

Legislative
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of Ontario



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

A-28

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-28

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
43rd Parliament
Thursday 28 March 2024

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
43^e législature
Jeudi 28 mars 2024

Chair: Will Bouma
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Will Bouma
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 28 March 2024

Jeudi 28 mars 2024

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will now come to order.

We are meeting today to conduct a review of intended appointees. We are joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard and broadcast and recording.

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

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. MARK BAXTER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Mark Baxter, intended appointee as member, Council of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Our first intended appointee today is Mark Baxter, nominated as member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Can you please come forward, Mr. Baxter—Mark. Thank you for being here. You may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will start with the government, 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.

You may proceed.

Mr. Mark Baxter: Thank you. So a long opening statement won't put me less time on the hot seat—it will still be the same amount of time? Okay—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): I'm not sure how to define that. I won't do that right now—I'm the neutral Chair.

Mr. Mark Baxter: Good morning to the committee members. Thanks for having me here today and for this opportunity.

My name is Mark Baxter and I'm the president of the Police Association of Ontario. I was born and raised in Brantford, and I was hired as a police officer in January 2005 by the Brantford Police Service. Prior to my election to this full-time position in June 2021, I was a patrol sergeant working the front lines.

I have previously held several positions within the police service, including what I often describe as my most impactful work, as a high school resource officer. My

policing story begins in grade 12, when my high school introduced the school resource officer program. The school resource officer at my school had a tremendous impact on me, and because of this impact, I became interested in a career in law enforcement.

I come from a family of educators, and had I not had the influence of a school resource officer in high school, I would have likely pursued a career in teaching. My grandfather, Leonard Staples, taught high school before and after the war. He taught math at a high school in Hamilton. He was a master at rapid calculation and co-authored two math textbooks. And with his math and research skills, he went on to become the superintendent of research at the Hamilton public school board.

My mother worked as an elementary school administrative assistant for 28 years in Brantford, and her brother, who is my uncle, was an elementary school principal. My aunt was an elementary teacher. My sister is currently a high school teacher in the Brantford area, having returned recently to Canada after teaching for 13 years in Australia.

I'm a father of two young boys, aged seven and 10, both of whom are enrolled in the public education system, grade 2 and grade 5. Education in Ontario is very important to me and ensuring that we have properly equipped and qualified teachers teaching our leaders for tomorrow is critical.

I have extensive experience in board governance, having been an executive member of my local basketball referees' association since I was 19 years old. In 2006, I became the youngest local president at the age of 24. I've been a member of the Brantford Police Association board of directors since 2012, the PAO board of directors since 2014 and a member of our internal governance committee for 10 years, holding the position of chair for five of those years.

I understand the high standard that teachers are held to, and the important governance role members of the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers play in holding teachers accountable. My profession faces a similarly—and rightfully so—high standard, and high expectations from the public. Public accountability and trust in teachers is similarly important in my job, and I understand and appreciate the necessity of this.

I'm currently a member of the Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission. In that role, I sit on committees that assist in determining which members of the public are permitted to act as labour arbitrators for

police matters and as independent adjudicators for police misconduct cases. I was appointed to the police arbitration commission in 2017, and the newly formed adjudication committee last month.

I believe that my professional and personal life experiences will make me an ideal candidate for the council, and I look forward to working with other members of the council, regulating the teaching profession to protect our students. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Thank you very much, Mr. Baxter.

MPP Holland.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Mr. Baxter, thank you for coming out today. It's great to see you again. I'd seen you in the hallways on budget day, so it's good to have you back.

As a member of the council of the College of Teachers, you would have the responsibility to keep the teaching profession accountable to the public interest. You shared with us some of your experiences. Could you elaborate a little bit more on how you feel those experiences will best help you, to support you in this role?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Policing is held to a very high standard, and policing is subject to oversight and regulation within our own profession—those regimes I'm very familiar with—and I think rightfully so. It's in the public interest to ensure that we have properly trained and equipped police officers and that they're adhering to the government-regulated code of conduct. So with a large oversight regime that includes independent oversight at arms length from the police service, I really understand that system and I think it's really important to ensuring that we have police officers who are out in the community ensuring the safety and security of all of our community members.

When I look at the role of the council of teachers—I've learned a little bit more about the high standard that teachers are also held to—I think there are a lot of parallels in ensuring that we've got teachers who are in our classrooms who are properly trained, properly educated and held to a high standard to educate our students.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Mark, good to see you. Thank you for your service to the public in Ontario. I know it has been many years, and it's not always easy, certainly. Appearing before parliamentary committees is not always easy as well, so thanks for being here today.

You touched a little bit in your opening remarks on how school resource officers were a big part of what got you into policing, and that you were interested in teaching as maybe something later on the down the line. But obviously there have been—we'll say some challenges, maybe—with policing in schools over the last little while. I know that's not necessarily what we're here to talk about today, but maybe a little bit more as to how seeing uniformed officers in schools, seeing those people making a difference in their community got you into policing, and maybe a little bit more about how you feel that the very

diverse background that you have can really lend to the Ontario College of Teachers.

