. That's why we work well together; we think the same sometimes.

In Northern Ontario, the market is not what it is in the southwest or southeast or central Ontario when it comes to passenger loads etc. There needs to be public infrastructure in order to have that intercity-bus, intercity-train transportation system for companies such as Tembec and others. So you've already answered the question: Yes, you support that there is a role for government to play to provide these services, and if the private sector can't do it because there's no money to be made, then you believe that yes, ONTC should play that role.

0930

Mr. Alan Spacek: Absolutely; I couldn't agree more. I think another important feature of rail and Ontario Northland and bus services—there's certainly a lot of attention being paid to climate change these days. There's no better green way, environmentally friendly way to move freight than with rail, and multi-passenger by bus.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just by and by, if you remember, some years ago, when—I believe it was Bartolucci, but it might have been under Gravelle; I think it would have been Bartolucci under the Liberals—he had gotten rid of the telecommunications arm of ONTC. A lot of that was the Internet infrastructure that is necessary to make high-speed Internet work here in northern Ontario. A lot of people were warning that that was a mistake, because the private sector was not going to move into certain markets because the markets weren't big enough. We live the effect of that, so just a by and by.

On the passenger rail service, I take it you believe there should be passenger rail service of some type to northern, northeastern and possibly northwestern Ontario?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Absolutely. I agree.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Now, have you been following at all what's been going on in regard to the commission in their move towards hopefully maintaining the promise

made by the government in the last election, which is to return passenger rail service? Can you speak to that in any way?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Well, certainly, I've been watching it on the media. My good friend and former municipal colleague, the current ONTC chair, Tom Laughren, I think is doing a good job of leading the organization. I know he is working hard to achieve that restoration of passenger rail.

In terms of any details, Gilles, I don't—but I do know that there's a collective effort, both within the organization and at the board level—and politically—to reinstate that important service.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For what it's worth—and I've beat this drum a number of times, and I think I might have beat it with you a couple of times—one of the things we have to look at, as we restore passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario, is not just the traffic as far as moving people up north, south or wherever when it comes to people being able to get to appointments and do whatever it is, but we need to have an integrated tourism strategy, where we figure out ways of being able to tie the ONTC service into existing places that people can travel to in order to experience northern Ontario.

One of the things that I would urge you to do as the commissioner, if you do get an opportunity, is to look at that and say, "Okay, how can the ONTC, how can passenger rail service or bus service or whatever feed our tourism destinations here in northeastern Ontario?" Because I've always felt somewhat that the ONTC didn't put as much attention to it, probably, as necessary. Your thoughts?

Mr. Alan Spacek: I agree. I think under previous governments, there just weren't resources available to continue to provide that important level of service. But one of the dynamics that's going to result post-COVID will be a lot of local travel—and when I say "local," within the province. Certainly, there will be an opportunity to enjoy an increase in tourism within Ontario, and northern Ontario specifically, and Ontario Northland can play a very important role in facilitating that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Now, obviously, the ONTC—some of these services don't make money. GO transit doesn't make money, so we subsidize GO transit. The TTC and every municipal transit system don't make money; they get a subsidy. Your views on ONTC and the need for a subsidy, if necessary? Your thoughts?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Well, absolutely. You appropriately mention that every public transportation asset needs some level of subsidy. I think it's important, though, that we make sure we maximize those dollars when it comes to spending taxpayers' money. It's very important to do that responsibly, be accountable for it and be transparent while doing it. But certainly, it is going to require a level of subsidy; agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know that you sat on the heritage fund in the past, but you never sat on the ONTC before, did you?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Not as a board member. Actually, I was invited by then-Minister Gravelle. Tom Laughren was

vice-chair of FONOM at the time. We were on the ministry's advisory committee, and Tom was maybe a little less partisan at the time, so he was given the nod to go. But I had not officially participated as a commissioner, no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I knew you were on the heritage fund and a few others, but I really thought you had sat on ONTC.

