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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

A-13

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

A-13

**Standing Committee on
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Tuesday 9 April 2019

**Comité permanent des
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Mardi 9 avril 2019

Chair: John Vanthof
Clerk: Jocelyn McCauley

Président : John Vanthof
Greffière : Jocelyn McCauley

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Tuesday 9 April 2019

Mardi 9 avril 2019

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): I'd like to call this meeting to order.

The first item of business this morning is the subcommittee report dated April 4, 2019. We have all seen this report in advance, so could I please have a motion? Mr. Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, April 4, 2019, on the order-in-council certificate dated March 29, 2019.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MR. ROD JACKSON

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

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We have Rod Jackson—come forward, please—nominated as member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Good morning.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Good morning, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): 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 the 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.

The floor is yours. Welcome.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be here today with you, and I appreciate the opportunity to come to address you and answer any questions you might have.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is, I believe, a very important part of our community development across Ontario and something not to be taken lightly. During my time, actually, as an MPP for Barrie, I was privileged to present several, if not dozens, of Trillium awards to organizations within my community. I've seen first-hand

the good work that they do. I'm very proud to have the opportunity to potentially be a part of that.

I want to just quickly take you through some of my history and some of my relevant experience. In the past, I don't know, 20 years—not to give away my age—I've been on several boards. These include the Greater Barrie Centre for the Performing Arts. I was the chair of Hospice Simcoe's capital campaign for \$6 million. I was on the Barrie not-for-profit housing corporation; chair of the international relations committee for the city of Barrie; a committee of adjustment member; chair of the Olympic torch run for the Vancouver Olympics, for Barrie; the Barrie Film Festival board, the Barrie Historical Archive fundraising chair, on the board of Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada; and on the MacLaren Art Centre board of directors, which I'm currently on.

I was also privileged enough to be awarded the award for Justice for Children and Youth for preventing youth homelessness. That was actually given to me by that organization, out of Toronto.

I've got lots of experience in working for not-for-profit boards and with community groups in elected positions, both as a city councillor and an MPP, and having been acting mayor of Barrie for four months.

The opportunity to serve again as a volunteer for the Ontario Trillium Foundation is a privilege that will allow me to feed my desire to continue in public service at a significant level, where I believe I can do lots of good work and make not only all of you around this table but the people of Ontario proud in what that organization can accomplish. I look forward to helping to contribute to the fabric of our communities across Ontario in that manner.

I'd be happy to take any questions that anybody has.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much.

The questions will begin with the government: Ms. Khanjin.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for appearing in front of us today. I have to say, knocking on doors during the last provincial election, that many people miss you. It's big shoes to fill. You've certainly done a lot for the Barrie community, and it has been very much noticed. The Barrie Film Festival still speaks your praises. I try to attend when I can. Of course, they are recipients of the Trillium award.

One of my questions for you, because of your whole breadth of experience, the amount of merit that you do have for this job and your capabilities are just—in your

role you've seen people who've achieved the award for the Trillium Foundation. They've been successful, but there are people who keep applying and applying and they don't get there. How would you advise to make it fair, so that it's transparent, so that all community members do have access to this grant and there's this level of transparency and fairness?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I think it's critically important for anyone who's interested in achieving a Trillium grant to understand the process—perhaps how other groups have been successful, learning from their experience and making sure that that information is easily accessible to everybody. I think it's absolutely critically important to be transparent about how that award is given to anybody and the information available to anyone who questions the process, that anyone did receive or not receive an award.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: And Barrie, for many years when you were serving as an elected official, was very much one of the fastest-growing cities. That in itself comes with a lot of other needs and demands.

In your role, having to balance all the communities that want to access to such a grant, to champion and showcase talents or local community initiatives, how would you take that experience to ensure that all communities, no matter their size or scope, are able to access this fund?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Well, yes, it is a challenge when you have a fast-growing community. Ontario itself is very quickly growing and there are so many different priorities. To be able to divide that up properly is always going to be a challenge, I think, no matter how much money there is or how many people or organizations there are vying for that piece of the pie.

