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(Hansard)**

A-5

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des débats
(Hansard)**

A-5

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 23 November 2021

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

2^e session
42^e législature

Mardi 23 novembre 2021

Chair: Gilles Bisson
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

Président : Gilles Bisson
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 23 November 2021

Mardi 23 novembre 2021

The committee met at 0902 in committee room 2 and by video conference.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): The committee comes to order. We're meeting today. We have a couple of appointments. I'm going to put my glasses on so I can see what I'm doing.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Before we do that, we have a subcommittee report that I believe Mr. Yakabuski would like to move.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do, Mr. Chair. I'll have to get my glasses on just so I get all the words right.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We're the same age; that's why.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, November 18, 2021, on the order-in-council certificate dated November 8, 2021.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Okay. With that, is there any discussion? I don't see any discussion. All those in favour, please signify by raising your hand. Those opposed? All right, carried. Very good.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. ALAYNE CRAWFORD

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and government party: Alayne Crawford, intended appointee as member, Collège d'arts appliqués et de technologie La Cité collégiale board of governors.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Let's start with our first official appointment. This one is for the member of the Collège d'arts appliqués et de technologie La Cité collégiale. We have, for the board of governors, Alayne—I believe it's Alayne—Crawford. Madame Crawford, vous êtes capable de parler en français, si vous voulez. On a de la traduction et beaucoup de monde qui parle français. Or you can do it in English; it's up to you.

M^{me} Alayne Crawford: Excellent. Merci, monsieur Bisson.

Good morning. My name is Alayne Crawford—c'est anglo. I'd like to start by thanking the committee for this opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mais d'abord, j'aimerais raconter une petite histoire : My journey to here starts with being born in Calgary to two outstanding individuals, Ann and Sandy, who came from Saskatchewan. A short while later, Ann and Sandy picked up their two young daughters and relocated to Denver, Colorado, for a quick adventure before returning north to Calgary. A few years after that, their youngest daughter, myself, picked Carleton for post-secondary and relocated to our nation's capital, which is where I've now resided for over 17 years and which is where I've built a career, and I've established a beautiful family of my own.

I share this because, first of all, it explains to those of you who are sports fans why I'm a Denver Broncos-loving, Saskatchewan Roughriders loyalist who turned into an Ottawa Redblacks season ticket holder. The more substantive reason is that this anecdote contains an important subnarrative, one that is much less evident but very relevant to our conversation today: a lifetime filled with a commitment to and a love and respect for both our official languages.

Those parents had the foresight to instill a love of both our official languages in Canada into my sister and I from an early age, registering us in one of the few French immersion programs in Calgary at that time. When we moved to Denver, because the junior high didn't offer advanced enough programming, three afternoons a week I would hop on a school bus all by myself to attend a grade 10 French class at the nearby high school. Then, when I relocated to Ottawa close to two decades ago to attend university, French and Spanish were both foundational elements of my learning plan throughout the four years of my undergraduate studies.

Parler les deux langues officielles m'a positionné pour des aventures que je n'aurais jamais pu imaginer. In politics, it allowed me to experience the thrill of working on a national campaign and the privilege of visiting communities across Canada and the world, often travelling into the heart of Quebec, where we would plan and execute events on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Since transitioning into the private sector over a decade ago, having a firm grasp of both French and English has helped accelerate my learnings and opportunities, whether it was running national programs for the Canadian Automobile Association, serving as Shaw Communications director of government relations or, most recently, at the head of government and regulatory affairs for IBM Canada.

Cette appréciation fondamentale et cette passion pour un long éventail de langues et de cultures que mes parents m'ont inculquées dans l'enfance est une valeur fondamentale que mon mari et moi sommes maintenant heureux de réinvestir dans notre famille. Our oldest son is in his second year of a full French education at Francojeunesse here in Sandy Hill in Ottawa, is thriving in that environment and is already keen to correct my pronunciation.

On a somewhat unrelated note, the additional perspective, which I wanted to share before welcoming your questions, that has relevance for what we are here to talk about today is an understanding that I've only come to much more recently.

Since joining the IBM Canada family in 2019, I've grown my understanding and appreciation for the need to rethink the ways that many modern societies view education and hiring. While I will be forever grateful for the experiences and learnings that I curated during my two formal degrees, in today's day and age, it's become readily evident to me that it's simply no longer the case that there is only one path to a great career in technology or otherwise. Necessary skills can be acquired in many different ways. The workplace of today is full of jobs that do not require bachelor's degrees like mine, but do demand special skills that can be taught in rapid fashion via a whole host of avenues. The ability to skill and reskill talent at all stages of their career journey is an opportunity and a challenge for academia, government and industry to collaborate on together, embracing a trend that has only been accelerated, I believe, by the pandemic.

In closing, the opportunity to serve Ontario and my community in this volunteer capacity genuinely excites me. I believe I bring relevant professional board expertise to the table, which, in addition to my enthusiasm to learn and contribute, is a powerful combination and one which I would love to invest as a membre du conseil d'administration pour La Cité.

On that note, je suis heureuse de recevoir des questions dans l'une ou l'autre des langues officielles, mais parce que je suis un peu nerveuse, si ça va, je vais répondre en anglais. Ça va?

Le Président (M. Gilles Bisson): Ça va très bien. Merci beaucoup, madame Crawford.

Avant qu'on débute avec les questions de l'opposition officielle, I'd like to welcome Mr. Babikian. If you can please introduce yourself and tell us where you are, for the record.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Aris Babikian. I'm in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Very good. Okay. We will move to the first round of questioning. This is from the official opposition and Mrs. Stiles. You're up.