Listen, Al, it's always good to see you. I miss our region suppers and everything else that we used to have to do together, with you as former mayor and me as the MPP. I'm sure that you will have an interesting time with the ONTC. That's all the questions I have.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you, Gilles. I appreciate your support. I'm looking forward to it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any other questioning from the opposition side? Seeing none, I can move now to the government side. The government side has close to 13 minutes—a little bit less than 13 minutes. MPP Martin, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Mister—is it Spacek?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Spacek.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Spacek. Nice to meet you. I can tell that you and MPP Bisson have a long relationship.

I assume that, in preparation for your potential role on this commission, you have reviewed the legislation that governs this agency, and I guess from some of your past experience you might know something about, really, the scope of work that is involved in what the commission does. Can you just let us know about that?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Sure. Thank you for that question. Yes is the answer to your question. I have reviewed the legislation and the MOU, actually, as well as some of the details surrounding the transfer over to the Ministry of Transportation. I've done that at a higher level. I'm expecting a more in-depth review of it once the onboarding process takes place.

Mrs. Robin Martin: All right, and I take it you have no problem with the scope of work—which at least from the legislation looks to be quite extensive—that the commission has to take on?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Yes, correct. I am looking forward to meeting that challenge with the rest of the board.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Pang, the floor is yours.

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Spacek, nice to meet you. I can hear from your sharing that you have a lot of experience with the community. Are you aware of any challenges facing this agency, board or commission that you would like to see addressed?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you for the question. There are many, as was mentioned previously. I think it's incumbent upon us to provide that level of service to northerners and do it in a responsible fashion. I think aside from all of the challenges that COVID is currently presenting to anyone operating this kind of organization, there is the ongoing expansion of bus and parcel service to all of

northern Ontario and the reinstatement of passenger rail as well.

I think there is also an opportunity in growing a refurbishment business. Ontario Northland has a fantastic reputation of their repair shop in North Bay that I think we can exploit, if I can use that term, to reduce our dependence on taxpayer subsidy. There is a lot of opportunity there in the private sector to service that part of the industry. I think that's another opportunity for us.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you very much. I'll pass the next question to Mr. Bouma.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Bouma, go ahead, please.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Spacek, it's so good to have you here today. I come from the world of municipal politics also, down here in the county of Brant, and I love the ability of local municipal politicians to really see some of the issues on the ground, because municipal politics is about as close as you could possibly get to the people, with some of the associated excitement that people will also give you.

I had the opportunity, when I was first elected, to co-chair an agency review task force on behalf of the Treasury Board Secretariat, to have a good hard look at all the agencies, boards and commissions in the province of Ontario. I remember when we were discussing the ONTC and the importance that it has—like, critical infrastructure for northern Ontario. I didn't know that it had been under threat under the previous government, that they wanted to divest themselves of it.

I know that when we did that review, we realized that there was no way that it was moving forward as a private thing, that it needs to be supported. As Mr. Bisson said previously, a lot of transit agencies lose money, and yet what they're doing there is so critical for northern Ontario. So it's good to see the investments that we're making in maintaining and expanding that.

I know you've talked about that in your opening statement. You've talked about it with Mr. Bisson and even Mr. Pang. You briefly talked about that, but I'm just wondering, looking into the future of ONTC, what direction should government be thinking of taking other than just supporting it?

0940

You've lived there your whole life. You've served your community so well and been involved, in a broad sense, with other municipal politics. Looking into the future of transportation in northern Ontario—you've mentioned rail; we've talked about bus, obviously—what would be your vision for mass transportation, the ability for people to be able to access the north without a car, looking forward 50 years? If you could just tell us that or expand on that, please.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Certainly. Thank you for that question. That's certainly a tall order, I think, looking 50 years into the future. But technology is evolving exponentially fast and it's conceivable that we could have the kind of passenger transportation structure in place much like Europe and Asia—high-speed, efficient mass transit.

Northern Ontario is a very big place and I often like telling my colleagues in southern Ontario that if you've ever driven from Toronto to Halifax through Quebec, New Brunswick and the top end of Nova Scotia, and down to the east coast of Halifax, that drive is an hour shorter than the drive from Toronto to Kenora, Ontario. So it's a big piece of real estate and there's a lot of geography there to cover, but I think the technology is key to developing the north.