A lot of people, I think, underestimate the power of culture as an economic driver, and it's something I've always been a champion of. I believe that no strong economy doesn't have a strong cultural aspect of it as well. Being able to focus on cultural groups, and by that I mean everything from groups like—I'm just randomly grabbing—the Salvation Army, maybe, or even youth sports teams, theatres, art galleries and museums—they all contribute to the fabric of our communities.

To answer your question, I think it depends on what they bring to the table.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As I try to follow your footsteps and how big the shoes are to fill—like I said, it has been noticed that you made a huge impact in the community. But I also noticed something I didn't know about you before, and that is that you have a mediation background. So when you have these different groups coming to the table trying to get the same grant monies, how do you use the mediation background to your benefit?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Mediation? I got into that because my background is also in human resources management, so I did a lot of labour mediation. It has become a very valuable tool in my toolbox that I've used extensively in any piece of my professional career. I'm not sure how it'll benefit it, but certainly it really helps alleviate any potential conflicts there are at any level. Whether it's between board members or whether it's between community

groups, I feel like I want to be always available for everybody in that respect.

I'm not quite sure how it would exactly specifically apply to this role, but I can tell you that it will because it seems to be a skill that I use very often. There's conflict everywhere.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I sometimes wish I had the same certificate in this role.

But thank you so much for being here today. It's great to see more people with merit and passion and spirit in these roles, so thank you.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Jackson, good morning.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Good morning.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's good to see you again.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Good to see you, as well.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I know that there was a time when we were colleagues.

Mr. Rod Jackson: That's right. Seatmates.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Seatmates. That's exactly right. But that's all right. I totally enjoyed our time together, and of course we accomplished quite a bit, too, back in that time.

Mr. Jackson, we talk about the Ontario Trillium Foundation. I've had opportunity back in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington to work with the Trillium Foundation people down in that area, working hard to ensure that applications are brought forward and discussed. Although I don't get involved in that process per se, we do get the organizations coming, perhaps, to my office as well as saying, "How do we go about ..." and so on.

0910

We know that many individuals and organizations do rely on the Ontario Trillium Foundation to basically just stay in business. I know that there was a situation that came to mind back in my riding where a cricket team wanted to share a particular field, but they needed finances, so they applied through the Ontario Trillium Foundation to seek those out. They would then maintain the land and so on. So it's a good thing.

But, again, when we take a look at our government, we were elected with a very clear mandate to restore trust and accountability to the province's finances. Some people think that this is just, "Give me, give me, give me." To me, that's not the right attitude. As a government, and personally, I believe in offering a hand up, not so much a handout. If people are willing to work and put the effort behind things, then good things can come to them in that regard. They don't appreciate it, as I'm sure you would agree. They just don't appreciate the fact that when money comes real easy and it's like, "This is a walk in the park." "You never gave me enough." We hear that a lot. It doesn't matter how much we give; it's just never enough.

As I mentioned, we're sending a clear message that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. So my question to you—a roundabout way to go about asking my question, but I'm setting the stage for you and giving you

time to think about this: How will you ensure value for money for the Ontario taxpayer, but also ensure that the Trillium Foundation continues to provide its important grant programs?

Let me repeat that: How will you ensure value for money for the Ontario taxpayer, but also ensure that the foundation itself continues to provide important grant programs?

Mr. Rod Jackson: As I mentioned before, I think culture is a very important economic driver. I think any grants that are given, not only should they do good in the community as far as their reach within that community but they should also be thought of as an investment.

When you talk about some of these groups that will be recipients of the grants, it's interesting what gets missed is the fact that not only do they contribute to society and to the community as far as the fabric, as I mentioned before, but they contribute to the economy. That, in and of itself, is a hand up, I think, not a handout.

I don't think of the Trillium grants as a handout at all. I look at them as investments in our communities. You're right: It's not a great businesses model to depend on it, I don't think, for any group, but certainly it would be prudent to make sure that anyone who applied for the grant understood and made it known how their organization would contribute not only to their community, but what kind of economic impact they would have in the long run. Businesses and employers don't go to communities that don't have a cultural entity. No one is going to go to a city or a community that doesn't have museums or a hockey arena. They want these facilities, and thus it grows out.