M^{me} Marit Stiles: Bonjour, tout le monde, et merci, madame, d'être ici. Vous comprenez qu'on a beaucoup de nominations partisans par ce gouvernement conservateur. J'ai donc quelques questions sur votre histoire avec le parti. Je sais que vous avez dit quand même que vous avez travaillé pour M. Harper. C'est vrai?

M^{me} Alayne Crawford: Oui, c'est vrai.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Et—and I'll go in English, because it's probably easier for everybody else here as well.

M^{me} Alayne Crawford: Ça va.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Can you explain a little bit more about your role in working for Mr. Harper? I believe you said you worked for him from—which years was it, please?

0910

Ms. Alayne Crawford: It was about 2008 to 2010. I worked for him in a communications function first, then on the 2008 national campaign, and then had the honour of serving for him as one of the members of his advanced team, executing logistics and events across the country and the world.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. And in terms of this position at the college, were you approached to apply for this position? Did anybody suggest it to you?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: No, I had actually expressed interest in giving back via the portal, if you will, a while ago. As I continue to actually be more and more removed from politics, I'm still wanting to give back to my community in some way, shape or form. So I had expressed interest in the past, and I believe that was how I was flagged as a potential candidate for this role.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And did you apply for others? I know that when you go through the portal, you could sometimes pick several different possible agencies. Did you pick other ones as well, or was this your one?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: A whole host of them. Although, I do have to say this opportunity did talk more about talents and skills, and that certainly is increasingly of interest in my current role, so I was enthusiastic about the opportunity.

I am also a fellow through the Carleton masters of political management program and involved in various capacities as a mentor and in other roles via the University of Ottawa. Those are more informal roles. But the opportunity to do something even more substantive certainly excited me.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Can you tell me if you are currently or if you have ever been a member of either the Conservative Party of Canada or the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: I have, of both at various times, but I am not currently.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And do you recall when you stopped being a member of those parties?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: I'm a relatively new mom, so I'm going to play that card. No, I don't believe I remember. It would have been within the last couple of years, but for no particular reason other than having not renewed, to be honest.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I understand that. Out of curiosity: You're a relatively new mom. You've got a new baby or something?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: I feel like I can't claim that—he's 21 months—but I feel like it's all still a blur.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Totally. I understand that. I really feel that, yes.

I should say off the top too, I definitely was raised in a very anglophone province and did French immersion. I don't live in Ottawa, so it's a real struggle to maintain your French, believe me, in Toronto. Your French is sounding pretty good. I assume that the board meets "en français." Are you confident that you can do the work that's needed in French?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Absolutely. In both my capacity at Shaw and now at IBM, I have worked extensively in French. I'm very nervous today, to be quite candid, so you're not getting the best of it. My business comprehension level is honest—in order to be able to understand others; I'm not always the best at expressing myself.

That is part of my commitment in this role, in addition to wanting to learn more about this incredible institution here in Ottawa. I want to be forced, to your point, to use it even more, especially as I look to be an example for my sons as they go through a full French education.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate that. And I apologize—I do appreciate that, actually. I want to say, a few months ago we had an appointee who was appearing before us who was being appointed to a very senior position, like Chair of TFO. I mean, he could speak some French, and that was fine, but really I think there are some positions on some boards and agencies where you really do need a francophone. In this case, I don't know if you'd be the only non-francophone on the board or if there are others. Anyway, not to compare you to that, but it didn't work out so well.

I think it is one of those things where if you're committed to it and you continue to try to work on your French as well, it will really help. And I also appreciate being nervous. I've had to speak French often in circumstances where I was feeling a bit nervous, and it doesn't always come across as well as it could. Anyway, I appreciate the effort.

So we talked a bit about your applying and your previous membership in the PC Party and the federal Conservative Party. Have you donated to the Conservative Party, either provincially or federally, over the last few years, please?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Certainly, and not just in this province but in other provinces as well. Often that's supporting the people over the politics, to be honest. Because of my past life, often they are running for the Conservative Party, but I've also supported, either with my time or my resources, a number of progressive candidates in Ottawa, municipally and otherwise.

I have to say, the further I get away from politics, while I still hold true to my Conservative roots, it's really more about the people than the political ideologies that we all hold near and true. I really am genuinely focused—I married a Liberal. I have a family that consists of all political spectrums. While my roots and my beliefs are closely held, I am very excited to support all political stripes as they put their names on my ballot, because I admire what you have all done, which is not something I can claim to have done just yet. So thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you. As I mentioned in my first remarks, there's no question that this government has made a very large number of political appointments, and this is really the only public vetting opportunity. It's really the only opportunity where the public could, in theory, see the people who are being appointed to these positions, which is why we, in the official opposition, have really pushed hard to increase the number of people who can appear before us. We get through a tiny fraction of the people who could be appointed here, and I think it's a real disservice because we really do have an opportunity here to also highlight interesting people who want to take on these roles for really good reasons.

But we have seen a very large number of, particularly, failed Conservative candidates: people who ran, maybe, in the last election, couldn't get elected and then ended up being appointed by the government, which I think does a disservice to everyone because it paints a picture which is perhaps not fair to those folks who really do want to do good community service.

