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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

A-2

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-2

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 26 October 2021

2^e session
42^e législature

Mardi 26 octobre 2021

Chair: Gilles Bisson
Clerk: Tanzima Khan

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 26 October 2021

Mardi 26 octobre 2021

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

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting to order. We have the following members in the room: MPP Gates, MPP Coe, MPP Yakabuski. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Martin, MPP Miller and MPP Stiles.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, just give me a second. MPP Pang has joined us, so we will admit him.

Mr. Billy Pang: Good morning, Mr. Chair. MPP Billy Pang from Markham–Unionville here, and I'm in Markham–Unionville.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, MPP Pang. So MPP Pang has also joined us virtually.

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

To make sure that everyone can understand what is going on, it is important that all participants speak slowly and clearly. Please wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF SUBCOMMITTEE

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We have our first item of the agenda: appointment of the subcommittee on committee business. Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 20, 2021, a change to the composition of the subcommittee on committee business is required. I will now entertain a motion for the replacement of subcommittee member Mr. Will Bouma. MPP Coe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, Chair. I move that MPP Yakabuski be appointed as a member of the subcommittee on committee business.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you. Is there any discussion? MPP Stiles, go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I was wondering if we could—I don't know if it's possible to ask—I don't see MPP Yakabuski. Is he in the committee room? Sorry, I can't see him, so I don't know. Oh, he is. Okay. Hi, MPP Yakabuski.

I wondered if the MPP would mind sharing with us whether, if he is elected to be on the subcommittee, he's

willing to hold meetings very quickly and urgently to discuss some of the issues that have arisen that we've discussed previously at all of these meetings, because we haven't had a subcommittee meeting since, I think, the first year that we met. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could hardly hear MPP Stiles, Chair. It's quite garbled.

We'll be having discussions ongoing as members of the subcommittee. I heard her say something about meeting quickly. We're always open to discussions, as we always have been, and will continue to do so.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry, is there something wrong with the audio?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Yes, I think we're having some—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think you need to slow down. Just slow down a bit and I think—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): No, I think I'm having difficulty also understanding MPP Stiles. I don't know if there is something wrong with her audio or not.

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Stiles, we have the heater in the room working and making too much noise, so that's the problem. We're having difficulty hearing you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Can I repeat, please, so that he understands me clearly?

My earlier point, just for clarity, was that we have not been able to get the government members of the subcommittee to meet with the opposition member of the subcommittee since, I believe, the first year that this committee met—like 2018. So it has actually been really difficult, and I am reassured to hear Mr. Yakabuski make that commitment. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I haven't made any commitment. Let me be clear: I said I'm prepared to have a discussion with you or the members of the subcommittee. That's what I said, if you want clarity.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Yakabuski. MPP Stiles, are you okay with the answer?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I don't know what he's committing to or not, but I hope that we will actually hold some meetings so we can [*inaudible*]. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We'll sort it out.

I see MPP Deepak Anand has joined us. MPP Anand, can you confirm your presence and where you are about?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Absolutely. Good morning, Chair. My name is Deepak Anand, MPP for Mississauga–Malton, and I am in Mississauga right now. Thank you so much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, so we're on—did you want to say—yes, MPP Anand?

Mr. Deepak Anand: Chair, this is my first day in this committee, so I am getting to familiarize it. Is it a common practice for the subcommittee to meet? Because in the previous one, in another one, we actually had—we could meet through the communication [*inaudible*] paper as well.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tanzima Khan): Good morning, Mr. Anand.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Good morning.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Tanzima Khan): Typically, this committee is a little bit different from the other standing committees. The standing orders give the subcommittee of this committee authorization to make selections from the certificate, and typically, those selections can be made electronically. That's a decision that was made by the committee years ago. However, just like any other subcommittee, if the members do decide that they want to have a meeting in person or virtually together, we can facilitate that. We can take requests from either of the subcommittee members and reach out to the other subcommittee members to set up a meeting for them.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Perfect. But the work can still go on; it's not that the work is not going on, is my understanding.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: As MPP Anand would know, other committees deal with legislation; this committee does not, so it's a little different from the point of view of how it operates. There are no requests to travel or to have committee hearings in other locations or to bring in deputants. This is where we bring in prospective appointees. So it's somewhat different in that respect.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much for the clarification.

MPP Gates?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I think what my colleague is trying to say is that we'd like the committee to function a little better. I know that with the appointment of our new subcommittee member—he has been around a long, long time. There's no disrespect at all; that's a compliment. It's hard to be around this place a long, long time. He understands how the committees work. He understands how they should function. All my colleague is saying is that we could do a lot better job on making the committee function. What we're saying, as the NDP and as colleagues, is that we're prepared to do that. We're hoping that with the new appointment of maybe a different face, a different voice, somebody who has been around a long time, who probably takes pride in being appointed to a subcommittee, we can work together and make sure the

committee functions to the best of its ability. That's what it's about. Hopefully, that clears it up a little bit. I've worked with my colleague before. Hopefully, that happens.

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

We're back to finish our first item on the agenda. As you know, it is the appointment of the subcommittee on committee business. We're still in the voting process. So I'm going to ask once again, are members ready to vote? Yes. All those in favour—

Interjection.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Stiles, can you turn your camera on, please? Okay.

Now I'm going to go back again and ask the same question. All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed? The vote is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. REGAN HAYWARD

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Regan Hayward, intended appointee as member, McMichael Canadian Art Collection board of trustees.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We now move to our review of intended appointments. Today, we have Regan Hayward, nominated as member of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection board of trustees.

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

Ms. Hayward, is it clear?

Ms. Regan Hayward: Yes, that is clear.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. Welcome to the committee. Good morning. Please go ahead if you would like to make an opening statement.

0910

Ms. Regan Hayward: I would. Thank you so much.