I can also say that as of late, in the last couple of years, we're very fortunate in northern Ontario. The economy is booming. We are a resource-based economy—mining, timber, some manufacturing—and it is very busy right now. Of course, it's no secret what's happening in the lumber markets. We're seeing quite an influx of people. Also because of COVID, we're seeing an influx of residents to northern Ontario. I spoke with a real estate agent here locally: 40% of that agency's business in the last year was people coming from southern Ontario, moving into our area, and I think that's replicated right across the north.

So, all that to say there's going to be a need, if not certainly an interest in having a sustainable, high-speed, efficient rail or passenger network existing in northern Ontario.

Mr. Will Bouma: I love that answer, actually, and I've been intrigued by some of the proposals. I don't know Elon Musk well, but I know that you leave it to the dreamers who have some of the resources to enable some of those things—even what he's been able to accomplish with Internet service. I think they have Internet in Attawapiskat now through his company, and even here in the south and rural areas that are underserved. I've read some of his things on high-speed mass transit ideas, and I look forward to new ideas through that.

But thank you so much for coming here. You seem to be the absolute perfect candidate for this role, with your life experience, just bringing that and the fact that you seem to have the ability of getting along with everybody, which is such a struggle for most of us.

Mr. Chair, I will turn my time over to MPP Kusendova.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Mr. Spacek. Thank you so much for being here and for putting your name forward for public service.

I represent the city of Mississauga. It's the third-largest city in Ontario, and we certainly have our very own transportation challenges. Even before COVID, commuting to downtown Toronto to get to Queen's Park, I would sometimes have to leave an hour and a half ahead of time to make sure that I am on time for question period or for morning proceedings; and certainly the driving distance is only about 35 kilometres, so it shouldn't take an hour and a half.

I'm not really very familiar with the transportation situation in the north, so for the benefit of the members of our committee, could you maybe tell us a little bit about some of the challenges that northern communities are having in terms of transportation?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Four minutes left for the government side.

Mr. Alan Spacek: Thank you for that question. It's going to be a very simple answer because unfortunately there is not a lot of transportation infrastructure that exists in northern Ontario. There are 147 communities, of the 444 in the province, that are in northern Ontario. I'll speak to the FONOM territory, where there are 110. Of those 110, there are five cities. A city is a community of 10,000 or more. They're not large cities. The rest of those communities—over 80% of those communities are under 5,000 people, and over 50% are communities under 2,000 people, so you can appreciate the different dynamics that are in play there, and they're often spread quite far apart geographically. There certainly is a challenge there, but as I have mentioned in previous questions and discussions, there's a lot of potential in northern Ontario. We have room to grow, and the economy has the ability to grow and make Ontario prosper as a whole.

I think it would be a good investment by the government to increase its presence when it comes to public transportation. Rail and bus really are the only two options. I think there is some existing infrastructure in rail that we need to maximize. There are some growth opportunities there and, obviously, in bus, the same.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: For example, in my city of Mississauga, we are currently building the Hurontario LRT, which is a major investment that is bringing a lot of jobs to Mississauga and boosting our economy. Can you tell us a little bit more about what kind of innovative transportation solution you would like to see in the north?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Well, in the ideal world, we would have a track that would facilitate introducing rapid transit, whether it's light or high-speed. Unfortunately, that's not the case, because there were 13 years of neglect previously. There was not a lot of support for the maintenance of that kind of infrastructure, so there's some work to do. We're also the only jurisdiction left in Canada that doesn't have four lanes going across it. When you come from Quebec, your four lanes stop, and it's hit and miss until you get to the Manitoba border. So to fill that gap not just with highway infrastructure, there should be an opportunity in high-speed transportation as well.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Thank you so much. I will pass it on to MPP Coe now.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Coe, go ahead.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, sir. Thank you for being with the committee today. We have a number of past municipal politicians on this committee, yes: MPP Bouma and myself, who served for 13 years on both the Whitby town council and Durham regional council. Not unlike your own background, it brings a lot of diversity in several areas—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): One minute left.