So you have donated to the Conservative Party over the years, and locally, in the Ottawa region, you've made some donations to folks like Lisa MacLeod, I understand.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. And in terms of the college, could you explain a little bit about what you see to be some of the—one of the things we've certainly heard from this sector over the years is concern about both government underfunding as well as some of the restrictions the government has put around what kinds of services, for example, student unions can provide. Could you talk a little bit about what you see as some of the obstacles or hurdles that you're going to be dealing with at the collège d'arts appliqués when you're on the board? What are some of the issues that are arising right now?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: To be honest, much like when I came into this role, I don't claim to have all the answers just yet. What I would really like to do is maybe connect with you in a couple months' time, should I be successful, in order to be able to have that conversation. Really, I want to be in listening mode for the original phase to better understand what their realities are and what they are facing and what are some of the pain points, and then look to past experiences, some of the professional experience I bring to the table, some of my network, in order to be able to see what we could do to create a more conducive environment for learning and lift everybody up at La Cité.

I think, fundamentally, from far away, I see two opportunities readily available which I hope I could help with, which would be just enhancing whatever I can in terms of the connection to industry, locally, for the college. I think working to create learning opportunities and collaborating more is something we can all do more of, and if there's something I'm able to contribute in that regard, it's something I certainly see as that initial opportunity. The other thing would just be lifting up the brands and being able to talk even louder and prouder about what they're doing there, because I think there's some incredible work under way.

All that to say, what I would really like to do is genuinely connect with you in short order to be able to talk a little bit more about that, because I don't have the answers today, and I'd rather just listen first to better understand what the realities are.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I appreciate that. I do. What I've found—I'm the education critic for the opposition. I don't really focus on post-secondary per se, so much, but what I do hear from students in post-secondary is how increasingly difficult it is for them, both because of tuition and the costs of education generally, but also just the cost of living and how unaffordable it has become in Ontario generally to live. For students, that of course also applies.

0920

And so I'm really interested when there are opportunities like this and people who maybe have relationships with the government are on boards like this. I'm very interested in them taking—I really encourage you to also listen to the students, to what they're struggling with, and to use the connections that you have with this government to actually advocate for those students and for support for them, because at the end of the day, that's what's falling apart. We're sending these young people out into the world with increasing debt and an increasingly unaffordable province to live in, and it's a rough start, especially right now, coming out of COVID.

Anyways, that's all my questions, so thank you very much.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: It was a pleasure. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Okay. That's fine. We'll move to the government caucus, and I believe you have about 10 minutes left. Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much for joining us this morning, Alayne. I don't speak French. I'm a unilingual anglophone, but I know how to say good morning and stuff like that. But I have a number of siblings who are fluent in it. One actually studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, so he is fluent in both Parisian French and Québécois.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: MPP Yakabuski, if I can: My sister is the same. She actually has two degrees, in French and Spanish, and reads 300-page books in Spanish. She is really my guiding light in all of this, so we have something in common there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There you go.

I can say that just recently, the Minister of Education approved a significant funding increase, so we're going to have a French-language school in Arnprior. If you're in Ottawa, you know where Arnprior is, right on the border of the city of Ottawa in my riding. So we're very excited about that.

Alayne, in a province home to over 622,000 francophones, the largest French-speaking population in Canada outside Quebec, there is a need for greater access to high-quality French education. It is incredibly important that francophone students have greater choice and accessibility to high-quality French post-secondary education and skills development. Can you tell us about your interest in French

education and the importance you place on having a province that offers top-tier French education?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Absolutely. As I've spoken to in my remarks, I fundamentally believe that a French education opens up opportunities for all of us. I do think I'm demonstrating by choosing to have my children both go through the French education system here in Ontario—it's another signal that I believe in what it is.

I also have a daughter who is on the spectrum. She has Down syndrome and she is going through the special education system in this province. Time and time again I'm reminded how fortunate we are to live in this province, based on the quality of education I'm experiencing firsthand by my children.

I never went to elementary school in French in Ontario, or high school, but through second-hand experience in recent years, I have to say I am fully supportive of the education system we offer here in this province today, and excited by it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I'm going to pass it now to MPP Babikian.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Babikian, you have the floor.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Good morning.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Good morning.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you for coming and sharing your interest and your ideas with us. There is a growing concern regarding both a skills gap and the need for more workers within the skilled trades. While there is a surplus of good, well-paying jobs available, many businesses struggle to find people willing to take on those jobs.

Seeing as one of the fundamental components of our college system is to train young people to fill local labour market needs, what do you believe we need to do better in order to help close this gap?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: I think there's a great opportunity here—this is a personally held view—for government, industry and academia to work together more closely. I think there's leadership being shown by this government that we could expand on and use to better fit the training opportunities that exist currently and closer align them, having industry step up earlier on in the process in order to have everybody involved in creating a workforce that reflects the demands of today. I also think what those skills are today will change in three to five years, and there needs to be some flexibility in the system in order to be able to appreciate that maybe four-year degrees are not the answer for all roles and that we, as a culture of lifelong learners, could look to see if there are not new ways in which we can all learn.