Good morning, everyone. I'm Regan Hayward. I wanted to start off by sharing that it's a pleasure to be here this morning.

Since 2016, I am the managing director and art curator for the not-for-profit Beaux Arts gallery in downtown Brampton, with the mandate to raise the public profile of visual arts in our community. I have increased the membership by nearly 40%, and prior to COVID impacts, our gallery experienced an increase in visitorship by nearly 55%.

Before my position with the Beaux Arts gallery, I worked as a special projects manager for Brampton Arts Council. During this time, the focus was on planning, coordinating and collaborating on a plethora of programs

and fundraising initiatives designed to support artists and provide education in the business side of the arts. I provided guidance to our artist members and stewardship of our sponsors, and contributed to successful public relations campaigns that attracted audiences and patrons to our arts initiatives.

I serve currently as the gallery Chair for Headwaters Arts at the Alton Mill Arts Centre in Caledon. During recent times, and despite recent challenges, my team and I have produced a number of exhibitions and events that have generated a 25% increase in submissions from regional artists and patrons to our ticketed events, which we have successfully managed to pivot and produce on the outdoor grounds of the Alton Mill Arts Centre.

I am a member of International Curators' Network, based in New York City, and being accepted into this membership has enhanced my artistic growth and understanding of arts markets all over the world. It affords me virtual sharing with other arts leaders who inspire me and share sector-specific information, all relevant and very timely. I'm proud to be a member of this international, local organization.

I have served on jury panels for several visual art-based events with a number of different public and private organizations, but in recent years I have worked with PAMA, Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives, at the celebrated Live Art Competition. Founded and sponsored by the Inzola Endowment Fund, the Live Art Competition welcomes visual artists from across the region that produce plein-air paintings at outdoor public spaces. This is another outdoor-based event that has consistently grown in attraction for both artists and audiences over the years.

I am a former director of the board of the Downtown Brampton BIA and held the lead role in producing and presenting the successful ArtBeat Brampton events, which provided working opportunities for regional visual artists and attracted a large number of local residents to participate, enhancing positive social cohesion in our multicultural city.

I am a former director and founding member of the Brampton Arts Coalition Committee, which was instrumental in igniting and maintaining the municipal focus on developing the city of Brampton's first cultural master plan. It was passed at council in June 2018, and it helps to secure municipal legislation that will continue to solidify arts and culture support into the future.

Throughout the last decade and in contemporary time, I stay active in the arts and culture portfolio with the region of Peel, aligned with the municipality. I've also served on committees with the city of Brampton, successfully developing concept designs, policies and procedure for a municipal art gallery idea and our very own Brampton Arts Walk of Fame program, which continues to be activated and inviting inductees annually.

I also have sat on the Public Art Task Force that activates commissions for public art installations to enhance, decorate and lend to the legacy of Brampton designated heritage sites. It's been a very satisfying experience, especially when the public art installations are

warmly embraced by fellow citizens and stakeholders overall.

I am a graduate of OCAD University's curatorial development, criticism and design program, as well as Ryerson University's arts and entertainment management program. I continue to work toward my master's at the University of Toronto.

Throughout my life to date, I have consistently supported arts in various capacities and various ways. I possess an unwavering passion for visual arts and I'm forever seeking new opportunities and innovative ways to support our diverse Canadian talent, to help bolster the Canadian arts sector objectives, to attract diverse artists and engage our multicultural audiences with the arts, to promote core values of cultural exchange for social education, celebration and inspiration.

This concludes my opening remarks.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Ms. Hayward, for your presentation. Now we will go to the opposition side. They have 15 minutes. Who would like to start the questioning? MPP Stiles, go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you very much for joining us today. I know that you were here last week as well, so thank you, double, for having taken the time to join us for this second opportunity, so we get a chance to know you a little bit, Ms. Hayward, and understand what you may offer to the board of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

You obviously have a lot of experience, and I really just wanted to ask you a few more general questions, because I think that we're in a very important moment—I think that's probably understating it—for our economy, but also particularly in the arts sector, where we've seen a lot of artists themselves struggling during this difficult time, but also for galleries, for museums etc. So I wondered if you might comment a little bit about what you see as some of the more immediate challenges that are facing the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and where you see yourself fitting in to coming up with some of the solutions.

Ms. Regan Hayward: Certainly. So I think, perhaps, the challenges going forward would be, naturally, reaching wider audiences during this high-voltage time of challenge, reaching those audiences and also engaging with them live. Visual art and the galleries themselves, we're often—our objective for live engagement is a big part of our initiatives. So making people feel safe post-lockdown and post-COVID would be one thing.

I think I'm well suited to meet those expectations with respect to contributing different concept designs that have worked for myself—running a business gallery here in Brampton, as well as supporting one in Caledon—and really formulating strategic directions to stimulate interest and, again, incorporating the overtone of a safe zone to engage live with art, first. The second, as well, is, as I mentioned, reaching those wider audiences through new, innovative ways that are very inclusive.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you for that. There was a—I'm sure you're familiar with it, but maybe you could tell me if you are or not. There was a value-for-money audit

done of museums and galleries—specifically the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum and the McMichael—by the Auditor General in December 2020. There were a number of recommendations made, and I just wondered if you could speak to whether or not you've reviewed those and what your thoughts are on some of those recommendations specifically.

Ms. Regan Hayward: I have generally reviewed them, but I can't speak specifically to them. But I will share that the ongoing consideration and support is an integral part. The role that McMichael plays, holding the position representing Canadian art exclusively—so as far as the value added, particularly to the McMichael, it's special in that sense, right? It's completely focused on Canadian art and, especially, particularly including the Indigenous artists in our country. So I think that is a value added, that's premium—just to share about McMichael.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'd be very interested in just your personal perspective, working in the art community and running galleries, where you think the Ontario government could be stepping forward. What would be useful at this stage from the government in terms of support for galleries, particularly those small galleries? I know we're talking now about your appointment to the McMichael, but I'm wondering what you might think.