I think it's imperative to make sure that they understand and, as part of the process, make sure they make clear what their contribution will be exactly, specifically, not only to the community as a whole but to the economic well-being and future of that community—how exactly it applies and why there is a need for that specific organization to get the grant.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You kind of answered my next question for you, in a sense—the economic need. I'm sure that you will be inundated, as most places are, with requests to the Trillium Foundation. Of course, they all function on a budget as well, so they have to determine who receives assistance, who doesn't receive assistance, and so on.

As my colleague from Barrie–Innisfil mentioned, your mediation skills would certainly play an important role in that, in kind of gently, shall I say, lowering the boom on those who aren't going to be receiving any financial assistance, but also lifting them up as well and saying, “Hey, look.” Do you foresee any challenges in that regard?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes. I'm not sure how granular this position will actually allow me to get, but certainly, if the opportunity or the chance comes up to help any organization that maybe wasn't successful find a different way—although I think that's not a specific element of this role, it's one I'd be happy to play, because part of what we're trying to achieve here is to make sure that these groups are empowered to do the best things that they do.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes. I know that you have a very varied background, a very strong background, in community work. You certainly know the area, and you know where the strengths lie, where the weaknesses lie, in terms of where help can be afforded and whatnot.

Have you worked with any of the other organizations—

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Excuse me. The time for the government has expired. Thank you.

I'd like to switch to the official opposition: Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Welcome, Mr. Jackson, and congratulations.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: As you know yourself, having been an MPP before, this is a really important part of the process of appointments. Given that the other side has a majority, I think it's fair to say your appointment is pretty safe, but it is our job to ask some questions and poke around a little bit.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Of course.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hopefully, that would also be helpful for you in your taking on this new role.

Just to be clear: Obviously, you were an MPP. You're a former MPP; you were a Conservative MPP. You remain a partisan, I assume.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I don't consider myself a partisan. I haven't been involved in politics since 2014. I haven't participated in elections. It's no secret: Yes, I was a Conservative MPP. I don't consider myself a partisan, really, anymore. I don't have—

Ms. Marit Stiles: Are you a member of the Conservative Party of Ontario currently?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm sorry?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Are you a member of the Conservative Party of Ontario currently, or federally?

Mr. Rod Jackson: To be honest, I'm not sure if it has expired or not, but I'll say yes, just to be on the safe side.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay, fair enough.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Of course, it's your right to be so, to do so. Do you think, though, that it's appropriate for a government to nominate pretty exclusively partisan appointments through this process?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I think it's important to nominate whoever is capable of doing the job the best, regardless of their political affiliations.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Would it surprise you to know that, of the appointments that we've had come through here so far since this government was elected, about 95% are very clearly partisan appointments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I don't know any of the numbers or any of the other appointments, so it's tough for me to speak to that, but—

Ms. Marit Stiles: But probably not a coincidence, with numbers like that.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes. I mean, I have to take you at your word on those numbers. I don't know the particulars of any of those appointments, so it's tough for me to comment on them.

Ms. Marit Stiles: In terms of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the candidates who have already been appointed have very strong partisan connections to the Conservative Party. Two of them are failed Conservative candidates from the last election: Gary Bennett and Mary Henein Thorn, who—

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sorry?

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Yes, Mr. Baber?

Mr. Roman Baber: I'm not really sure if the line of questioning that we're currently hearing is within the scope of this witness' knowledge, or if it's appropriate for this particular witness to comment on other appointments within Trillium, when the purpose of this hearing is to determine if this is an appropriate candidate.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. I'm not sure this is a point of order, but I will request the questioner to maintain the questions on this candidate.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's quite relevant, actually, because it has to do with the makeup of the Ontario Trillium Foundation board.

0920

And also Michael Diamond, who, I think, directed the party's 2018 election campaign, who appeared before this committee not so long ago.

In fact, quite a number of these board positions are being filled with very partisan appointments. I just wonder if you think that's in any way concerning. Do you think that who receives assistance from a foundation like the Ontario Trillium Foundation should be in any way influenced by the political ideology or direction of the government?