Again, I do think there is a large role here for industry to play, in terms of working even more closely with post-secondary, if they're open to it, to ensure that there are open doors, that there are work-integrated learning opportunities so that we are producing the workforce that reflects the energy, resources and ambition of this country.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you. I believe my colleague Norm Miller is going to ask the next question.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Miller, you have the floor.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Ms. Crawford, for putting your name forward for this position. The idea of bridging the gap between education and career skills is something often talked about within our post-secondary sector. I believe you mentioned in your opening remarks about the need to rethink the ways that modern societies view education and hiring. So what are some of the gaps you have seen and what steps do you believe are necessary to better prepare our young people for meaningful careers? I think you alluded a bit to that in your last answer, but if you can fill us in some more that would be great. Thanks.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: I'm happy to. I would reflect on my earlier comments, as well, that I don't have all the answers right now, even though I do genuinely want to get into this role to better understand the current realities facing the system, because I'm only looking at this from a very certain angle at this point in time. I do think there are opportunities, and you see that across industry, for industry to put their hands up and offer things like 12-week paid internships for not just talent that's coming out of post-secondary institutions but for those who are choosing to go through a career change.

I do think there are opportunities for all of us to ensure that our students aren't graduating without having had opportunities to pursue on-the-job working opportunities. I think that is critical in terms of setting everybody up for success, and helping show a path forward as well. I think it's the least that we owe the next generation in terms of creating those opportunities for them to seize upon.

Those are just my initial comments. I don't want to spend too much time just repeating some of my previous thoughts there, but I would be happy, certainly, to expand on this conversation in future as I am hopeful to gain a better understanding of what the realities are and where we might be missing out on some opportunities at this time.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for that and I think some excellent points.

I'll pass it on to MPP Martin.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Martin, you have about two and a half minutes—wherever you are. I don't think she's in the room, Mr. Miller.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Sabawy, please go ahead. We called the wrong member.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It's okay. I'm subbing for PA Robin Martin.

My question is, with your vast expertise, what kind of value can you add to the college and the position you are appointed for, please? If you can reflect on some of the past experiences that can help you do the job.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Sure, absolutely. I think an understanding of the regulatory landscape at multiple levels of government and across the country. Right now, in my current role, I do have responsibilities from coast to coast, so I do have a familiarity with some examples of what's working in other jurisdictions that I think I could bring to the table, and just a general understanding of

public affairs and government relations. Those sorts of abilities, I think, could bring an additional perspective to the table, and obviously my understanding of industry and very relevant industry in terms of having been at IBM for close to three years now and hearing conversations on a daily, if not hourly, basis about the gaps in terms of our hiring needs and wants, and bringing that perspective to the table in terms of solutions we've explored—which are not the only answer—to address some of those issues.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You still have about a minute.

Mr. Pang? Yes, Mr. Pang, you can go.

0930

Mr. Billy Pang: Hi, nice to meet you, Ms. Crawford. Thank you for your presentation and putting your name forward. Lately, we are starting to hear a great deal about the concept of lifelong learning and upskilling our workforce, especially in the digital age. We are now constantly creating new and innovative ways to improve the way we work and deliver a better product. What sort of role do you see things like micro-credentials playing in the future of education?

Ms. Alayne Crawford: That's a great question. I think micro-credentials could open up a whole new opportunity for us to all have multiple careers as we choose, as I know many of you have. I think it's a quicker, light-touch, potentially more accessible option for individuals to gain new skills, new understandings that could position them for future success. So I'm excited by what it could do in terms of enhancing existing understanding and fine-tuning some skills.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You have to wrap up; you have about two seconds. I guess we're done.

Ms. Alayne Crawford: Two seconds? I'm done.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Thank you very much, Madame Crawford, for being here with us. We will advise you once the committee has voted.

MR. MARK BRICKELL

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Mark Brickell, intended appointee as member, Ontario Parole Board.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We are now going to go to the next concurrence, which is for the Ontario Parole Board: Mark Brickell. There you are, Mr. Brickell. If you want to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about why you should be on the board, that time will come off the government's. We'll start with your comments.

Mr. Mark Brickell: Good morning, Chair, Vice-Chair, members of the standing committee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before this committee and allowing me to answer any questions you may have related to my qualifications to stand as a member of the Ontario Parole Board. I look forward to our discussion.

My career has been one of public and community service, focused on improving the lives of others. While pursuing my undergraduate degree in political science, I

was fortunate to secure summer employment first as a correctional classification officer at the Thorold detention centre for two summers and then as a probation and parole officer in St. Catharines for one summer. These combined experiences opened my eyes to another world. Yes, some of those convicted had done really terrible things. Others committed lesser crimes but did so repeatedly. Most of them had really hard lives. Strikingly, many of them were just like you and me. They had made bad choices and were paying the price.

Through these roles I got to know a lot more about the people who served time in our criminal institutions. As a classification officer, I was the one who prepared reports and recommended where individuals would serve their time, in a maximum, medium, minimum or mental health institution. I was also the one who prepared and confirmed the details of pre-release plans.

Many of their stories were heartbreaking: stories of physical, psychological and sexual abuse as children; stories about their struggles with drugs and alcohol; stories of utter despair, hopelessness and mistreatment.

I also got to hear and read victim impact statements: the trauma, the residual fear, the anger and the hardships caused; some demanding harsh penalties; others wanting to forgive and find ways to reconciliation.

It was during these years that I determined I wanted my life to be about serving and helping others. My first job out of university was as a youth counsellor in a residential setting working for Niagara Centre for Youth Care. Here we worked with socially and emotionally disturbed youth and their families. These kids and their families were hurting greatly.

Initially, we focused our efforts on fixing the kid. This seemed to work wonderfully until, of course, we reunited them with their families and things would go right back to where we started almost immediately in a very high percentage of the cases. Then came along Dr. Jose Urbano, who introduced our organization to family systems theory. He helped us to understand that the child's conduct had not developed in isolation but rather as part of a family and bigger system. This was a game-changer. From that point on, we understood the necessity of working with the entire family if we were to bring about meaningful and lasting changes in family dynamics.