I will say, in my community, we have a large number of small, independent galleries, and they're very active in a lot of our BIAs. I know you have experience with BIAs. I'm wondering—and we've really struggled. They have very much struggled through this pandemic. They've had difficulty getting access to the supports that small businesses were offered, and kind of too late, perhaps. But they've had a lot of difficulty, and we've had to work really hard in opposition to try to ensure that those small businesses, including those galleries, got the support they needed, but I still feel like there are some serious gaps. I'm just wondering if you could speak to where you think the government should be focused right now in terms of supporting those small businesses, specifically the galleries.

0920

Ms. Regan Hayward: I think it's important for our small galleries and the arts to clearly define the direction going forward and, in doing so, be able to outline that relevance to the different funding sectors of the government, whether it be the Ontario Arts Council, Trillium and so forth. So for the government to support the ongoing programs and funding streams available to the smaller galleries is very important and would be most helpful, going forward, as well as different initiatives toward awareness of those smaller galleries that exist in our ecosystem in the arts. I do think that the ongoing support of that would be extraordinarily helpful when we're competing for audience eyes, if you will. Whether that be through screen fatigue or resistance to joining live, both things could—raising that awareness and getting really definitive on what it is that these small galleries are producing, and supporting their artists relevant to modern times, going forward, would be most helpful.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's all my questions. I'll pass it on to my colleague Mr. Gates.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's nice to see you again. I feel like I know you, seeing that you were here last week. I'm sure you enjoyed the debate, just for the main reason that it was all about accountability. When I take a look at everything—and I've read quite a bit about you; I know you might find that surprising—it looks to me like you understand how important it is to have accountability, and I'm sure you're going to try to bring that to the arts.

I also have a question that I ask everybody. You're not special—I think you saw that last week. I've asked other witnesses this. I've said it before. Do you have any connections to the Conservative Party, both provincially and federally?

Ms. Regan Hayward: Am I—a connection—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Are you a member?

Ms. Regan Hayward: No, I'm not.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Have you ever been a member of either party?

Ms. Regan Hayward: No, I have not.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Have you ever donated?

Ms. Regan Hayward: No, I have not.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. That's very, very good.

I also saw that you did a lot of work at the municipality level, running events and that stuff.

Maybe you can tell me why it's important to have an arts wall of fame. I think we have that in our community, Niagara Falls, as well.

I'm going to ask you three questions, but they all tie together.

Why do you think it's important to have an arts wall of fame?

Ms. Regan Hayward: The Brampton Arts Walk of Fame program is one that is similar, as you mentioned, to your neighbourhood and other neighbourhoods across our country. They are representative of giving hometown accolades to artists who have gone on to national or international success in their various disciplines, so that they have hometown recognition and support and ongoing legacy lives on in something. When you're an inductee and there's actually a plaque installed, whether that be in a wall format or a walkway format—I think that's very important for visitors, for the artists, all the stakeholders, and the ongoing recognition, that it stays live and continuous.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes. You may or may not agree with me that a lot of times it's hard to get recognition for the arts. It seems to be something that's not done a lot in a lot of communities, although it should be—whether it's arts or culture. I think we should be proud of our arts and proud of our culture.

You also did something that is always interesting to me—I know my colleagues in the PC Party like to do these golf tournaments, as well. You ran an annual golf tournament for the arts. It has never been done in our area. We've had a number of golf tournaments for everything,

but I've never, ever—in the 12, 13 years that I've been elected in Niagara Falls, we've never had a charity golf tournament for the arts.

When you run these tournaments, is there a lot of interest? Can you make some money? Is awareness of the tournament what you're looking for? Is it money you're looking for? Just a little explanation on why it's important to run these types of events.

Ms. Regan Hayward: Yes, absolutely. The charitable golf tournament for the arts was sponsored as well by our local councillors—well, it was the Councillors' Annual Charity Golf Tournament for the Arts. It was our second-most successful fundraiser for the arts here in our municipality, and it certainly raised local awareness, which spilled over into other parts of engagement to build our stakeholders.

I think it's very vital to have all kinds of different parts, whether it be our labour market or our community, aware of the local arts that are happening. Once they're aware, that's when—and so, engaged, they will continue that support, ongoing, in different ways, whether that be to literally show up and support with presence and applause or whether that's funding or whatever it is that they can support with. But it's support, fundamentally.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Just a question on that. I used to be a city councillor of Niagara Falls. Like I said, we have the wall of fame, but we've never run a golf tournament. Would the mayor participate? How much money would a tournament like this raise for the arts?

I think the awareness is probably the most important part of it, but we also need money. I mean, that's why we do this stuff. We can't do a lot of things we want to do around the arts without money. So how much money would you raise for that? And would the mayor, as well as the councillors, embrace it and participate?

Ms. Regan Hayward: Historically, this particular fundraiser was supported by, fortunately for Brampton, the mayor and the majority of council, believe it or not. We raised anywhere from \$30,000 to \$38,000, which directly funded our CAP program, which was the community arts performance program, which enabled our local artists to apply for smaller amounts—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: What's that?

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

Ms. Regan Hayward: —so, for example, \$2,000 to \$5,000 for different things they needed for their operational elements to produce their art. So it was a direct impact; those fundraising events gave a direct impact to the local CAP program, which was really embraced by local artists and appreciated by local artists. It was an excellent return in support.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay. I appreciate those answers.

The current government, quite frankly, doesn't have a great track record when it comes to the arts. In 2019, they cut millions out of the Ontario Arts Council. Do you think that this was the right direction?

Ms. Regan Hayward: [*Inaudible*] a direction, for different reasons.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Do you think that cuts are a good idea, I guess, is where I'm looking at.

Ms. Regan Hayward: Cuts, if they make no sense, are certainly not a good idea, but if they make sense, maybe they're a necessary idea.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't understand that answer, but it's your answer.