Mr. Mark Baxter: School resource officer programs are obviously near and dear to my heart, as I said in my opening. That's why I became a police officer. I remember when I was interviewing at the police department for a job, one of the questions they had asked as I was trying to become a police officer was, "Hey, where do you see yourself working in our organization?", and the one that I had said was, "I want to be a school resource officer." The program that was active in so many of our communities and in our schools really worked to bridge the gap between police and youth.

For me, prior to the resource officer program being introduced in grade 12, my interaction with the local police was very limited. But it really opened up my eyes to this other public service and all of the unique intricacies and challenges that come with policing. One of the things that I really enjoyed when I was a school resource officer was building relationships with students.

I get that the school resource officer program is certainly not in the scope of what the council for the College of Teachers does, but I think that one of the things that's really important about those programs is having a police officer in uniform building relationships in the community with a school.

Mr. Mike Harris: From an interaction with teachers and administrators at the school perspective, what was that like?

Mr. Mark Baxter: The three years that I was there, as much as it's about building relationships with the students, you're really building relationships with the whole school community, which includes the teachers and the principals. It has been 10 years since I was in that role, I still have relationships with teachers who I keep in contact with from doing that. I really built such great relationships with teachers, principals and people that I've continued to keep in contact with, and I think that those relationships are really invaluable to our community. Sometimes even still, I'll have a teacher call me and say, "Hey, this incident has happened in my community," or "This personal thing has happened. You're a police officer. What do you think?" I think those relationships are really invaluable.

Mr. Mike Harris: Amazing. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Gallagher Murphy.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Baxter, for being here today. I also wanted to first thank you for your service to this province being a front-line police officer. It is greatly appreciated.

You know that our government is definitely focused on community safety—a top priority for us—but it is also about increasing student safety as well, and that is by increasing transparency and accountability for teachers. You're probably aware that our government has brought in a lifetime ban for teachers who are found guilty of sexual exploitation, and we've also set up a registry so that parents can learn if their child's teacher has been involved in any type of criminal proceeding.

0910

That being the case, my question to you as a police officer—and, again, I appreciate everything you've done for your community and across the province—could you comment on how transparency, accountability and public safety play a role in your profession?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Thanks for that question. I think that transparency and public accountability are really the cornerstones to building public trust in policing. I think that, when we have police services that are well equipped, that are transparent, that we've got systems in place that ensure accountability and transparency for our public-serving police officers in the community, then I think that strengthens and continues to build trust in the communities, and I really see a real, clear link between that and teachers and holding and ensuring that teachers are accountable to the standards that are set out.

Certainly, as a police officer, it's the world that we live in. Public accountability and transparency is something that we know; it's something that we expect; it's something that the public expects, and it's really important, as I said, to building public trust. And I think all of that carries into the teaching profession to ensure that we have qualified teachers that are teaching our youth so that we can have safe communities, so that our students can be in a learning environment that's going to be safe and set them up best for success.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: That's great. Thank you very much, Mr. Baxter.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Quinn, you've got three minutes and 12 seconds.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you for being here today, Mark. Interestingly enough, I was just at the youth in policing event at the Durham Regional Police Service, and it was quite interesting to see those graduates last night coming through. Could you comment on the relationships you've been able to build as the president of the police association, and how would those skills help support you on the OCT?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Obviously, I have a public job, and I have a job where it's really important, representing 28,000 sworn-in civilian members across the province, that we have relationships with members in government across all parties. I think a lot of the skills that I learned in terms of relationship development, to be honest with you, I learned when I was a school resource officer from some of the principals and watching the way they interacted, certainly with me, but with students and with other teachers.

And, so, it's been really important to build strong relationships with all members of government, and I've done my best and tried to do that. Certainly, at the NDP, John Vanthof, who until recently was the community safety critic—he and I had a great relationship, and before that it was Gilles Bisson. To be honest, I miss Gilles. Gilles used to call me about once a month on Friday mornings at 7 a.m. and wake me up. I think he continued to call me at 7 a.m. because he got a kick out of waking

me up. Every time he called, he knew he was waking me up and he got a kick out of that.

And then, with our friends in the Liberal Party, as well, we've built relationships with them. Yesterday, I had a lengthy meeting with Bonnie Crombie, trying to build a relationship with her and with her party. It's really important because representing the policing profession and all of policing in the province, it's important that we're a non-partisan organization. Whoever the government of the day is or whoever is in opposition, we all have to work together because, at the end of the day, we're trying to ensure that our members have safe, inclusive workplaces, which translates to safe and secure communities.

And so I'm very happy and pleased with the relationships that we've built. Recently, in the last year, there have been two times where there were motions at standing committee that required all-party consent for amendments that we were looking for in policing, and I was able to reach out to members of both the opposition parties, to the Liberals and the NDP, and get consent and get them to agree to a motion that we wanted. I'm really proud of the work that we've been able to do for that because it's been in the best interests of policing and of our members.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): We're good? Thank you.