This new understanding was life-changing for me. I became completely fascinated by just how interconnected and interdependent we really are. As such, I decided to continue my studies at Niagara University, pursuing a master of science degree in education counselling, while still working at Niagara Centre for Youth Care. My formal education has included courses and training on cultural and racial sensitivity, alternative dispute resolution, active listening and counselling skills.

Around the time I graduated from Niagara University, I accepted a job at the adult learning centre within the Welland Roman Catholic separate school board, working as a counsellor, providing support to adults in transition. As you can imagine, the webs of interconnection among those who have spent time dealing with family services,

attending adult education programs and those dealing with the criminal justice system, whether as victims or criminals, were significant.

With this as my background, having already served as a school trustee for nearly 14 years, I decided to try out new political arenas, first as a city councillor, and then as a regional councillor. I loved my time in municipal politics. Back then, it was completely non-partisan. We would argue the merits of the matter before us and then often go for a beer and informally discuss what we might focus on next. It was a good time to be in municipal politics. During this period, I had the honour of serving as a member of the Niagara regional police services board, providing yet another viewpoint of the criminal justice system. I also served as vice-chair of the community and health services committee for Niagara region.

It is true that I sought election as a member of provincial Parliament in 2003, but like many before me and after me, Jim Bradley prevailed. I think that turned out to be a good thing for me. I'm grateful for the opportunities I've been given to serve my local community, first in economic development, advancing the smart growth and brownfield redevelopment agenda that has propelled Niagara to an even greater future, and second through my various roles at the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, advocating for conservation and the environment while getting the organization back on track.

In closing, I offer these words: Dignity matters; respect matters; compassion matters; fairness matters. We need to demonstrate empathy and respect for all persons with whom we engage—in this case, to victims and offenders alike. Thank you for listening to me. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Thank you, Mr. Brickell, and we're going to start with Mr. Yakabuski. We have about nine minutes, I think.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mark, for joining us. You alluded to your candidacy in 2003. That's when you and I first met, and I must say that you've aged much better than I have, I can tell you.

But anyway, you're going to get a lot of questions from the opposition this morning about your affiliation with the PC Party, and you've alluded to that and made it clear in your address. Your history speaks for itself, but I do hope that they spend some time talking to you about your qualifications and how qualified you are for this job. I can see, and I know from your background, that this is really a perfect match for Mark Brickell and the parole board.

What do you believe it takes, Mark, to be an effective member on the Ontario Parole Board?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you for the question, and I think you look great also.

I think what it takes most of all is to actually be a caring person, to be a person who actually cares about humanity, who cares equally about those who have been victimized by crime and those who are in these situations. That's the whole point of what I was trying to say in my opening remarks, is that when you start to look closely—and I got to look really closely at these people who were serving

time in the detention centre, for example. You got to see them up close and meet them, and you would hear the hardships of the stories.

This is systemic. It becomes a challenge in their lives. They're not unlike you; they're not unlike me. They are people who have made mistakes, and they need to have someone who will listen, someone who will engage them, someone who shows them empathy at all times and respect for the person. I believe that's the most essential characteristic, that we can demonstrate empathy and respect for the person. They may not like what we ultimately determine or decide, but I think it's really important that they understand that we are trying to understand and relate to them.

0940

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mark. I'm going to now pass it on to MPP Billy Pang.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Pang, you have the floor.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, Mr. Brickell, for putting your name forward. The parole board has to try to balance two imperatives that can come into conflict: on the one hand, the integration of offenders back into their community, and on the other, ensuring the safety of our communities. What factors do you take into consideration when you are doing this?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you for the question. I actually think that there is really no conflict in those two positions, because, in fact, I think in both cases we're trying to ensure the highest value, and that is the safety of the community. So in allowing for early release, the whole idea is that what we're trying to do is help them reintegrate in the safest way, in ways that we have some kind of understanding. There are conditions to that role. There are observations. The whole idea is to make it as safe a reintegration as possible. If we don't believe that person to be in a position where they're ready yet to re-enter society and for society to still be safe, then they don't get released.

But the whole idea of an early release is that we're trying to actually put them out there in the community so that they can have the best experience and that it's most likely to be safe for all of us, because, in other words, we know what the supports are that are in place for them at the time they leave, rather than that they leave at the end of their sentence and, really, we don't have any input in terms of how they reintegrate with society.

So I think there's that nice balance there. Again, if someone is not prepared for that and they don't have the right plan, they haven't worked through it or the circumstances of their crime suggest that they haven't yet done enough time, then of course they have to stay and carry out the rest of their sentence. But both parts of this are actually related to community safety.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you. I'll pass it to the next member.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Baber, you have about three and a half minutes. Go ahead, Mr. Baber—Mr. Babikian, excuse me. I saw somebody that wasn't there. My apologies.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I was wondering if there was someone new on the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Yes, there was an independent there. I didn't see him.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you very much, Chair.

And thank you very much, Mr. Brickell, for coming and having the courage to put in your name and go through the process, because I believe you have strong credentials to become an effective member of the board. What sort of engagement do you have in your community—volunteer work etc.—and what have you learned from it? How will it inform your work on the OPB?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you for that question. My connections and ties to this community are really broad and far-reaching. I've had very close ties to the education community. Because of my involvement with local councils and school boards, I've had the pleasure of working in conservation, in economic development. I've been able to work closely with all parts of this community, and that's whether it's working in connecting with the social services, whether it's being on the grape and wine festival board, whether it's volunteering for hospice. There are so many ways I've been involved, and I think that ties from education to the various municipalities to the police services board to mentoring young people to providing strategic advice to charities and to organizations.