The value-for-money audit—and I know my colleague asked you a question on this. There were some things in the audit where you give credit where credit is due. There were some things in there that were doing a good job, around safety and those types of things. But there are one, two, three, four things that the value-for-money audit found that are a little disturbing to me. I'll read one, and you can—if I get through them all—I probably won't because I've only got a couple minutes left, but it “could not demonstrate how it selected exhibitions that were most likely to be successful.”

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: That was the one—“could not always demonstrate that the acquisitions they made were needed to meet their collection objectives”; “did not have policies in place”—and this is interesting—“to conduct regular inventory checks to verify the existence of the items in its collections”; and it “did not have an accurate valuation of its collections to ensure it maintained sufficient insurance coverage.”

The way this committee works is: You're going to be on the committee. That's just the way it works. You've been asked to come here by the PC Party, which is fine—selected by them.

But they're four pretty important things. With your experience that I see you've done, I would think that you would think that those are things that should be corrected. I'm hoping when you get on the committee—because I've only got a couple seconds left; I won't force you to answer them. But when you get on the committee, could you please take a look? You said that you didn't really see a lot of the audit. Please take a look at those things. I think they're very important, not only for—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Gates. Your time is up.

0930

We move to the government side. The government side has 10 minutes. Who wants to start? MPP Yakabuski, go ahead, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Regan, for joining us today and for coming forward and offering to be a member of this board of trustees at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. We can see by not only your resumé but by your address today, and based on the answers you gave to opposition questions, that you're exactly, I think, what we're looking for.

To Mr. Gates's questions about accountability, that's exactly clearly what you believe in, and I think that that's laudable. Our government has been tremendously supportive to the arts, and through our minister, Minister MacLeod, we have demonstrated that. But we've always

also demonstrated that we expect accountability, and I think that that's something that you have shown in your background as well.

A few minutes isn't very much, but can you elaborate on how you believe you are so well-suited to meet the expectations of the McMichael, with the background and the resumé that you have and the commitment that you clearly have for the arts? Arts and government are intrinsically connected because of the nature of that business. Maybe if you could elaborate on that a little bit, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Ms. Regan Hayward: Certainly. I think that with my professional background, I would certainly leverage my cultural competency and lived experience for this role at McMichael, to help design different effective considerations reaching and engaging diverse people. I also think I'm well-suited to meet the expectations of McMichael, contributing different ideas to support of the strategic direction of the organization—meaning realizing that the board's objectives are very significantly directed towards stimulating interest in the collections, to stimulate interest in the exhibitions and, subsequently, in the area of various activities that they engage to enhance and complement the collections and the exhibitions. I think I can certainly, with my experience, support the strategic direction overall.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much for that answer. I believe that MPP Anand has a question for you as well.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, MPP Yakubuski, for kicking it off.

First of all, congratulations, Regan, and thank you. I love Peel and I love people from Peel, and you've done an incredible job being part of PAMA. I was actually looking at Beaux Arts, talking about the beauty and increasing the beauty. When we talk about equality, we talk about inclusion, and those things always definitely matter.

I honestly am truly impressed with your resumé. I really don't have much to ask, but I'll still ask this question: Both from an economic and a practical purpose, can you share with the committee what you might leverage in your existing role as a managing director and apply to McMichael? If you wanted to elaborate on that part.

Ms. Regan Hayward: I do have a professional network, with all the experience I have collected over the years. I am, I think, very overtly passionate and consistently passionate with my support of the arts and I do believe that my network has that awareness of me and the projects I work on.

I dare say that I have creative leadership that is trusted by people in my network, so my involvement with McMichael would certainly draw their attention closer to it and enhance engagement in any type of support that we could lend it going forward. As I said, it's a notable Canadian institution supporting Canadian artists and Indigenous artists, and this is such a movement for the future forward in arts and culture in our country.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I know the next question is from MPP Norm Miller. The beauty is always a lot in his riding, so I'll pass it on.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Ms. Hayward, for putting your name forward for the McMichael Canadian Art Collection board of trustees.

I know I've heard the minister responsible for heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries, Ms. MacLeod, often talk about how the sectors under her ministry were hit hardest and first, and will take the longest to recover from COVID.

What I'm wondering about is, as a business manager of an art gallery that has lived through the last year and a half or so, what first-hand experiences and lessons have you learned from that experience, please?

Ms. Regan Hayward: Certainly. The minister is absolutely right: The arts and culture sector, along with hospitality, it's fair to say, was the hardest hit. We are so dependent on live engagement, and we all know that COVID has contracted that, for certain.

I would think going forward, though, in the arts sector specifically, that it's important to really define and design the intent on arts practices and presentations. It's those that are defined and designed and aligned with what our current contemporary culture wants to engage with, wants to explore—I think that's very important.

Sadly, maybe that contracting has really forced us to do that, much like it has forced us to engage through Zoom as opposed to live. In the arts, it's the same idea. I've learned through the business sector of the arts that we have loyal audiences, but those audiences want to be engaged in things that really resonate with them. So I think from the business part of the arts, we need to really—leaders in the arts are tasked to really drive it home, to really get clear and defined into what that is and give it our best shot.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you. I thank you for putting your name forward, and I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Ms. Hayward, your academic and professional background we've gone over a bit already, but I am aware that you were a 2019 nominee for the annual Waterfront Awards, recognizing and celebrating the achievements of outstanding women in the greater Toronto area. I just wanted to say congratulations for that nomination and for that just recognition of your contribution to arts and culture. Thank you for all you're doing in that regard.

As with most agencies, the McMichael does rely on fundraising as a means of supporting exhibitions and programming. I was wondering if you could share with the committee how you might leverage your professional network and your experiences to enhance the McMichael's fundraising capabilities.