To the opposition: MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much for being here this morning, Mr. Baxter. I know it's not always the most comfortable experience to come before the government agencies committee, but it's an important part of our public and democratic process, so that the public has confidence that appointments are being made based on merit and not connections. It's not a democratic practice that the government always lets us practice, but it's incredibly important to the people of Ontario, so thank you for being here.

You talked a lot about the education experience of your family, but I am still struggling to understand, what is your experience in the education system?

Mr. Mark Baxter: In terms of the education system, my experience is from the time that I spent as a school resource officer. Also, in the last year, I've formed some relationships with additional folks within Brantford, within the local school board.

There was an incident that happened about a year ago—I think it was in early May, last year—where there was a police officer in our community that wasn't allowed to go to his child's classroom in uniform. I don't know if you recall, but there was a lot of public discussion around it and there were some articles in the newspaper, and through that, we were vocal about expressing our concerns about that.

For me, it was really personal because my two young boys, when they were in grade 1 and in kindergarten, I would go into their classrooms in uniform and talk about community helpers and how it's important that, when children are hurt, lost or scared, that they know that they can turn to a community helper. A police officer is a com-

munity helper and this is what we look like. We wear a uniform and we have a cap and we have a badge on our shoulder and all of those things. So I was really concerned about the fact that we have a uniformed police officer not allowed to go into his child's class.

Through that, I started to develop a relationship with the director of education in Brantford. It's when I really started to develop some relationships with folks at the ministry and we had lots of conversations around education.

When I look at the role of the council and regulating the teaching profession to protect students, I think my governance experience—the boards that I've sat on and the experience that I've gained, as well as the experience that I have as a police officer, working in a system for almost 20 years where public accountability, transparency is really paramount to what we do, I really think that it really suits me well to be part of this council whose role it is to regulate the teaching profession and ensure that we're protecting students in classrooms.

Lastly, it's obviously very near and dear to my heart with two young children that are in public schools—it's really important to me that they are going to school in an environment that's safe, with teachers that are properly trained, properly equipped and that are going to provide for a safe education environment for them.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: While I understand that experience was personally painful for you and I know there are important debates that are painful on both sides about the role of police officers in the schools—a lot of racialized children have expressed that they do not feel safe—that's a decision that's being made by school boards and administrators that doesn't actually have anything to do with the qualification and certification of teachers.

So I'm still struggling to understand. If that's your motivation, why not run for the school board as opposed to applying for a position that has to do with the certification of teachers?

Mr. Mark Baxter: To be clear, I fully understand that the role of the council is not to have any discussion, really, around police officers in schools, and that's obviously a local issue that's made by the local school board, but I really feel that my experience on board governance—this is a governance board that provides regulations and is responsible for regulating teachers, and I feel like I have a lot of experience in that field, coming from policing, where we're highly regulated. We are held to a high standard.

And the high standard that teachers are held to—being part of that council, they're holding the teachers accountable to the standard and to a standard that I'm used to—a bit of a lower standard, but that's still a high standard that I'm used to in policing, I think that my experience working within a regulatory framework where you're held to a high standard, where there are high expectations, there's public accountability, transparency, will really assist me in being on the regulatory body with the council of teachers.

0920

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Let's talk about that training and that standard and the certification because right now we

have a situation where there are over 40,000 teachers who are qualified and certified with the Ontario teachers' college who are choosing not to participate in the education system in Ontario, given the massive underfunding and the working conditions, so we have a lot of teachers who are actually not qualified who are working on letters of permission from the Ontario teachers' college.

I have heard concerns both about the standard of teaching—that often there is no teaching taking place when we have someone just filling in on a letter of permission—but also safety concerns, that these letter of permission teachers are not receiving the same training as qualified teachers. We had an incident in London earlier this year where now a teacher is being charged for not providing medical care for a student in an emergency.

Do you have concerns that we are putting children in a position where they're not getting the highest quality education and their safety is in danger if we have such a large number of people who have letters of permission rather than actual qualifications as a teacher?

Mr. Mark Baxter: First of all, I'm not aware of that incident in London. That sounds like a very tragic situation, and certainly I'm immediately thinking about that student who was in that unsafe environment. I think that's really a tragic situation that has happened there, and if a teacher has been charged, certainly they're going to be held to the standard and held accountable, as they should be, going through a fair process.

In terms of what you've talked about with unqualified teachers, my experience on this is limited, but what I can tell you that I know about the situation now is that my sister, last September when she moved home from Australia—she had been teaching high school in Australia for 13 years; she had worked at a number of schools down there—it's quite a process to become qualified to teach in Ontario, but through the ability of whatever you referred to there, where she wasn't qualified in Ontario yet—she was awaiting her qualification from OCT—she was able to go into the classroom and teach because she had all the necessary and relevant experience and had been a teacher for 13 years. There's a circumstance where, in my view, the system really worked.

We know that we have a staffing shortage across all sectors in this province—policing, certainly; teaching. My sister moved home and needed work—because I needed to get her out of my basement—and she was able to go into the classroom until she was able to get her OCT certification, which took several months for her to get. In that circumstance, the system worked. I think it's really important that that's a critical role the OCT plays, that the council will play to ensure that all the proper systems are in place, so that, when we've got those circumstances where someone who is not a qualified teacher in Ontario to teach, that they're being set up for success and their students are being set up for success in the classroom.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I think your sister is actually the exception, not the rule because the majority of people who are teaching on a letter of permission do not have teacher qualifications from elsewhere, that experience from else-

where. They may be in the process of pursuing their education degree, but in many cases they're not.