I think one of the unique things about my career is that it has been so broad and so diverse that it has really offered me this tremendous perspective. I've been able to work with the persons with disabilities act and help to establish accessibility committees, both at the city of St. Catharines and in Niagara region. I've been able to advocate on behalf of other groups, including Indigenous communities, while I was at the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. So it's been a very broad, very interesting career, but I think it's one that positions me well to deal effectively with the very broad interests of the community.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Okay. We have roughly about a minute left, if somebody else wants to do a question.

Mr. Miller, you have the floor.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Mr. Brickell. I probably won't get my question in, or you'll have a very short answer, but I certainly would want to comment that you have quite a breadth of experience that seems perfectly suited to the role you have applied for. I certainly like your attitude about dignity, respect and fairness as well.

I'm just wondering about operating in a COVID environment. How do you think the OPB can adapt to not having in-person hearings, and how are your feelings about that? Do you have any concerns about that?

Mr. Mark Brickell: I actually think that these Zoom calls have been really interesting and good for so many of us. People also have the right to have their matters heard in a timely manner, and so it's important that we be able to reach as many people as possible.

People's lives are at stake, in terms of how they conduct their lives, how they carry on their lives—

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You're going to have to wrap up. You've only got a couple of seconds.

Interruption.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Oh, actually, you just ran out of time. She has a timer going here. It's pretty good.

All right. I want to thank you. We're now going to move to the official opposition and MPP Stiles. You have the floor.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning, and thanks for being here. I am Marit Stiles. I'm the MPP for Davenport, with the official opposition. I did want to start by just mentioning—Mr. Yakabuski referred to it already—that there has been a very large number—an exceedingly large number—of political appointments by this government since their election in 2018. We only get to see a very few appointees, actually, before us in this committee because the government won't let us sit for any longer than the bare minimum—because, really, this is the only opportunity, at least in theory, where the public can also get to watch or listen and that we, as MPPs, get a chance to vet appointees.

At the end of the day, the government has a majority, so they're going to appoint people anyway, but we have seen this tendency on the part of this government. So I absolutely will be asking about your political connections. I do appreciate that you were very upfront about them in your introduction and in your application, so I want to start by saying that—thank you.

But I do have a few questions that we tend to ask people when they have been appointed to these kinds of roles. This is a really important role. I do appreciate what you've talked a lot about, what you think you can contribute, and I will get into that. But first of all, I want to ask you if you were approached to apply for this position, and if so, by who.

Mr. Mark Brickell: No, I was not.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I noticed in your application that you applied to a number of different agencies and boards. Can you explain why you were applying to so many, and maybe a little bit about the other organizations or agencies that you applied to? Have you heard back about any of them?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you for that question. In short, I just went through the portal. I didn't really understand or have any knowledge of what they were. I took a look to see which positions there seemed to line up with my background and where I thought I could add value to something. I'm not one to just put my name in if I don't think I can add value somewhere, so I looked at situations not knowing, really, the process or how it works. Can you serve on one? Can you serve on two? How does that work? I had no idea what that was.

I put my name forward for the ones that I thought I could add some benefit and value to. I know the Social Benefits Tribunal was one of the ones that I put my name forward for. I put my name forward for licensing appeals—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, okay.

Mr. Mark Brickell: I can't remember, but I just looked at ones where I thought I had something to offer, and that's how I made my decision about where to apply.

0950

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, they do give us some of this information. I saw a couple of things like the Niagara Parks Commission, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, the Advisory Council to the Order of Ontario, Metrolinx.

You did mention that you have run as a candidate at the federal level, I guess, for the Conservative Party. Is that correct, again just to confirm?

Mr. Mark Brickell: No, that was provincially.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Provincial, okay. So I assume you've been a member of the PC Party of Ontario. Are you currently a member?

Mr. Mark Brickell: I couldn't confirm that. I think my membership has expired; I don't know for sure. It's not something that I keep ongoing. I've held party membership. It wouldn't surprise me if I had it or didn't have it right now. I just don't know.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. So probably then, based on my knowledge of these things, you're on some sort of a rolling membership thing so you don't have to worry about it, but you're not positive. But you wouldn't be surprised if you still were as well, right?

Mr. Mark Brickell: I wouldn't be surprised either way, but I believe my membership to both is actually expired right now. I actually don't know for sure.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And so you have also been a member of the federal Conservative Party of Canada?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Correct.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. In terms of donations, as a former candidate and such, it's not surprising to find that you've donated over the years. Can you talk a little bit about what you've donated in more recent years, perhaps even this year, and who you've donated to?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Yes. I would say I donate somewhere in the—it ranges anywhere from \$100 to maybe \$400 max in any one year, but typically it would be \$100 or \$200 a year, most frequently to Conservative candidates, absolutely, or to the Conservative Party generally.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So it wouldn't surprise you to know that you've donated almost \$2,000 to the PC Party of Ontario since 2017?

Mr. Mark Brickell: Since 2017? No. It could be. I don't know; I actually don't know.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Fair enough. To give you a heads-up, the government increased how much people can give to their party and other parties too, so you might be getting a call one day soon.

You were also, as I understand it, director of Brian Pallister's leadership campaign back in 2012. Can you confirm that?