Ms. Regan Hayward: Absolutely. I do feel that my network is paying attention and they're very willing to

support, in various ways, the types of initiatives I'm involved with, only for having the track record that I have demonstrated over the last decade of time. I trust this endeavour with the McMichael will be no different; in fact, I think that because it is a Canadian treasure and I am very passionate about Canadian artists, particularly of which the McMichael is very engaged with, I just think it's a natural fit with my network. I think they'd be very supportive and I'd be very proud to seek their support for the McMichael, so it's something—anything done with enthusiasm is done greatly.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much. I think my colleague MPP Coe has a question.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Coe, go ahead. You have one minute and 20 seconds. Go ahead.

Mr. Lorne Coe: All right. Thank you. I'll be quick, Chair.

Good morning and welcome to the committee. You'll be aware that the McMichael board meets four times a year and it also has some subcommittee work. I noted in your resumé that you also volunteer for three other board roles and you also have a full-time job. How are you going to be able to accommodate this particular position that you're appearing for today?

Ms. Regan Hayward: Certainly. Forgive me, I should probably update that resumé. I have just completed my term on the board with the Downtown Brampton BIA, so that removes one, and the second one is completing at the end of this year. So, the timing of this—I tried to align it in such a way that it wouldn't be overloading my attention span with respect to my involvement. I feel confident that the intersection of time is conducive to open up—I'm concluding some areas and I'm commencing in other areas, so I hope that answers your question.

0940

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We have six seconds left for the government side.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Ms. Hayward, for your patience and presentation. That concludes our hearing with you.

MS. GINA SACCOCCIO BRANNAN

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Gina Saccoccio Brannan, intended appointee as member, Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We will move now to Gina Saccoccio Brannan—I hope I pronounced it accurately; I didn't butcher your middle name.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: It's "Saccoccio." It's an Italian name.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, great—nominated as member of the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corp.

As you may be aware, you have the opportunity, should you choose to do so, to make an initial statement. Following this, there will be questions from members of the

committee. 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.

Now, I will ask you if you'd like to make an opening statement.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Yes, I would.

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

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Good morning, Chair, Mr. Bisson; Vice-Chair, Mr. Babikian; and members of the committee. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to address my appointment and the confirmation of that appointment.

My name is Gina Brannan. I'm a wife, I'm a mother of three adult children, and a lawyer celebrating my 41st year as a member of the Ontario Bar and the Law Society of Ontario. I have, over the years, practised in a number of areas of law, including municipal and planning law, real estate law, personal injury law on both the plaintiff and defence side—none of which assists me with this particular committee, of course, but to let you know my background.

However, over the last 20 years, I have practised in the area of employment human resources law, where I represent both employers and employees in both non-litigation and in litigation matters. So I've had the great opportunity to see this area of the law through the lens of the employer, for-profit and not-for-profit, and through the lens of the employee. I believe this has made me a better lawyer in this area of law. There's no doubt that solving problems and workable solutions in this area—and we have many these days with COVID—in my view, require knowledge and experience on both sides of the equation.

I have extensive not-for-profit board experience, dating back to 1985, when I first sat on the board of Ashby House, which operated a transitional living home for the brain-injured. I have been a member of a number of not-for-profit community boards and two Ontario hospitals, the Orthopaedic and Arthritic, which still remains on Wellesley but is part of the Sunnybrook hospital campus, and the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, which was an interesting time, because that was when the merger had occurred, bringing together three corporate cultures that were entirely different.

In almost all cases, I've assisted in the development of HR employment policies and addressing matters of governance. Most importantly, given that the majority of the not-for-profit boards I've sat on were fully or partly funded by the public funds, I have gained a strong understanding of the important governance role that directors of public agencies have as stewards of public assets.

Since March 2020, the employment and HR side of my practice has been busy and challenging, addressing issues of compliance and developing policies for employers and the not-for-profit board that I presently sit on, to respond to the laws, the regulations, the mandates and public health

orders issued through this pandemic. I've also addressed the very human side of the COVID laws and the regulations in assisting employees in dealing with the changes to their employment, mandatory vaccination policies set by employers and the new normal in the workplace, and the far-too-many cases where jobs were lost—and assisting these employees and directing their energy to reinventing themselves and to be ready for the reopening.

I believe that my professional skill set in the skills and knowledge developed over the years and, most recently, during this pandemic are well suited to assisting this board's governance and HR committees. I know that there is an oversight aspect to this with respect to HR and employment policies and that those types of skill sets are going to be important because of the significant reopening of the convention centre. It is the engine of our hospitality and tourism industry, of the economy of this province and, potentially, even the country, given the number of people who will come from overseas and then spread across Canada after their conventions.

Those are my remarks. I'm welcome to receive any questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, Ms. Brannan.

Now we will move to the government side for questioning. Government side, you have 11 minutes and 15 seconds. Who wants to go first? MPP Yakabuski, go ahead, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Ms. Brannan, for joining us today. Even though my daughter is married to a Colucci, I won't try that second name there because I don't have it in writing.

As I said, I do want to thank you for joining us today and also for your willingness to put your name forward and to come before this committee. Based on your resumé, which we've seen much of, and your record, you are absolutely amazingly qualified, as your record shows in other boards that you have sat on. You're someone who has been sought out because of your wise counsel and your abilities and your commitment, so I'm not surprised to see you here today, to be appointed to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

You had a short statement, and I realize that, but is there anything you can share with us on why you believe specifically you're well suited to meet the expectations of the MTCC and the appointment to their board of directors?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Well, it's my understanding that the board is a skills-based board, and this particular board has governance and HR committee oversight on policies and issues. So it's very, very specific with respect to my area of training and my area of expertise. HR, employment law issues and governance issues are all things that I've worked with, particularly in the past 20 years.