Mr. Lorne Coe: —one of which is in transportation, but also some of the challenges that extend beyond the communities that you represent. But added to that, given

the added background and practical experiences that you do bring to this particular appointment, can you talk a little bit more broadly about what qualifications you think you would bring to this particular appointment, please?

Mr. Alan Spacek: Certainly. Again, as I previously stated, my awareness of the need to have that piece of rail infrastructure in place for the mining and forestry sectors, any of the resource-based industries, as well as the developing/manufacturing sector that we are experiencing in northern Ontario. Then there's the obligation, I think, to provide public transportation. I'm acutely aware of that. In my municipal life previously, that was always an ongoing discussion about getting a similar level of support in northern Ontario which southern Ontario enjoys when it comes to support for public transportation—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Mr. Spacek. That concludes our time allowed. Thank you for your presentation.

MR. PATRICK ROGERS

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Patrick Rogers, intended appointee as member, Ontario Educational Communications Authority.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now, we will move to our next presenter, Mr. Patrick Rogers, nominated as member of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority.

As you may be aware, Mr. Rogers, 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. With the questioning, we will start with the government side, followed by the official opposition, 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. Go ahead, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Thank you, Chair. I do have an opening statement this morning. Is it all right if I begin?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Perfect. Good morning. My name is Patrick Rogers. I'm happy to join you today to discuss an appointment to the board of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority. I'm joining you today from Ottawa, where this September, I will mark having spent half my life after attending Carleton University and never finding my way home to Toronto, where I was born and raised.

0950

Today, I'm the chief executive officer of Music Canada, the trade association for Canada's major music labels. I took on the role in January of this year, following an interim period last year. In a couple of weeks' time, I will have been with the organization for five years.

The organization is most commonly thought of as a leading proponent of copyright law and the economic value of Canada's music industry, much of which is found here in Ontario. But the COVID-19 pandemic has forced

the industry as a whole to come together to tell the story of the entire community, from artists to guitar techs, sound teams, venue owners, songwriters, aspiring talent and household names. I'm proud of the role that Music Canada has played through this time.

Prior to joining Music Canada, I worked in federal politics as political staff. Most recently, I was the director of policy to the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. There I worked closely with cultural stakeholders from across the country, working on everything from reviewing Canada's broadcasting system to allow for greater choice in channel packages, to helping arrange the National Day of Honour in commemoration of Canada's military participation in Afghanistan, to preparing the government of Canada for the 2017 celebration of our country's sesquicentennial.

Most importantly for today, the work in that office that I'd like to highlight is my involvement in Northern Lights, the sound-and-light show on Parliament Hill. If you've not seen the show from the lawn of Parliament Hill telling the story of Canada upon the walls of Centre Block, I highly recommend watching it on the Canadian Heritage website. While the program has been updated over the years, the original, released in 2015, remains in place. It is quite a feat. Telling the story of Canada in 30 minutes in a fun and entertaining way for all ages is quite the challenge. As I think of the educational focus of TVO, I think of the opportunities that exist there.

Prior to my time at Canadian Heritage, I worked for four years in the Prime Minister's office, first as an issues adviser and then as the manager of parliamentary affairs. I had the opportunity to brief the Prime Minister on all things parliamentary, including the business of the House and standing committees not too dissimilar to this one. I will note here that at those morning briefings was the now Minister of Education, and that is where I first met him.

I will say here that I believe that one of the highest forms of public service is to do what you have done: win a nomination for a party, put your name on a ballot and be elected to public office to represent the people of your community. But you don't do it entirely alone. If we were meeting in-person today, sitting behind you or in the back of the room would be a handful of staff, usually young, energetic and less attached to families and mortgages. We ask a great deal of political staff. We ask them to make difficult decisions under significant pressure, with great risks as the reward for failure. But I loved being a political staffer. I recommend it to any young person who wants a shot at making a difference in the world. That is why, whenever I'm given the chance, I take the opportunity to speak to students thinking about working in politics and share some of my hard-earned lessons learned.

Prior to the Prime Minister's office, I worked as a junior political staffer for the Minister of Natural Resources, and prior to that, Larry Miller, the former MP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, gave me my first job on the hill.