I wonder, if your emphasis is on teachers meeting a high standard of having that education in order to provide a safe, high-quality education for students, then what is the role of the Ontario teachers' college? What will be your role as a member of the Ontario teachers' college in making sure that our teachers actually have the qualifications, that we're not putting kids' education at risk as a stopgap for a problem that could be addressed in other ways?

Mr. Mark Baxter: I think certainly one of the things that's really important at the College of Teachers, as a regulatory body, is ensuring that the rules that are in place—whether through regulation or policy, or whatever the framework is that places the rules—are being followed and that the rules that are in place are being followed by the teachers. I think it's OCT's responsibility as a regulatory body, when you've got these circumstances like the tragic situation you've described in London, when those situations occur, that certainly folks are being held accountable.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: The area with the biggest shortages is actually our francophone education system. Members of the francophone community are very concerned about this because, of course, schools are the main transmitter of the French language and culture. There are many stories about families where the French language was lost because students didn't have access to a French-language school, so not having qualified teachers in the French school system is actually putting the transmission of French language and culture in jeopardy.

So how are you going to be sensitive to that need of the francophone community in your role in the Ontario teachers' college?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Certainly, that leads to what I said earlier, that we've got a staffing crisis across the province in all professions. I think it's important that there be some attempt to recruit. If we've got a shortage of French teachers in the province, the folks should come together and figure out a way that we can look at recruiting more French teachers.

In policing, to address our staffing shortages, we've come together as the associations—we've come together with the chiefs of police, with the police services boards, with other policing stakeholders, and we've been meeting for over a year and we've developed a comprehensive recruitment strategy, recognizing that everyone has a role to play in ensuring that we address the staffing shortages.

I think, similarly, in teaching, where there's a staffing shortage, everyone has a role to play in ensuring that they come together and come up with some effective strategies to properly recruit more teachers and, in the case that you're speaking about, French teachers.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you.

I'm going to turn my time over to MPP Glover.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Glover, you've got three minutes and 26 seconds.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, thank you.

Thank you for being here and for putting your name forward. I was a high school teacher when the College of Teachers was created, and then after that, I became a school trustee.

There are conflicting jurisdictions around this. When I was a trustee, there were a couple of teachers where they had done something very wrong with students and then there's three different processes going on. The College of Teachers is the regulator, the school board is the employer, and then there were criminal investigations as well, so there was the whole criminal process. Have you thought about how that balances out or how the College of Teachers should navigate these three different jurisdictions?

Mr. Mark Baxter: No, I haven't really turned my mind to that. Certainly, like in policing, we have similar interests which, at times, can be competing, especially if I think about a situation where we've got officers that maybe are under investigation by the Special Investigations Unit, so we know that that's a criminal investigation. There may be a parallel criminal investigation that's taking place by the police service in response to what had occurred with the response to the interaction with the member of the public. There may be some misconduct allegations that the police service wants to look into. In those circumstances, in policing, we don't always have it right, but for the most part, we've got it figured out to know everyone's lane and what order we go in.

So, my experience in policing—I can bring that to the council. I hadn't really turned my mind to what those processes look like within the teaching profession when those unfortunate circumstances do arise.

Mr. Chris Glover: I've got some necessary questions that I need to go through. They are a little bit uncomfortable, but they're fairly quick.

Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, provincially?

Mr. Mark Baxter: I have not. I'm not a member of any political party.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you ever donated to the Conservative Party?

Mr. Mark Baxter: I have not donated. I have not made a political donation to any party.

Mr. Chris Glover: Have you ever worked on a Conservative election campaign?

Mr. Mark Baxter: I have—yes, I have.

Mr. Chris Glover: And can you give some details?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Yes, certainly. My local MPP—I knocked on doors with him during his most recent campaign and knocked on doors for other members as well during the last election campaign.

Mr. Chris Glover: Did anyone ask you to apply for this position?

Mr. Mark Baxter: No, I became aware of this position through conversations that I had had through the Ministry of Education, through some of those relationships that I said I developed last year.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, thank you. I think I'm out of time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Thank you very much, Mr. Baxter. We appreciate you being here this morning.

MR. ANDREW WILDER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Andrew Wilder, intended appointee as member, Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Our next intended appointee is online. Our second intended appointee today is Andrew Wilder, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

0930

Ms. Sarah Jama: Can I ask a point of order?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Yes.

Ms. Sarah Jama: So I'm in this committee; am I allowed to ask a question as an independent going forward?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): No. Time is only allotted to recognized parties. It's at the discretion of the official opposition to give any time they have remaining to the independent member.

Ms. Sarah Jama: Okay, noted. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Mr. Wilder, you may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from members of the committee. With that questioning, we will start with the government, followed by the official opposition, with 15 minutes allocated to each recognized party. Any time that you take in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government.