I think, probably, the policies and the issues that affect employees are going to be really important, because we can see, in the hospitality industry particularly, the difficulties that the businesses are having bringing their employees back. It's tough. I think that these policies have

to be fair, they have to be all-encompassing, they still have to take into consideration whatever rules and regulations that are presently there, and they have to be welcoming to bring these employees back, for the employees that didn't stay with the convention. I'm assuming that some did and that some didn't; I don't know for sure.

But I think the employee piece is important to the running of this convention centre. I see, in February, the car show is going to be back. That's a huge show, that's a big draw, and we need to have the employees to operate.

I can tell you that in some of the restaurants, they can't even do the—now, I know they're open completely, but they couldn't do their capacity because they didn't have the employees to cover the tables. We can't allow that to happen at the convention centre. We have to make it work, because it's the engine that runs our economy. It brings everybody here. It fills up the hotels; it fills up the restaurants.

So I think I'm suited to assist in that particular policy area, dealing with the employees, having represented many employees throughout the pandemic.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Ms. Brannan. I can see by your enthusiasm that the MTCC will be well served with you joining that board.

I believe MPP Anand has a question for you as well.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Chair. I am following MPP Yakabuski, it looks like, in every meeting and discussion.

Ms. Brannan, thank you so much for joining. It's really important, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. You said it very well: It's not just filling up those places; it's building those memories, building those milestones and bringing life back as soon as we can possibly do it. But as we know, COVID-19 had an extreme impact. Sometimes, I call it a reset. Sometimes, I think it's a fast-forward in many things.

0950

You have such a brilliant, quite impressive resumé, with a QC designation. I think MTCC will play an important role in Toronto's recovery, and I could hear that from you as well. Can you speak to how your skill set might assist in MTCC's successful recovery and, eventually, a vibrant Toronto recovery?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Well, it seems to me that with the senior management team, and the CEO and the president, it will be, I guess, the groups—and I don't know the whole organizational chart, but I'm assuming that there is a group that's out there looking for these trade shows to come to the convention centre. They're going to need support, because any policies or issues that affect employees also, because of the pandemic, may very well affect the people coming into the convention centre.

Remember, we want them in the convention centre because we want them in our hotels and our restaurants, and we want them to leave the convention and go to other parts of Ontario: northern Ontario, eastern Ontario, down to the county and the wine country in Niagara. So I think

my job would be to assist the senior management team with respect to any assistance they want, with respect to those policies and issues that relate to bringing the employees in to run these conventions. To me, the employees of the convention centre are so important—so, so important—because you can't run those conventions without them. You need people.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you so much.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you. I really appreciate it. My colleague MPP Pang would like to ask something.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Good morning, Ms. Brannan. Good to see you here, and I appreciate you putting your name forward. This is a very challenging position. I understand that you bring some board experience to this role at the MTCC. Can you please tell us what boards you have been involved with in the past or present and how these experiences will benefit you in this new potential role?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Some of the boards I've been on don't relate to the tourism and hospitality industry; in fact, none of them do. This would be the first foray into the tourism and hospitality industry. But with all of them, I have dealt with the issues of governance and employment. There were health care boards like Ashby House. I was on the East York Board of Health for a while, two to three years. I sat on my local ratepayers' association.

Some things that weren't on my computer—I founded a school, when we couldn't find a place to put our children in daycare, way, way back when, so we had full-time JK and full-time SK. A colleague and I started a school, which still exists today. We had to develop the bylaws and we had to develop the corporate stuff. We had to deal with the employees. So that was another learning experience.

The biggest learning experiences for me have clearly been the hospital boards, and particularly Sunnybrook. That was a huge and difficult exercise in bringing three different corporate cultures together. It was so difficult that, as you know, Women's ultimately broke off and went their own way, leaving behind their NICU unit at Sunnybrook. I can tell you that the employee issues and the governance issues that I dealt with there I think will serve me well in assisting the convention centre in coming back to its full speed—which is huge. When I look at the last annual report, the amount of money that has been lost is frightening, but it's an amount of money that we can gain back in the reopening.

Once again, I think that my experience on all of these boards, and my most recent board, which—it's just a small board; it's my golf club. I did all of the pandemic work on that and all of the governance. I chair the governance committee. I do all the terms of reference for all the various subcommittees. I dealt with all of the employee issues, of which there were many as soon as a mandatory vaccination policy was introduced. So I think all of those boards will serve me well in working with the convention centre.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you. I appreciate your experience from all directions. I believe—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Two minutes and 30 seconds left for the government side. MPP Coe, go ahead.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, and welcome to the committee.

I was hoping you'd be able to speak about your experiences working with a wide range of clients from different sectors over your career and how that would be valuable if you were appointed to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Every single file that I've had over the years has taught me at least one lesson, if not more.

I believe in the area of municipal planning law and real estate—I don't know how helpful that might be, sitting on the convention centre board. I'm sure they have those kinds of issues. That's still in my back pocket.

Dealing with plaintiff and insurance defence work—I expect there are a lot of insurance issues that the board may very well have to deal with, and if I can be of any assistance there—I still do some insurance work on another board I sit on. I review the policies. I don't negotiate them; I see them afterwards. Of course, when the legal claims come in, I assist in retaining counsel and instructing counsel. I'm not sure that would be the type of job you would have at the convention centre. But those types of things may be helpful in assisting.

As one of our Chief Justices said a long time ago, there's a lot to be said for somebody who has practised in a lot of areas of the law, because you see things through all different lenses. I'm hoping that ability will be of some service to the convention centre.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Chair, how much time do we have left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You have 34 seconds.

MPP Martin, go ahead.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I know that Fan Expo 2021 was at the MTCC this past weekend. My daughter talks about these kinds of things all the time. I'm wondering if you can tell us what the impacts of events like that are for the MTCC, but also for getting our economy going.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: It was huge. My middle son is a big tech person and also a big Marvel Comics person. He didn't go, mainly because he's not ready for the big public—and that's going to be—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, Ms. Brannan. Unfortunately, your time is up.