Mr. Rod Jackson: No, I don't think that should play a part in it at all. I think they should be approved, or not, based on the merits of their application. Politics really shouldn't play any role in that.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Maybe I should ask you: Were you approached by anyone and asked to apply for this position?

Mr. Rod Jackson: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You just applied online?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes, I went online, put my name on the database, clicked the boxes for the boards and agencies that I thought I could be a good contributor for, and I got a call.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Who called you, by the way?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I believe Stephanie was my first contact—Stephanie Dunlop.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Have you had any conversations with Mr. Ford or anyone in his office about this role?

Mr. Rod Jackson: No.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you mind me asking what your relationship currently is with the Premier—if you have a relationship with the Premier at all?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I've met him once.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Could you imagine that there might be a chance that your political experience or ties could have given some preference to your appointment here? I'm not trying to undermine—you have, obviously,

skills and experience; we understand that. But do you think that would have any influence?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I hope not. I'd like to think that I'm here on the merits of my community achievements and experience. It certainly doesn't hurt to know most of the people in the room. I don't think—John included—Mr. Chair; sorry.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): It's okay.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I don't think it hurts, but I really would like to think that I'm here because of the good work that I've done.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes. Certainly, I think it's a bit unfortunate, perhaps, that there is this context that obviously you weren't aware of prior.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation got some bad news, let's just say, not that long ago—\$15 million cut from their budget. Had you heard that before?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: What do you think about that cut?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's unfortunate, but I think in this day and age we have to be prudent with the dollars that are spent. I'm not surprised. I think the days are gone—if they were ever here—where we can frivolously spend on anything. We have to be very prudent about where dollars are spent.

Am I surprised? No. I think it makes it even more important that we make sure that the dollars that are there are going to the appropriate place and that every dime is going to a group that is going to use it to its fullest potential.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you think there are concerns? Are you familiar with any concerns about funding that has been provided to any of the recipients thus far at the Ontario Trillium Foundation?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm not aware of any. I know that in my own community, they've all done very good things.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I was actually at an announcement in my riding recently for an organization that does really amazing work around children's mental health and behavioural therapies—really phenomenal. They received a grant from the Trillium Foundation.

I find it interesting, because when we talk about whether it makes any difference who is on the board—whether the ideology of the people on the board or the partisanship of the people on the board has any impact—when I hear questions like the ones the member opposite was asking, or comments about how we have to think very strategically about the kinds of organizations that are deserving—it's not how he put it, but it's how I interpreted it—I wonder: Where does children's mental health fall in something like that? Is it a boon to the economy? Well, no. Hopefully it keeps some kids healthy.

It's a strange comparison, because the kinds of projects that are often—there are things like food banks that receive grants. We may not like that there are food banks; we maybe wish that people didn't need to have to go to food banks, but it certainly seems to be something that's necessary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: One of the biggest food banks—I think the second-largest one in Canada—is in Barrie. They

supply food to the working poor. They do some amazing work. You touched on children's mental health, which is very close to my heart. I am one of three directors on the Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada. I'm very aware of the struggles that face youth today. I think the core of that problem is mental health.

Ms. Marit Stiles: See, I think, for the people in the organization that I was there for this announcement—they're worried. They're really, really worried about the future opportunities they might have to receive similar grants. It worries me, therefore, that a board like this, which has such an important responsibility, would be—again, it's not really a comment so much on your own appointment, but that that would be so ideologically driven, I guess. When I also hear questions about how you would use your mediation skills, which I thought you answered very well—thank you for that. I can't understand why it's the role of the board to mediate those kinds of who gets—I don't know. Do you want to comment more on the role? How on earth does that actually play in at all?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Like I said, mediation comes in useful in just about every scenario, including this one. I'm not sure that it is a skill that would be used in that way. I don't think that that's the role of the board.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I can see it more like those are interpersonal skills, too, that you learn how to use in board circumstances. I can see it that way.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes, and boards can be contentious.

Ms. Marit Stiles: But being the bearer of bad news to an organization that didn't receive the funding—I'm not sure.