You may begin, Mr. Wilder.

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Good morning. First off, I'd like to thank the Chair and members of this committee for permitting me to appear before you online, as I live in Ottawa. I believe it's a privilege to be here, and I hope to be involved with the bravery division of this council, as I know I can assist in recognizing the great work of our first responders in Ontario. I believe I bring a wealth of experience to this council.

When I was 57 years old, I joined the Canadian Armed Forces, entering officer training, and now serving sub-lieutenant as a reservist teaching sea cadets.

I'm also a 30-year retired veteran with the Ontario Provincial Police. I retired in 2016. My work primarily was with traffic and marine. The traffic part was reconstructing terrible car crashes, and the marine part was patrolling on Georgian Bay, which I did for 30 years, hence my joining the navy when I retired.

I also worked as the community services and media officer. That included me being involved with service groups like MADD Canada, child and family services and the Canadian Cancer Society. Although I worked with these agencies as a police officer, I also volunteered as a standing member on their boards of directors. I started working on boards in 2006; in fact, with MADD Canada, I was elected to be on their national board. Seeing firsthand the results of victims in car crashes of impaired

drivers made my involvement with MADD Canada very important to me.

I also volunteered with St. John Ambulance in a corporate capacity, not putting on bandages—although I'm trained to do that. St. John is the oldest non-denominational humanitarian organization in the world. My experience with St. John started at the local level as a board member and then being appointed to board chair.

That position put me in the responsibility for local honours and awards, which included life-saving CPR awards, which is the process prescribed by the Order of St. John, governed by Rideau Hall. The Most Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem is one of Canada's national honours, like the Order of Canada. The Governor General is the prior of St. John Canada, and the vice-priors are the Lieutenant Governors for each province and territory.

In 2012, I was appointed to the provincial level of honours and awards committee, overseeing the nominations for life-saving submissions from across the province. Now, I volunteer as the chancellor's chief of staff for St. John Canada, assisting with many of the national awards and processes for St. John. I write up many submissions recognizing outstanding community members from across the country. All must be approved by our national honours and awards committee.

In my police world, I did a great deal of instructing, teaching out of the OPP academy. It was here that I was able to recognize the work of great police officers, hearing their stories from across the province. Back in my front-line work at detachment, I was also able to recognize the work of paramedics and firefighters as our paths crossed often and not in the best of circumstances. These are well-intentioned people who are highly trained, facing some of the toughest situations you can think of. I know because I've been there.

I'm retired, and I believe it's now time to pay it forward. As listed in my CV, I've received many awards for my successful community life-saving initiatives. This kind of honour shows the importance of integrity and accountability, which has been a reflection in my professionalism my entire life.

There are so many first responders doing great things at their work, and not only like the things I did but still gaining experience by putting their lives on the line every day they suit up for work. This experience working with the provincial police and St. John Canada has afforded me the knowledge of how important the quality measures are when deciding who should be recognized for any kind of award, but bravery and life-saving efforts seem to always be on my agenda. Having over 20 years' experience in recommending and handling files related to merit, bravery involving police, paramedics and firefighters, I'm confident that I would be an asset, given the opportunity to be a member of your council.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll start with the government. MPP Holland, there's 10 minutes and 30 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Holland: Thank you for your opening remarks. Listening to your opening statement, I have very many shared experiences with you. I had the privilege last week of attending the award ceremony with the northwest region of the OPP in Thunder Bay, so I appreciate the work you're doing and what you have done, your service to Ontario and to the community groups that you served on. So thank you for that; I really appreciate your time.

Can you share with the committee why you believe you are well suited to meet the expectations of this committee?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I believe this committee is dedicated to recognizing the work of first responders. For the last 20 years, this is what I've been doing in a volunteer capacity. Taking that experience working with St. John Canada, recognizing the life-saving awards that their volunteers do—also with St. John, recognizing police and paramedics and firefighters at award ceremonies just like the OPP's, which I also attend locally around here—I think that I'm well suited for the exact job that I'm being looked at for.

Mr. Kevin Holland: I appreciate that and, again, thank you for your service. I do believe your experiences do suit you well in this position, so thank you.

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Sandhu.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Wilder, for your presentation, and thank you so much for appearing before the committee.

Your résumé is quite impressive. Would you be able to walk the committee through your career path and what led you to this particular path?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Of course. As I said, working as a police officer, it was my role as the community services officer that led me into being on boards of directors within the community where I worked. It was there, when I started in 2006, that I was able to sit on boards, recognize the need of these boards in my community, which evolved into honours and awards. It was there, where not only did I have the availability to learn the process of submissions, learn how it's important to recognize who deserves to be recognized for their efforts and for their actions, that I was able to evolve into working with St. John Ambulance now at a national level and taking that experience and moving it forward into councils like this.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Gallagher Murphy.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Wilder, for appearing today before this committee. You have quite the extensive background and volunteer work as well. I would like to commend you for your work with St. John Ambulance as well with the Royal Canadian Legion. I have high regard for both, and I appreciate all your volunteer time with both of those organizations. They do great work.