Now we will move to the opposition side. MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: First of all, before I begin, I just want to ask, when are we going to have a standing committee meeting in MPP Norm Miller's living room? That is one beautiful fire. I'm very, very jealous right now.

Aside from that, I want to thank you for coming today. I appreciate you being here.

As you probably heard in the previous questioning of the appointee, there are certain questions that the opposition, as I know you will understand, feel a responsibility to ask. We have seen, over the last three and a half years, a large number of connected Conservatives, particularly former candidates for the Conservative Party, appointed to various boards, commissions, agencies. The role of this committee is to ensure there is transparency and accountability.

You have a lot of experience, so I'm sure you won't be surprised by some of my questions, but I just wanted to give a little background there, before I get going.

Ms. Brannan, are you currently or have you ever been a member of the PC Party, both federally or provincially?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Yes, both. I believe I'm actually still a member of the provincial party and the federal party.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Have you ever acted on behalf of—as a lawyer, I suppose. I know you worked, very early days, for the Conservative government here in Ontario, but have you ever acted on behalf of, as a lawyer—including legal advice, comment etc.—either the PC Party or the Conservative Party?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: Not the federal party, but the provincial party. I was the interim general counsel for the party during Minister Fedeli's time as the interim leader. So I was the party lawyer for 45 days, and then I stepped back. Then I was retained on a matter by the caucus office to deal with a file where there were documents that they were looking for from the party in a particular action. So that was a very brief retainer of maybe a month.

1000

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry, that was the caucus—

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: The PC caucus, yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The PC caucus retained you to—

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: The Legislative Assembly, I think, was actually who I had the retainer with but for the PC caucus.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm sorry. Just to clarify, the Legislature or the party was looking for some documents or—

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: No. Another litigant was looking for some documents. So I dealt with that. That was already three years or two years ago.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Are you able to share who the litigant was in that case?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: That would be breaching privileges of the people involved. I can't do that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. I wasn't sure, so I appreciate that.

Ms. Brannan, over those many years, can you confirm that you've donated upwards of \$5,000 to the federal and/or provincial Conservative parties?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: I know that I have donated money to the provincial party. No, that's not \$5,000. In 2014, I donated \$189—I looked these up—in 2015, I donated \$500 and in 2019, \$1,600.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And that \$500 contribution, just to clarify, was to Christine Elliott's leadership campaign. Is that correct?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: In 2015, it may very well have been to hers or to Mr. Fedeli's. I don't know for sure; I can't recall. Maybe it had been to Ms. Elliott's.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So when you were retained, as you mentioned, by the party, I guess—it was during the leadership race, I believe. Correct?

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: No, no, no. During the leadership race, the most recent one that selected Premier Ford, I was the interim general counsel to the party, because Mr. Fedeli and the party asked me to come in for that 45 days until a new leader was chosen.

When it came to the convention portion, I was not there. There was another lawyer responsible for what happened at the convention and any legal issues there. I remained at home. I was not involved in that part.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You were fortunate. I had to go. I was there as an observer. It was very interesting.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: I did watch it on TV.

Ms. Marit Stiles: And I will say, I did notice in just a brief search that you had been quoted—and that's what I was trying to understand, what it was for—in relation to some questions that were being raised by various leadership camps about looking for injunctions or something around the—

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: I actually represented the party. An injunction application was brought to halt the leadership race that selected Premier Ford, and I was asked to defend the party and to prevent that injunction from occurring the best that I could, because it would have cost an awful lot of money to move that convention two weeks, never mind the fact that pretty well everything was in place. We were successful on that application and moved on. So that's probably where you saw quotes in the paper from me, with respect to the never-ending leadership campaign. If we kept it on, we would have had to bring it to an end.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I remember.

You were retained for that one period, but you do have a long history. You've documented this in your CV. You talked about your days working for the Conservative government. I assume that was under Bill Davis.

Ms. Gina Saccoccio Brannan: That was the Mr. Davis government, yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: So you have a long history here. I know you talked about some of the donations and stuff, but I think it would be fair to say you have been—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Stiles, a point of order by MPP Yakabuski.

Go ahead, MPP Yakabuski.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have to ask: This line of questioning is drifting further and further away from Ms. Brannan's qualifications and her potential appointment to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and into the realm of some kind of a historical political witch hunt. She's now going back to the time of the late Premier William Davis, who we'll honour next week at his memorial. This is not

the function of this committee. If you want to write a book or do a political history, I mean, we can all do that.

Ms. Brannan has clearly indicated that she has a history with the PC Party. She has not denied a single question. She has made it clear that she has made donations in the past. That's not what this appointment is about. This appointment is about the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Incidentally, they sought her out. They want her on this board because of the myriad of qualifications she has to sit on a board like this. So if MPP Stiles wants to continue this line of questioning, I submit that it's out of order. It is not on topic at all.

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

MPP Stiles, would you like to continue the questioning? I will appreciate if you can focus on the board and the credentials and qualifications of the candidate and her role. How can she improve the board that she will be appointed to?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Chair, I think we've had some government members raise these kinds of concerns before. I will say, Mr. Chair, that previously, on multiple occasions, the government members have had to be told and reminded that we are able as members to ask any questions that we deem appropriate.

In fact, given this government's record of appointing lacrosse buddies of the Premier, there are multiple issues. The member opposite was perhaps not on the committee this time, but will recall that the government attempted to appoint a non-francophone to be the chair of the board of TFO, at this very committee, because of his political connections.

I am certainly quite aware, and I think Ms. Brannan understands that I am quite aware of her other qualifications, but it is absolutely the responsibility of us as MPPs—of all parties, I would argue—to shed light where it needs to be shed. I'm actually asking some—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, just one second.