Anyway, I think I will pass it over to my colleague now to see if he has any other questions.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Welcome, Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You do realize that, in dealing with the Trillium Foundation, you're dealing with NGOs that have relationships, partnerships and funding relationships with unions and businesses in communities across Ontario. Back in 2014, when you lost that election, you were very vocal and public about blaming public sector unions and NGOs for being too involved in provincial politics and being part of why you lost the election in 2014. Do you still feel that way?

Mr. Rod Jackson: At that time, I can tell you, union groups and unions themselves invested over \$1 million in my riding alone on advertisements on TV and radio. That had a direct effect on the outcome of that election. So, yes, I still believe that to be true.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So if you're part of the Trillium Foundation and you're funding an NGO that has a strong relationship with a union or a public sector union, is that going to matter to your decision-making process?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I don't—I'm over it.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You're over it?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes. I mean, it was never a wrong thing, but that was what happened. I didn't say that they did anything that was inappropriate or illegal or anything

like that. The fact was, they contributed to a campaign that worked against me, and they won.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So you feel that unions are too involved in provincial politics, but businesses are not too involved in provincial politics.

Mr. Rod Jackson: No, I think they have as much a right. Businesses and individuals and unions have as much a right as the next person to be involved in politics.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Equally?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes, sure. Why not? I think it needs to be equal, actually. I think that was part of the problem: It wasn't at the time. Things have changed.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That concludes it. We have two and a half minutes on the overall clock. Madame Lalonde, would you like to take that two and a half minutes?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes. Good morning.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Good morning.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you for coming, and thank you for serving our province in your time in office.

I'm looking at my colleagues on the right here, and certainly appreciate some of the questions that are sort of challenging for me as to your objectivity and your subjectivity. I would like to know a little bit more.

0930

As we know, this government has brought in—I guess they'd call them efficiencies; I'd call them cuts, and they're already being felt by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. How would you see, being a proud Barrie member and former MPP—and I know how proud we are of our communities—when you are supposed to stay objective between two organizations, and those dollars are fewer and fewer, based on government projections of how they're going to be managing our province?

Mr. Rod Jackson: All I can tell you is that I approach this position from an objective point of view. I'm my own person. I'm not beholden to any party or to an ideology. I think it's important, and I would take pride in making the right decisions, the appropriate decisions, and doing the job in the most objective, professional manner that I know. That's how I've always carried out my business.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: If you were to tell us what are the three top issues you think are important for you and you feel very strongly that you would like to help those organizations—what would they be?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Well, I already mentioned—firstly, anything to do with children, especially children's mental health, is something that's very close to my heart. Youth homelessness is another one.

I think it's also important not to forget the value of cultural institutions. Whether they're a musical group or a local theatre group, it's important to understand not only their importance, but also their need in that community. I don't think it would make sense, for example, to fund a choir when there are 40 choirs in that city. Do you know what I mean? We need to be sure that they're filling a void

that exists. So I think that's an important element to bring to it, as well.

As far as my own priorities, I think focusing on youth is critically important in any respect, because that's going to tell the future of all our communities—if we have a strong, well-educated, informed youth population—because they're going to be here one day.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That concludes the time allotted. Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Jackson. You may step down.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you.

MR. FRED DOMINELLI

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

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We now have Fred Dominelli, nominated as member for the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Could you please step forward, sir?

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 allocated to the government.

Welcome, sir. The floor is yours.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Good morning. I'm a little nervous, but I'll pick up.

My name is Fred Dominelli. I'm very emotional because when I came here, I was a very poor man. I came here when I was 14 years old, with five sisters, four brothers, my mother and my father. I started to work right away to support my family. I took any jobs I could. I worked at Amodeo Brothers. I worked at Tamblyn drug-store. I worked at the library on Bloor. Anything I could do to support my family, I did. I went to school. I graduated—I got my grade 10. I went to Centennial College. I worked in a gas station; I pumped gas. I graduated, I got my apprenticeship. I went and I bought my—I rented my first gas station at Queen and Bellwoods, where today it's still there, and I still own it.