I wanted to give you the opportunity to further elaborate on these past experiences, so to explain to our committee here how you believe this will allow you to be a more

effective member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

Mr. Andrew Wilder: The things that I've done over the last 20 years serving on boards, recognizing community members, recognizing police and paramedics and firefighters, this seems the logical next step—to get into a provincial entity and then possibly a national entity where I can further my experience in promoting our community members.

I have received some great awards for my work, and there is no way that I'm the only one that should have been recognized, because I worked with great people who didn't get recognized. That always made me feel kind of empty inside that I just happened to connect with the right people—and it takes a lot of effort to recognize great work, write submissions and to make sure they follow a process that's going to be successful. Those other people, other officers, other community members that I worked with that weren't recognized should have been. So here I am; I'm going to make sure that people don't get missed and, if there are corrections in submissions that can be done in a professional way, that they get completed so the awards can be honoured.

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M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: That's amazing. Thank you very much for that very humble response. I appreciate that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Good morning, Mr. Wilder. Thank you for putting your name forward. I appreciate that you have a very extensive employment and volunteer background, so I believe you're capable and able to be in a lot of different appointments. So why, this time, did you pick this council?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Actually, I don't believe this is the first time I've applied to this council. I believe I applied when I first retired from the provincial police in 2016, and I never heard back.

All of a sudden, one of the people I volunteer with at St. John Ambulance suggested that I submit a résumé and try to reapply, and I did, and this time I'm successful on that, so I am here today.

Mr. Billy Pang: So it's not your first attempt, but now you got somewhere for potential appointment.

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I honestly believe that since 2016 I've doubled my experience, so that's probably why now I'm being given the opportunity to apply.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): MPP Quinn, you've got four minutes and 25 seconds.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Being a member of any board requires an ability to work with people from various backgrounds and experiences to achieve the best outcomes for the people of Ontario. Can you tell us how your experience has best prepared you to work collaboratively?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I've been on lots of volunteer boards. I've worked with different police agencies, different government agencies, and we all know that any group

that works together has to collaborate, and they have to get along. They have to have the same goal in mind.

There are lots of times where I'm working with people who aren't a member of the team and are only there to satisfy their own résumé or career path, and those types of people are a challenge. I believe that I have been able to work successfully to make sure that those people are brought into the fold, so that the team's goal is successful.

We all run into positions where we work with people we don't want to work with. Believe me, working as a copper for 30 years, I've had this lots, but that's a talent that police officers and first responders have to undertake, where if you don't learn to get along with everybody, you're not going to achieve your goals. I think that I've been very successful with my experiences, and I will bring that to this council for sure.

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Thank you for your answer.

Mr. Mike Harris: How much time is left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Two minutes and 55 seconds, MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Mr. Wilder, good to see you. It was actually really funny: We were just having a bit of a meeting yesterday about what was coming up today and your name sounded really familiar, and I couldn't place it. I don't know if you've got a doppelgänger or anybody like that with the same name out there, but I swear I've heard it before and I couldn't figure out where it was from.

Anyways, a bit of a funny, more lighthearted question for you: Obviously you've got an amazing amount of police experience over the last 30 years. How do you see yourself being able to be impartial when you're going to be looking at medals of bravery for firefighters?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Listen, I've worked with the best firefighters. When I worked in collision reconstruction and the crime scene was now mine on the highway, the only people who stayed with me were the firefighters. They were the ones who blocked the road. They were the ones who brought me coffee. They were the ones who served me lunch and stayed with me for hours and hours while I collected evidence on the road. So where I worked as a police officer, my fire department were my best friends, let me tell you. I respected them wholeheartedly.

Mr. Mike Harris: That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Fraser): Government side, a minute and 30 seconds. We're all good? Thank you very much.

The official opposition: MPP Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you so much, Mr. Wilder for putting your name forward and also for your service over many, many years in many different areas. A lot of the things that you've mentioned, that you've talked about, are actually pretty close to me as well. I've got HMCS York in my riding, the Fort York Armoury, and as you know, Fort York is the site of a very important battle in Canadian history. Also, I was an instructor with St. John Ambulance. So thank you for your service with all of these things.

Let's see, the first question I was supposed to ask is what motivated your doing this and I think you've ex-

plained that pretty well, so I'll just go to the next one, which is, is there a way for the process of these awards to actively deter systemic issues from taking root in our services? For example, I've had a number of conversations with police officers who said that they want to improve the relationship between the police and the communities that they serve, and they were speaking particularly about racial profiling. So is there a way for these awards to actually deter or improve systemic relations?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I think that there's always room for improvement, absolutely. I'm doing this as a project with St. John nationally, right now, where—and it's not really based on anything other than lack of knowledge—there's a lot of community members out there who want to recognize that person and don't know the process. So right now, nationally, we're creating an online teaching program on what honours and awards are about, and how to actually recognize your neighbour who did some outstanding, life-saving effort and should be a hero in the community. A lot of people don't know how to do it. A lot of people will say, "Man, that guy—he did it. Man, did he ever step up," or "Did that lady performing CPR save that life?" and then it goes away.