Lastly, I will also note that my first political experience was as an intern to the NDP MP for Winnipeg Centre, Pat Martin, in the fall of 2005, and as an intern for the late Labour MP Malcolm Wicks, who was a junior energy

minister in the Blair government in the UK in the beginning of 2006. I obviously did not continue along those university-assigned partisan lines, but I will tell you this: Those experiences left me with a very deep understanding of the nature of political disagreement. So often, we are all guilty of assuming ignorance from the other side of an issue. My time with Pat Martin taught me that he and his colleagues were incredibly genuine in their beliefs, and it's something I've always carried forward in partisan settings.

My connection to TVO is the same as many my age. Long before Pixar brought Woody and Buzz Lightyear to life when no one was around, Today's Special brought Jeff the mannequin alive in a department store with his friend Muffy Mouse. And of course, I, too, was disappointed that the host of Polka Dot Door always missed Polkaroo. Lastly, I must point out that many a Sunday morning growing up was spent watching a taped version of the classic film Elwy Yost had presented the night before on Saturday Night at the Movies. Soon, TVO's children's programming will re-enter my household, as my daughter Grace nears the right age.

Today, The Agenda with Steve Paikin still is an important cultural touchpoint, and many of the show's episodes have touched on issues important to Ontario's creative culture industries.

I believe this appointment fits at a nice cross-section of my experience and skill without conflicting with my professional responsibilities. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Mr. Rogers. We will go to the government side. They have nine and a half minutes. MPP Martin? Go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. You have a fascinating background and a fascinating current position with Music Canada. I was very interested to hear what you had to say about all that.

I guess one thing I'm wondering is what interested you in applying for a position as a board member with TVO.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: I thank the member for the question. I think time in politics is short, and yet a desire to have some involvement in public service remains strong. So when I saw the opportunity to put both my experience with broadcasting regulations as well as with digital platforms, which TVO is a part of—digital space is a big part of what my members do now in my current role, as I said in my opening statement—this seemed like an excellent spot for me to be able to do this work again, without any conflict in my professional responsibilities.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Bouma, go ahead.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Chair. Through you: Mr. Rogers, thank you for joining us today. I really appreciate your resumé. It can't be lost on you that it's interesting that Mr. Rogers is here before us to join TVO. That made me chuckle when I saw that.

Part of TVO's mandate is to ensure our students have access to quality online content to support their learning,

especially when our schools have had to turn to remote learning, as they have in the last year. With your experience, I was wondering if you could fill us in a little bit more about how you feel that you could support that specifically.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Thank you so much for the question from the member. Look, I've been very fortunate. My daughter is 16 months old, so we've just missed the need to take part in online learning at this stage. But obviously, the pandemic has required us to look very closely at making sure that these tools are available to schools, students and parents themselves.

I think one of the more interesting facets of this entire space, though, is the changes in digital technology, both in terms of the actual technology but also the delivery to the expected end user. One of the most interesting things about the digital space is that people closer to your and my age enjoy the idea that digital properties reflect what we're most used to. The ability to flip through the channels, for instance, is something that is still important to a certain level of user, but children, who have never experienced that, don't find any need for it. As we move further and further into the digital space, as bandwidth becomes more and more available, it's important that all services, including public services, push the limits on that delivery to something that is useful, rather than being a nostalgic reminder of what we might have remembered from before.

My hope is that my participation in the board is to help provide that insight. Obviously, my members are leaders in this here in Canada and around the world, in terms of the music industry. Whatever advice and suggestions I can provide on that, I look forward to that opportunity.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you very much. I'll turn it over to MPP Pang, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Five minutes left for the government side. MPP Pang, go ahead.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you: Mr. Rogers, nice to meet you here. My son, who is in grade 6, is a big fan of TVO and TVOKids, so I have a lot of opportunity to watch many programs of theirs.

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I can see TVO also has a cultural role, and you certainly bring a strong background when it comes to promoting Canadian music and culture. Can you speak more to the work you've done in this field? How do you think you can share that expertise in supporting TVO's cultural role?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to talk about this. I'm a huge fan of Canadian culture. I believe my experience shows that. I'm happy to share that with you today.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, I think the sound and light show, while just a single product, was an amazing project to work on in terms of both how do we tell stories in Canada about ourselves, about where we've been and where we'd like to go, and how that conversation is always evolving as our society's views on different aspects of our history are always changing.