When I got involved with the gas station, we started an organization that was called the Toronto Gasoline Association. The early closing bylaw, which—I fought for the people who had gas stations. The oil company wanted me to fight, because the more stations they close, the better for me it is. I would sell more gas. But that's not me. I had to step in to help these people who didn't understand.

After that, when I had the gas station, I was the president of the Niagara neighbourhood association. I was the president of San Bruno Association. I went on and went on and went on, and after so many years, I paid off my gas station and I bought properties. I dealt with properties.

I was a former city councillor. I got appointed—ward 17. I was very proud to serve the community. After all of these years and the knowledge, I started to understand to

respect the taxpayers' money, and I'll respect the taxpayers' money even today.

I respect the community where I work, because I was involved with a land, which was the Massey Ferguson, and John Inglis—to get development. I fought with Bramalea homes, which went broke, then CIBC took it over. They sold it to another company, and I was part of the development there, to make sure we kept the jobs for the people, to make sure that they built what fit in the area. I always was involved in the community. I believe in the community, because if I can help the community, obviously I help myself.

I'm here today to tell you that I've been involved—all of the years helping and respecting the taxpayers' money. Today, if you give me this appointment, I can tell you that I will treat each application with the merit of the application. I would be very pleased to serve and to make sure to the people who apply—that they get what they deserve and that they not abuse the dollar only because it's a grant or it has been given, because at the end of the day, the more money we give, the more the government has no choice but to raise taxes. But raising taxes, nobody likes it, so they take a different route. So, my approach to the Trillium Foundation is to listen to the application, make sure it fits with the criteria and they're not abusing the system only to take the money and not help anybody. That's my best approach that I can give.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much for your presentation.

The first round of questioning goes to the official opposition. Mr. Burch.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Welcome, Mr. Dominelli.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I have to say, I've been to a few meetings, and I think that's the best introduction I've heard yet in terms of why you want to serve on the Trillium board, so thank you for that. Also, I married into an Italian immigrant family, so I appreciate the work ethic.

I do want to ask a few questions. As my colleague has mentioned earlier, there's a troubling trend with partisan appointments to the Trillium Foundation. Do you have a personal relationship with the Premier?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I don't have a personal relationship. I have a relationship with the NDP; I have a relationship with the Liberals; I have a relationship with the PCs. This is the type of guy I am. I served at my gas station for 39 years in one location. Everybody came there for gas, and we chatted about everything. I have no personal relationship with anybody.

Mr. Jeff Burch: How did you come to apply for the position? Did you seek it out, or were you approached by someone?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: No, I applied—the same thing as when I applied when I was on the committee of adjustment. You go online, you search, see what it is, you open the file, you apply and wait for a response.

Mr. Jeff Burch: You'll forgive me for asking this, but I just have to clear this up. In 2016, there was an issue with

making too many campaign donations to your own municipal campaign, that was above the cap under the Election Act—

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Not me.

0940

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. That's the information that I have.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Not me.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. Well, if that's not true, then I sincerely apologize.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: It's okay.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Do you have a prior relationship with Dean French?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: No, I don't even know him.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Okay. That's all the questions I have, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Ms. Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you so much for being here.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I agree with my colleague; that was a lovely introduction. I don't know if you're still a constituent of mine, but I think you have been in the past, perhaps, in our riding?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I do own a property—

Ms. Marit Stiles: A little bit; a few.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Anyway, I just wanted to go a little bit deeper into some of the things that you mentioned, because you talked a little bit at the end there about—it is certainly important to make sure that there is accountability and transparency in a foundation like this.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Do you want to talk a little bit more about how your own experiences might help you to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the decisions?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: There has to be because each application has to be treated differently, because each application has different merit. You have no choice but to be transparent. I don't belong to any party. If the application comes forward and it's a Liberal person, I don't look at the Liberal person or the NDP person; I look at the application, if it's needed. And that's all I can do.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Right. There are some concerns. Certainly, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and others have been very critical, as have we, of the fact that the government has reduced the funding available through the Ontario Trillium Foundation by about \$15 million. We're also concerned that there could be more cuts coming. Do you have concerns about that? Do you share those concerns?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I have concerns, but not really, because we went through many governments that did many cuts. So we are used, now, to cuts.