So I think there's a process where we have an opportunity to teach our community members how to recognize each other. I think that that in itself is going to bring the community closer together because then it becomes about the act and not about where you're from or what you think or where you go to church.

Mr. Chris Glover: Okay, thank you. Would you be supportive of having a similar educational program at OHOB? Because you were talking about St. John Ambulance, right?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I was talking St. John. I think that what we are building right now could be incorporated anywhere. Why wouldn't we bring it into local government, where all we're going to do is make a council more educated to serve its community? I think it's a great idea.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'll just correct my record, Mr. Chair: I said OHOB. It's OHAB. Just a small thing.

Let's see. Have you ever submitted nominations for the awards you would be consulting for? These include the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, the Ontario Medal for Paramedic Bravery and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. If so, what informed your decision to nominate them?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I have not done that.

Mr. Chris Glover: Well, that was a short answer. It was a long question and a short answer—

Mr. Andrew Wilder: If I could elaborate, though: I was aware, when I worked at the detachment level, of officers submitting those types of nominations, mainly for police bravery. What I recognized more were the officers that were missed, and I found that that became favourites, showing favourites. It was, "Well, he's the good guy, we're going to nominate him for the medal," whereas those officers just did this or did that and were bypassed. I think that that's an issue that, somehow, when information is

collected in a database for all stakeholders, that type of information could get looked at and fall into a category saying, “You’ve met the criteria. The medal should be forwarded in a proper submission,” as opposed to it being one person, one supervisor’s personal idea.

Mr. Chris Glover: Right. What are the things that—it was before my time, but when I was a school board trustee, the TDSB actually started collecting race-based statistics on success rates for students and also discipline rates for students. And what they were able to identify was areas of need, but also areas where students were being racially profiled and then being disciplined differently or more harshly than non-racialized students.

Do you think that there’s room for—like you’re saying, some people are being overlooked for awards that they could be or should be nominated for. Do you think that there’s room for, with OHAB, to be able to look at something like that, some way of recognizing, making sure that there is no systemic bias in the nomination process?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I think that that’s an excellent idea that should maybe fall back to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, where they can start looking at the process.

As I’m not fully aware of what happens on this council—yet, hopefully. Cross your fingers. But I think on a provincial level, there’s reasons where chiefs of police can initiate this kind of process to ensure that that doesn’t happen.

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Mr. Chris Glover: I’ll ask one more question and then I’m going to pass it over to my colleague. In your opinion, what makes a good citizen of Ontario, and how can we encourage more Ontarians to become good citizens?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I think good citizens are all about being inclusive, being fair and being nice to each other. I think there’s a lot that needs to improve. How do we do it? I think we have to start with ourselves. We have to start looking within ourselves to ask, what can I do to make my neighbourhood better? What can I do to make me better? That is like a ripple effect.

If I make sure I take care of my household and my committees and my involvement, I hope that others see that and say—well, I guess that’s how it worked with me. I looked to senior people, senior office, senior community members and said I want to be like that person. I’m impressed, I like being around them, and I like the way they make me feel, and that’s what I took from that connection, and I want to be like that.

I’m hoping that that is what people will look at within themselves and again, that ripple effect will take effect and evolve throughout the entire community or province.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you very much. Thank you for your responses and thank you for putting your name forward. I’ll pass it over to my colleague.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): MPP Pasma, you have eight minutes and three seconds.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much for being here this morning, Mr. Wilder. I know it’s not the most comfortable process but it’s a very important part of our democratic process, that we have transparency about who’s

being appointed to public positions and what their qualifications are so that the public knows that these appointments are being made on the basis of merit. It’s not a practice that the government always lets us follow, which I think is a problem, but we’re incredibly grateful that you’re here this morning and taking the time to talk to us about your qualifications.

Having said that, I’m going to start with a very easy question, because I’m the MPP for Ottawa West–Nepean, so I’m wondering what part of Ottawa you live in?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I live in Greely.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Oh, my goodness. Okay, not even close to Ottawa West–Nepean. Well, I won’t hold that against you.

I want to dig in a little bit more to what you said about equality and some of the questions my colleague MPP Glover was asking, because I think it is an important factor for us to take into consideration. Can you explain a little bit more about, in your experience, in the awards process for St. John Ambulance—how did you come to see that equality was an important consideration and what kind of steps would you say you can take to ensure some equality in how awards are granted?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I think that it goes back to what you were saying on how this council and all award-based councils should look at merit. Look at the meat of the submission and don’t look at who it’s about. It’s almost like the submissions could come in without a name. So people can just read what happened and what great deed was done and then see if it falls into the criteria of recognition. And if that was the case, then I think more people would be recognized wholeheartedly as opposed to—like in any job, like in any organization, people play favourites. People have people that they don’t get along with, and that’s just human, right? That’s just the way it works. But sometimes great work falls to the side, where it should be recognized.