I think that it's an incredibly important role. It's one of the reasons why, for instance, in the Broadcasting Act,

TVO is a mandatory carriage. It's important that no matter what package any Ontarian has, TVO is required. I think that serves an important place not only in terms of making sure that quality children's programming is available, but as well, public affairs shows like *The Agenda*.

Personally, now, in my current role, I spend a lot of time promoting all Canadian music, because although the membership that I represent is owned by different places internationally, the goal of the company here in Canada is to make Canadian music for Canadian ears. Back when offices were a thing—and we look forward to when they are again—each company had offices full of Ontarians making music for Ontarians. We're big believers in that.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. Now I want to pass the floor.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Nicholls, I see your hand. Go ahead.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes. Thank you very much, Chair, and good morning, Mr. Rogers. I've always had a strong interest in music. You may know that I have an award-winning daughter, Brooke, who is building a career in music, but in the field of gospel music. I'll tell you, that's a tough gig. It really is a tough gig in Canada, anyway. Obviously, I'd like to see that expanded. In the US, she's been down to Nashville, but it's a much larger market down there, as you can well—maybe I need to put a country and western hat on her and put a little twang in her gospel music, and she'd be doing well.

But listen, very quickly, can you talk a little bit more about your experience in working with political representatives across party lines? What have you learned from that?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, I thank the member for the question and wish his daughter well in the highly competitive field of music. It's one of the most amazing pieces, to watch anyone with such skill taking part in any activity like that. To put yourself out there is so tough. It's hard enough for me to put myself out here for this committee meeting, let alone go out and sing. So thank you for the opportunity.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Just one minute left.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Look, as I said in my opening statement, I actually have some cross-partisan experience. I think, though, the most important piece of this is—not to make any elected official nervous here, but these jobs are not for life. Partisan politics tends to be a short time of anyone's career and second chapters are required.

My focus over the last five years with Music Canada has been utilizing not my partisan background, but my understanding of government: the machinery of government and demystifying government of all levels for other cultural community groups. It's something I take great pride in, and it involves, obviously, working with people from all political stripes. It will not surprise the member to learn that in the outside world—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Mr. Rogers. The government side time is up. Now we will move to the opposition, and I see MPP Stiles. MPP Stiles, go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Rogers, for joining us here today. As you noted, our role here is really an important one: We are here to provide some modicum of transparency and accountability around the Conservative government's appointments process. As you're probably also aware, we've had a number of issues that this government has had around some very partisan appointments, including, most recently, one to TFO, where the government attempted to appoint some former donor/supporter to TFO who actually isn't francophone. It was not well received.

Anyway, Mr. Rogers, I want to ask you some very regular questions we ask in this committee. I know you understand why, and why we have to have you on record in this regard. The first question is, have you ever donated to the Conservative Party of Canada or the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and if so, how much? I know that it may go back a ways, so I understand if you don't have a full accounting, but if you can give us some sense, that would be great.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, I thank the member for the question. I'm afraid I'm not familiar with all of the examples that the member was referring to off the top, but I'm happy to be here today and answer any questions that she may have.

I do not have a full accounting of all of my political donations, but I don't believe it will surprise you to learn that as someone with a background as a political staffer, I do make political donations to both the federal Conservative Party and to the provincial party when I am able, and at a level that I believe is appropriate at the current time for my family's budget. I believe all of that information is publicly available.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is. Just as an example, would it make sense to you if I told you that a very preliminary search showed a little over \$3,000 in donations to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario since 2018?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: I believe that that would be roughly in line. The only other thing: In the interest of full transparency, I do note that I do present a small issue to the tracking system. My legal name is Miles Patrick Rogers, and so, depending on who inputs it, even though I'll put quotation marks around "Patrick," as it is the name that I've gone by my entire life, depending on filling out the forms—I try to make sure that I always fill them out to reflect my full legal name. It's just a family tradition that we've always had. To make it even more difficult, my baby daughter—we've named her Caroline Grace Rogers but intend to refer to her as Grace as well.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you for that. That's helpful, in fact, and I'm sure there are many Rogerses—I know, maybe different relations, not necessarily related to you—who contribute to the Conservative Party.