Ms. Marit Stiles: —reasonable questions, I think, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay. MPP Stiles, no one is questioning your right to ask the questions that you need to ask to the witness, but it will be more beneficial for the overall work of the committee if we can focus on the credentials of the candidate for that particular board or commission, because she already stated very clearly that she is affiliated with the Conservative Party. So let's look at the general work of the committee and the province.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Chair—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Just a second.

Interjections.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Yakabuski, you have the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, thank you very much, Chair. With all due respect to MPP Stiles, if she wants to bring up other issues where she believes there is a history,

there is a forum that's available for that. She can have the media conference room, she can raise them in question period or she can do whatever she wants. But the reality of this committee—I would say it submits to almost badgering of the potential appointee, where she has made it clear that she has a history.

Now what we're trying to determine is whether or not she is appropriate to sit on this board. I put it to the MPP that you can't find any reason not, so you continue to go down this road of this character aspersion. I would suggest that you try to speak about the board and the candidate's suitability for this board. Her history indicates that she is more than capable and more than appropriate, and the board itself sees that and is hopeful that she could be appointed to this board.

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

MPP Stiles, we have eight minutes left for the opposition, and the time is running out because we are going to stop in seven minutes. If you want to continue with the questioning, let's go ahead. Everyone made their point, and I think we should continue the questioning and finish on time.

1010

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to get back to my questions. I think the Clerk will probably clarify at some point that I am actually able to ask any question I want to here. In fact, my questions do very much speak to the suitability of the person who we are interviewing. Mr. Yakabuski may not like that, the Conservative caucus members may not like that, because obviously they don't want to draw any attention to that matter—and by the way, I will point out that this committee continues to no longer broadcast. There is no broadcast of this committee, because this government doesn't want to shed any light on their appointment process.

Anyway, Ms. Brannan, I was almost wrapped up with my questions to you, so I apologize—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Stiles, MPP Yakabuski is asking for a point of order. Go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If MPP Stiles makes statements that she knows are not in keeping with the facts—she also knows that we have undertaken, as a government, to extend and further the reach of broadcast committees to include all committee rooms. She knows; she's aware of that. So when she sits there and makes the statement that the government does not want to broadcast committees, she knows that to be false.

We are the first government to actually take steps to broaden the reach and the publication of committee hearings. That process is currently in progress, and the Clerks are aware of it. The Legislative Assembly is aware of it. We're working together to try to make that possible. There are technological challenges, like everything else with an old building like this, but at some point we'll get there. But it's not because this government is—in fact, we're the ones who are promoting trying to let these committees broadcast more broadly.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Yakabuski. MPP Stiles, go ahead.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Perhaps MPP Yakabuski needs to be brought up to speed, so I'll give him a little bit of room here. In fact, we have attempted on numerous occasions throughout the pandemic to ask the government members to support a webcast of this committee, and that has been defeated. They refused to agree.

Anyways, I'm not going to cut off my colleague, who I know has some questions as well. So I want to hand this over now to MPP Gates. Thank you, Ms. Brannan.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

I will say that the 15 minutes is our time, and we should be allowed to ask our questions, whether the other party likes it or not.

We did talk about credentials, so in fairness to my colleague, this particular witness, from what I can see and everything that's been provided—there's been a lot provided, and I appreciate that—has absolutely no credentials when it comes to the file of tourism, none, no experience. She's never sat on a board; she's never done any of that. She has experience as a lawyer; that's her experience.

In my case, just so you know, I know tourism. I come from a tourist community. I come from Niagara Falls. I also know that COVID-19 devastated our area—not just Niagara Falls. It devastated Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Queenston, Ridgeway, Crystal Beach, all these little communities, where 40,000 people lost their jobs overnight, like that. And I know the same thing happened in Toronto, as I watched hotel after hotel shut down, and thousands and thousands of people lost their jobs. So the convention centre is very, very important.

My convention centre in Niagara Falls was shut down immediately. I think the first event that they've had in almost 19 months happened a couple of weeks ago, and we have one next week—something around Halloween, I think it is, or comedy. So I understand the tourist sector. When you say you need credentials, I'm not sure a lawyer is the right person to put in right now, during a pandemic.

But seeing you are a lawyer and seeing you want to get on this convention—and you talked about all the positions you've held as a lawyer, a lot around human resources, those types of issues. We've already established you have connections with the PC Party. We see that every week here.

But one thing that I will ask you, if you're going on the convention centre—you said, "Well, a lot of people can't get employees." There's a shortage of employees everywhere, including the tourist sector. Even as we started to come back and our patios were open for the summer, we had trouble getting employees and we had trouble keeping our shifts running, whether that's because they didn't have cooks. But one thing that I think you could talk about, quite frankly, is that we just had an increase—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Gates—

Mr. Wayne Gates: One minute?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Unfortunately, we're running out of time, because we have only one minute left from our—

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm not running out of time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Your side has almost six minutes.

We have to interrupt the meeting, because we have to end the committee business on time.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Okay, so I've got a minute left.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: If you stop talking, I can finish my point. It's important.

We just had a 10-cent increase to the minimum wage. One of the reasons why we have staffing problems is because of how low the minimum wage is and the fact that they don't have sick days. If you get on this board, will you raise that issue with your board—that if you want to get employees, you're going to have to pay them a little more money?

Inflation is up 4.8%. Our rents are going through the roof. Our housing costs are going through the roof. Food is going through the roof, and a lot of that's because we're plowing over all our farms and our food supply.

So will you commit right now that you will talk to your board about raising the minimum wage, paying your employees fairly, and providing sick days? I think they all go together—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you very much, MPP Gates. Unfortunately, our time is up. The committee's allocated time is 10:15, and we are at 10:15.

My apologies, Ms. Brannan, for the delays. We have to end the testimony here. The Clerk will contact you to advise you on the next step. The opposition has five minutes, but we have to end the meeting here.

I call an end to this meeting. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1016.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

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