I think that if we had a process in place where we make that those deserving are properly recognized, and I think we’d be in a greater place, and I say that from experience, where I saw officers that I worked with, I saw firefighters and paramedics not recognized for things that I’m going, “Holy smokes. You did that? You put your life on the line?” And they got nothing other than a pat on the back, and it’s because they’re not the favourite in the office. Yet, when it came time and they suited up and went to work, they did it, and they did it so over the top that it makes you feel sad. I go off and create a program and get recognized by Rideau Hall and yet they’ve saved four lives, and they get to go home to their families. Well, if it’s the same—but it’s not the same, right?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Yes, absolutely, but the council can only decide on the nominations that are coming before you, and as you say, a lot of the inequity is happening within the nomination process. Do you think there’s a role for the council in trying to address that inequity in the nomination process?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I think there’s always room for improvement, no matter what you’re doing and where you

are. As I said to your colleague, I think that if we approach the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to have some type of look at how their departments, how their police services or their boards recognize their employees for the great work that they do to make sure that—I think that, honestly, there's a lot of supervisors that don't even know about this process. They don't even know that there's a medal out there that you could give one of their employees for doing outstanding work or for saving lives or for being brave and protecting community members.

I think there's an education piece that needs to be put together, and whether it's a mandatory thing, or whether it's part of a training process when you get to X number of years of service, or a development course where you're now a supervisor, honours and awards is part of your job now, recognizing people under your employ. So I think that there is always room to do this and it's just going to make the whole system better.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I hear what you're saying about the value of the evaluators not knowing any of the personal characteristics of the people who've been nominated, but MPP Glover also mentioned the example of the education system, where when they started tracking race-based statistics, it was very clear that there were some racial trends in discipline and in educational outcomes. Do you think it's important not for the evaluators themselves, but for the council to be tracking these kinds of statistics to make sure there is not racial disparity on who is receiving an award and there's not disparity on the basis of gender or linguistic characteristics?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I totally agree with you, and I think the more information, the better. The more we know, the more we're going to turn things out tomorrow, right? So if we need to collect more evidence of how things are put together, on how nominations come forward, then, of course, I think that having more information is going to be a great thing.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: This is more curiosity, but you mentioned receiving awards for things that other people had been involved in. You're the one singled out for recognition when it was team-based work. Is there a role for teams to be nominated or for multiple people on a team to be nominated for the same event?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I don't know about—the awards that I received were all me. They weren't a team; it was my initiative. But I know at St. John, I know in other facets of honours and awards, that absolutely you can nominate a team. I know for a fact there are police awards that, for instance, if you were a part of an investigative group, the group receives the award.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, thank you.

I want to conclude with some quick, uncomfortable, but necessary questions. Have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, provincially?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Have you been a member of the Conservative Party, federally?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Have you donated to either the Progressive Conservative Party or the Conservative Party?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Have you ever worked on a Conservative election campaign?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: No.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Did anyone ask you to apply for this position?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: I volunteered with a member of St. John Ambulance who thought that my CV would be a great fit, and I was encouraged to apply—

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, so it was members of the public who asked you to apply?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Yes.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay, thank you.

Have you ever sat at the Premier's table at a family wedding?

Mr. Andrew Wilder: No, but I would go.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Wilder.

Mr. Andrew Wilder: Thank you. I hope to see you around.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Thank you. That concludes the time available. Thank you, Mr. Wilder, very much for your presentation.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Mark Baxter, nominated as member of the Ontario College of Teachers. Do we have a mover?

Mr. Kevin Holland: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Mark Baxter, nominated as a member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? I consider the motion carried. Congratulations, Mr. Baxter.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Andrew Wilder, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council. Do we have a mover?

Mr. Kevin Holland: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Andrew Wilder, nominated as member of the Ontario Honours Advisory Council.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Is there any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? I declare the motion carried. Congratulations, Mr. Wilder.

The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the March 1, 2024, certificate is set to expire on March 31, 2024. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I heard a no.

The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the March 8, 2024, certificate is set to expire on April 7, 2024. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I heard a no again.

That concludes our business for today. This committee—

Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Sure. I recognize Mr. Glover.

Mr. Chris Glover: I just want to make a statement on the record that the work of this committee is really import-

ant to our democratic process. These are appointments to government agencies, and—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): That's not a valid point of order.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Chris Glover: The work that we do is really vital, and yet, consistently, the Conservative members of this committee keep voting not to have these appointments reviewed by this committee. I think that's an abrogation of the responsibility that this committee has to the process, to our democracy in this province, because it's absolutely vital that we have an open and transparent process here at the committee. I would ask the Conservative members to stop voting to not extend the deadlines, so that we can actually do the work that this committee is designed to do, which is to review these appointments.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): That's not a valid point of order, but thank you.

I recognize a point of order from Mr. Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: If it's not ruled as a valid point of order, then not on the same point of order, I guess, but I would just like to submit to the member that when we do have the ability to sit here every week on Thursday mornings, we do have two intended appointees who are here. We're interviewing them. We're having the opportunity to hear what they have to say and question them, so I think it's very important that maybe we hear the other side of the story as well.

I know it's going to be ruled as not a valid point of order, but thank you for the opportunity, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): That is also not a valid point of order, and—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Graham McGregor): Is it on the same point of order? I think we're done with this point of order.

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

The committee adjourned at 1003.

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