Mr. Mark Brickell: I can absolutely confirm that I worked on his campaign, yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And can you explain your role in that campaign?

Mr. Mark Brickell: I was the director of organization and operations. For that campaign, I can assure you that he

ran as a—how did he describe himself? A “pragmatic centralist” is how he described himself.

Ms. Marit Stiles: All right. I have a few other questions, but I did want to say, as I said at the start of this, we’ve seen a very large number of especially former and particularly failed candidates for the Conservative Party appointed to various positions by this government. I think it’s probably even more than we’ve managed to nail down, but we’ve seen a lot of it. That’s why I ask all these questions, because we see it as pointing to a pattern. It’s not so much about you individually as it is about this pattern of behaviour by this government.

I wanted to ask you another question, because you did work for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority for a number of years, and I do understand—and maybe there are also legal agreements that prohibit you from speaking about some stuff, and I understand that. But I do want to ask you a little bit about it, because I was going over some of the reports from that time. One of the things I noticed was the Auditor General of Ontario conducted an audit, as you know. You were saying, coming out of that experience, that you had been pleased that you led the conservation authority through a very successful audit. But the Auditor General found things like weak governance in operational practices, significant issues in human resource and procurement policies, flood mapping data, leadership. I wondered if you would be able to comment on what was successful about that audit. I mean, it seems to me like it pointed out some very significant issues.

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you for that question, because it’s important. That audit actually went back about 10 years. I came into the organization when it was really going through very challenging times, and I was brought to fix a lot of the problems that were going on there. That’s exactly what I did.

Absolutely, I would acknowledge that there was a mess at the conservation authority at some period before I got there. This went through a series of two or three different boards that were dealing with the various issues. For example, I can tell you that when I first got there, they didn’t even have a capital budget, so many of their properties had been neglected and were in poor condition. I had to actually go through the process of creating the first capital budget, creating a multi-year capital budget, doing the asset management program to get it back on track and to move it forward. And we were able to bring back and restore many of the properties that we counted on. We were able to grow our revenues. We were able to tackle the main issues of conservation.

One by one, I took on all the challenges. When I say “a clean audit,” I was the first one to deliver a clean financial audit for the organization. They hadn’t had that. Under my leadership, they actually had a completely clean audit from the auditor. I’m not talking about the Auditor General; I co-operated fully with the Auditor General as they conducted their investigation, and I provided all the information going back 10 years in that organization to demonstrate how things had happened and what we were working on.

I am very confident that I know I left the organization in a very great place, in a great financial position and able to take on the challenges that they are required to undertake today. So I feel really good about what I did. It was also kind of a sad time, because this organization and its staff had gone through a number of difficult years, so I was very pleased to be part of bringing that organization back to a level of great professionalism. I supported staff. I helped them. I increased the training and development budget to make sure that they were all—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Chair, if I—I apologize. I don’t want to—because I actually do appreciate your comments here, but I don’t know how many more minutes we have. Mr. Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You have about four and a half minutes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Oh, okay. Well, actually, maybe I’ll jump in, though, if I can. You were, though, let go from that role, and then there was, I understand—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): One moment. I have a point of order from Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Chair. I think it would be appropriate, if MPP Stiles asked a question and the prospective appointee is answering the question, that she would at least allow him to finish his answer.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): I think it’s the time of Mrs. Stiles to use the way she wants, and it’s not unusual for members to remind people there’s little time and they need to move to another question.

Mrs. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, I said to the member appearing here that I apologize for intervening there, but I do only have a little bit of time, which Mr. Yakabuski just took some of, so I apologize. But I did appreciate your response.

As I was saying, I do want to ask about the parole board, but I did want to ask you just if you could be a little clearer about that with me, because as I understand, though, you were let go from that position. It got quite a bit of media attention. I know there was a settlement. I don’t know what you’re allowed to say, but in this here, I would be curious to hear what—because you were let go from that. I just want to make sure we have that on the record and you have a chance to speak to that, quickly.

Mr. Mark Brickell: Thank you. Yes, obviously, the details of all of that are unfortunately restricted by a non-disclosure agreement. That being said, I think anyone who has actually read the documentation and read the articles has a pretty clear picture of what actually transpired there. Certainly if you want to look at my statement of claim, you will see a very honest account of what actually happened there, so that is available. You’re able to see that; I’m just not able to comment on it.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I appreciate that. Thank you.

I did want to ask you about the parole board. I appreciated your comments in your opening on that. I wonder if you would comment, though, because I think you’ve raised some really important issues about rehabilitation,

about some of the systemic and structural issues that contribute to families falling apart and the impact on people and, often, offenders. Can you talk a little bit about what government, perhaps within the correctional system—maybe we could just limit it to that for now—should be better doing to ensure that there is better rehabilitation, that there are better outcomes when people are released on parole? Could you speak a little bit about what you'd like to see happen?

1000

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): You have about a minute and a half.

Mr. Mark Brickell: Okay. Obviously, I could speak about that in terms of personal opinions for a very long time. But the big thing that I would say for government is: I would always just hope that we look at these things truthfully through a systemic lens. We have to be able to take a look at all of these matters, because things truly are interrelated and interconnected. It goes back to the earliest years of development, and then all the issues that go with family and everything else. This is not just a simple fix. This is very complicated because there are so many factors that are involved.