You talked about this in your introduction: You were working in the Prime Minister's office, under Stephen Harper. You reported daily on Senate operations, House of Commons issues etc. You were also an issues manager, assisting the ministers, generally, with communications. Did you have anything to do with the Minister of

Education, Stephen Lecce, when he was also working in the Prime Minister's office?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, through you to the member, yes, I worked in the Prime Minister's office with the minister, and as you will note, I mentioned that in my opening statement.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And so, you have had a working relationship with the Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce. I just want to get that on the record again.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, through you to the member, yes, as I said in my opening statement, this is a fact. I believe he was responsible for media liaisons, and I was responsible for parliamentary affairs. It's—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry to interrupt you. I've got a lot of questions. Apologies.

Did anybody approach you to suggest that you apply to be on the board of TVO?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, through you to the member, obviously, at some point, I indicated an interest in continuing public service to Ontarians, but I'm afraid that I've sort of aged out of being a political staffer. So at some point, I was contacted by appointment staff—it was actually some time ago because it didn't really meet with my professional responsibilities at the time. But that interest was out there, and now I'm here.

1010

Ms. Marit Stiles: And have you had any contact with Premier Ford just generally in the last couple of years, since he became Premier of the province?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, I'm not sure if that question was somewhat cut off. I'm—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry. I've got a bad connection here. Have you had any contact with anybody in the Premier's office or the Premier himself over recent years, since he was elected as Premier?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, through you to the member, I'm the chief executive officer of a trade association for major companies that interact in the provincial space, so the short answer is yes, I have interactions with people in the Premier's office.

If the member is asking me specifically about the appointment, however, no, I've not spoken to the Premier about any appointments or to anyone in his office about that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Have you talked to anybody in the Ministry of Education specifically in relation to this appointment?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: As I mentioned in an answer to an earlier question, a big part of my role now in a professional space is to help demystify politics and partisan politics. Specifically, I'm here now as a nominee for a board, so yes, in order to do so, I require some sort of

interaction with political staff in the minister's office in order to get set up and go.

Ms. Marit Stiles: In the Minister of Education's office?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Yes. There are people publicly available who have "appointments" in their title.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I have a few questions related to TVO. Actually, I want to go back a bit, because as you know, we've been talking—you mentioned this before, but TVO is embarking, I guess, or the government is floating the concept of making it possible for Ontario children to make the situation we're in right now permanent and actually do online education full-time from kindergarten to grade 12. I just want to ask you whether you think that TVO is actually equipped to run that.

I also want to ask your opinion about why you think it's necessary for the school boards to actually pay TVOntario, under this proposed model, to provide that service that boards have previously provided—some of them for many, many years in a consortium etc., on their own.

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, through you to the member, I'm happy to answer all of these questions, but I will note—again, one of the unique parts of this process is that I meet with the committee at this stage after suggesting some interest and then having the government suggest interest, but before any kind of onboarding process happens. So I can share with the member my thoughts generally, but I have not had access to any information about the inner workings of TVO or—

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate that; I do.

Maybe another way I could come at this is, in your conversations with staff in the Ministry of Education, the minister's office and, I don't know, maybe with the minister himself, have they expressed to you any sense of what their plans are for TVOntario in terms of the shift to full-time, permanent online learning for students in Ontario?

Mr. Patrick Rogers: Chair, I thank the member for the question specifically in order to help clear up any misunderstanding of my answer to the previous question.

My only interaction with the minister's office to this point has been to help make sure that I'm here and prepared for the process that I'm taking part in—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Mr. Rogers, my apology for the interruption, but we have run out of time for the meeting.

The intended appointees we heard from today were selected from a certificate that is about to expire. The Clerk will send out an email to ask whether there is unanimous consent to extend the deadline for this consideration.

This committee is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1015.

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Mr. Aris Babikian (Scarborough–Agincourt PC)

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