Ms. Marit Stiles: That's true.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I have said the government has to run like my father. We used to have 12 breads a week, and then when nobody works, my father says, "We can't have 12; we've got to have 10." We had no choice.

If the government wants to run and not be in deficit, it has to run like a household. If today we buy three steaks and my father doesn't work, we have no choice but to buy one steak and share. We have to get used to that system. If the people don't get used to the system, then there will be always demonstrations here.

Ms. Marit Stiles: But then there's probably the question of priority. So, yes, if you're cutting \$15 million but you're adding \$15 million into tax breaks and things—we may differ on that as well—but it's really sometimes a question of priorities though, right?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: It is priorities, but at the same time, if he doesn't cut—I'm only going by the number you gave me—\$15 million and he raises tax for \$16 million, the opposition and everybody else will say, "Why do you raise the tax so much?" So which one is it? Where is the balance here?

Ms. Marit Stiles: You own a lot of properties and stuff in the Liberty Village area, for example, right?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Yes.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think we asked a similar question of Mr. Jackson, but some of these projects absolutely could potentially benefit neighbourhoods where you have property. Can you talk a little bit about how you would balance that too in terms of your own—because certainly, if I own a house here and they're going to put some nice community centre down the road, that benefits me in terms of my home value. But I'm just wondering if you've thought about how you would treat those kinds of applications.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I would like to tell you what I did for Liberty Village and then you tell me if I benefit. When I bought a property at Liberty Village, there was no tunnel between my property and the Exhibition. People would get off at the station on Dufferin and walk and come there and jump the fence. I donated that piece of property for free to GO trains and the city. I made the deal with Barbara Hall. I gave that.

Then, I started to improve the area. It came to be a number one piece of property, and then Metrolinx came along. I don't take this appointment to benefit, because I co-operate fully with Metrolinx. I gave them the right of way to go in and out to do the work. I didn't hire a lawyer to disappropriate me. They're waiting for the price. I went all along. I did not give them any hard time at all. So anybody benefits out of that piece of property once they've decided what to do.

Ms. Marit Stiles: I guess more along the lines of what I was asking is—I appreciate that. Say an application came forward that was something that would potentially benefit you. I know you're saying quite clearly that that's not what you're interested in this position for, but would you step out? What would you do in a circumstance like that so that you're not seen to have any conflict?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Oh, 100%, I would step out, because I'm used to that as a councillor, as a former committee of adjustment member. I step out, and whatever the board decides to do, I'm okay with. I'm not even trying to influence or talk to anybody.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): That's the conclusion of the official opposition. We'll now switch over to the government: Mr. Baber.

Mr. Roman Baber: Mr. Dominelli, welcome.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Mr. Roman Baber: And thank you for your submissions. I also enjoyed them immensely. I certainly appreciate your path to get here as an immigrant. I'd like to tell you that I can think of at least three MPPs on this panel who have also immigrated to Canada, including myself, and have realized the Canadian dream. It's a remarkable testament to our province and to our country. I thank you for that, as well.

I also thank you for your community involvement and your community work. Engagement in our community is often a prerequisite to being invited to sit where you're seated today. Your contribution to our community has not gone unnoticed, so I thank you for that as well.

I also want to thank you for your ideological approach to the taxpayers' dollars. When it's hard to afford three steaks and we can only afford one steak, then we proceed to afford one steak. That is not something that has previously been necessarily regarded for in this building, but that is certainly an approach that our government is bringing forth, so I'm thankful to you for that as well.

I see that you're from North York currently. Is that correct? You reside in North York?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Yes.

Mr. Roman Baber: I think you might be a constituent of mine, even though we haven't previously met. Could you kindly tell me whereabouts you live?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: At 251 Maple Leaf Drive.

Mr. Roman Baber: What's the major intersection?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Keele and Lawrence.

Mr. Roman Baber: So you're just south of my riding. I represent the riding of York Centre, which starts north of the 401, whereas you're just south of the 401. But nonetheless, you're certainly familiar with some of the challenges that north Toronto is currently experiencing, particularly in the immense development and population growth.