We know that, by research, if you intervene with a child before the age of eight, you've got a virtual 100% chance of turning things around for them. If you wait until they're 12, you're now down to a 50% chance of turning things around for that family dynamic. And if they're 16 years old, you've virtually lost that cause already. Age-wise, we know exactly how these things happen and how they progress. Things start to break down at that point, and then, obviously, whole other systems start to kick in. Those are the things that I would encourage, that we look at the systemic factors that lead us to where we ultimately go.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): We have about 10 seconds. Do you want to say one last thing?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you. I was hoping I could hear a bit more about the kinds of things the government could fund in our correctional system that would improve things. But do I appreciate those comments. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): That concludes the time we have for this particular appointment.

We're now going to move to concurrences. We're going to start first with the concurrence for the Collège d'arts appliqués et de technologie La Cité collégiale. That is for Alayne Crawford.

Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll try this: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Alayne Crawford, nominated as member of the Collège d'arts appliqués et de technologie La Cité collégiale board of governors.

Le Président (M. Gilles Bisson): Vous avez passé l'examen, monsieur. Je vous donne un certificat comme francophone.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know what he said, but I'll take it as a compliment. He's smiling.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): I said you did well and I'm going to give you a certificate—a little gold star next to your name.

With that, is there any discussion in regard to Madame Crawford's intended appointment? Seeing no discussion, all those in favour signify it by raising your hand. All those opposed? Carried.

All right, we are now going to move to our second concurrence. This is for the Ontario Parole Board: Mark Brickell.

We're going to go again to Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Mark Brickell, nominated as member of the Ontario Parole Board.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): With that, is there any discussion? Seeing no discussion, all those in favour please signify by raising your hand. All those opposed? It is so carried.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): What? No, but I wanted to. I'm the Chair. I get to use my gavel when I want. I've always wanted to do that. It's just fun.

Anyway, with that, that concludes the time that we have for committee. Unless members want to raise something, we are ready to adjourn.

We do have MPP Stiles. Go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just wondering if there was any chance that the—I know my colleague Mr. Gates, who is usually here, sits on the subcommittee, but if there was any opportunity for that committee to be meeting so that we could actually look again at what we want to flag. We're going to be rising again, the Legislature, in a couple of weeks, and this committee does not, in practice, meet when the House isn't sitting, which is a real missed opportunity. It means that many, many appointments go by without any kind of scrutiny at all, even those appointments that we might actually agree with. We don't get to hear from anybody, and the public doesn't either.

Especially given this government's track record in appointing so many partisan appointments, donors, failed Conservative candidates, I think it does a disservice to Ontarians not to actually have a chance to learn about the many people that this government is appointing to these important agencies and boards. So I want to just urge the government members again to please, please meet our request to have those meetings to discuss a plan going forward, so that in that period when the House isn't sitting, we can continue to hold regular meetings and continue to meet candidates for these positions.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the request from MPP Stiles. We will continue to meet as scheduled when the House is in session.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): I just remind members: There is a process, if you want to follow it, through the standing orders. The subcommittee could come back with a recommendation to the general committee.

MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, and to be clear to Mr. Yakabuski, that is a good example of what's going wrong here. There are opportunities to sit down to have conversations about why this might be valuable. You just heard the government members shut the door without even having a conversation about it. I know I could count the number of times the subcommittee has met. It's been twice, I think, since I was originally appointed to this committee back in 2018—twice. That's shameful.

We've repeatedly asked for an opportunity to have these conversations. I've got to say, especially when you have a government like this one, which extends the break because I guess, I don't know, the Premier doesn't like to be in the Legislature, it means that we could be going on for months and months without having any opportunity—

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Stiles, I would just warn you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: She made her request. Now she's taking the time to get up on her soapbox. If she wants to raise the issue—

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Mr. Yakabuski, you do not have the floor. MPP Stiles has the floor. If you want to be on the list, I'll put you on.

But I was just going to warn that you can't mention the absence of any member from the House.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Apologies for that, Mr. Chair. You're right. I didn't mean to do that.

But I do want to say, once again—and Mr. Yakabuski doesn't like us talking about this because the government is embarrassed by it, but we've seen some absolutely abhorrent appointments by this government, repeatedly. It's embarrassing, and I know it's embarrassing to the government members, so let's have an opportunity. Let's hear from all of your so-called fabulous appointees. Let's have more opportunities.

We do a disservice to the people of this province by not meeting more regularly. I don't know why this government and these committee members don't want to do the work. It's important work and it deserves our attention and our respect.

Once again, Mr. Yakabuski's comments—we continue to see this government and these members of this committee disrespecting the interests of the public, of the people of Ontario, who have a right to understand and know exactly who is being appointed to these boards and agencies. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): MPP Babikian, you wanted the floor? You have the floor.

Mr. Aris Babikian: MPP Stiles—I know that she's trying to score a point, but in the meantime, insulting the members of this committee the way she describes us as we don't want to work is an unwarranted statement and comment. All of us are working very hard. I'm personally on three different committees and I'm also on different—I have House duty; I have constituency.

To be honest with you, this is out of question, the way that she's questioning our credibility, our commitment to work. All of us are working very hard. Since COVID started, I have not taken a one-day break from my job. I have been in my office every day. Even when everyone was working from home, I was in my office with my staff to respond to the questions of constituents and look after their needs. So I think MPP Stiles owes an apology to these committee members.

The Chair (Mr. Gilles Bisson): Well, I'll leave that to MPP Stiles, but I'm sure that every member of the assembly works as hard as they can and goes above and beyond.

Does anybody else want the floor? There being none, that's it. The committee stands adjourned until next week.

The committee adjourned at 1009.

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