I'm wondering if this is something that you can tell us a little bit about. Premier Ford campaigned on the fact that people in Etobicoke, people in Scarborough and people in North York have been left out for too long by the municipal government and by the provincial government, so I'm hoping you can talk to us a little bit about the massive population growth that North York is currently experiencing and some of the challenges that are associated with that.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Point of order, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Yes, Mr. Burch?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I wonder if Mr. Baber could explain what this has to do with the application.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): If you could?

Mr. Roman Baber: Sure. First of all, it's a matter of interest as someone who resides in an area that is a priority to our government, or that our government is looking at in terms of transit in other areas. Second of all, I think the

foundation in itself often reviews applications from north Toronto, an area that's currently experiencing, again, a boom and may require some Trillium assistance. There's absolutely nothing wrong, in my capacity as the local legislator, to ask about that area.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Continue, as it is related to the foundation.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: As you know, I used to live at Steeles and Bathurst before—

Mr. Roman Baber: At Steeles and Bathurst?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Yes.

Mr. Roman Baber: That is in my riding.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Tanjoe Crescent. I still own a house over there, 36 Tanjoe Crescent.

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Mr. Roman Baber: Wonderful.

Interjection.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: I have a little bit everywhere—a little bit in Barrie, a little bit in Innisfil.

I can see the challenge of North York. It really grows. It is a big challenge, but you have to take the challenge at face value. You cannot take the challenges all the same, because each challenge is different.

The Trillium Foundation, for the growth of North York, it is one who helped the community of North York. Some people take advantage of it. But it's up to us, if we get on the board, when we screen the application, to see if there is a value or it is just somebody who takes advantage of the application because the money comes from the government.

At the end of the day, if you really sit down and realize, the money is not coming from the government; the money comes from the taxpayer. It's me. If I give out so much money to somebody and it's getting abused—I'm only giving the money—I have to pay, not the government. The government only rents the money, but we are the taxpayers—the community. So we have to watch.

Like I said, I'm aware and I'll always respect the taxpayers' money. I respect the community, because that's who makes the city. What makes the world is the community. Without the community, we have nobody—just like a mayor with no people; he's mayor of himself. What can you do? Nothing. So I have a great respect.

North York is growing, and it needs help from the Trillium Foundation—except the applications have to be scaled down, to see which one is a true application or an abused application.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thanks very much.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you, Mr. Dominelli. When you were talking about your story when you immigrated here, it reminded me of my parents and grandfather, and my in-laws as well. My father had to work in an oil refinery in Port Credit. My grandfather was a shoe repairman. My father-in-law ended up working hard at importing shoes and wholesaling them to the Toronto area. It was very hard. You were right that we had difficult times when yourself and my parents and my grandparents came

here to this country. So I really appreciate hearing that story from you.

What do you hope to accomplish during your three years as a board member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: What I'm trying to accomplish is what I accomplished with the Niagara neighbourhood association, the BIA in Liberty Village, and as president of the Toronto Gasoline Association, with the early close. What I'm trying to accomplish is the best for the community.

When the Trillium Foundation comes with the application, I'll try to make sure that I understand the application very well, and do enough research before we approve the funding, so that this fund will be spent well and be spent for people who really need it, not just for somebody who has a large payroll and lives out of the Trillium Foundation.

I'd like to see the money that we approve go towards— if it's mental health, if it's kids or for whatever it is, because what the Trillium Foundation is about is to help other people, but not to help somebody who's a director and gets a big paycheque.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you.

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

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for being here today.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Mr. Vincent Ke: My question is, what would you consider the biggest challenge as a member of the Trillium Foundation?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: In my life, I don't think I consider anything to be big, because I look at everything equally. I looked ahead of time in every decision that I've made since I was a kid. My father told me, "You don't make a decision only on what's in front of your nose. You make your decision with 10 years."

When I was on city council, I pushed for traffic, for roads, for everything, not just for three years or four years; I always looked ahead 10 years.

That's why I am what I am today, because when I bought the properties in Liberty Village that nobody wanted, I knew; I had a vision. There are tracks here. This is the property. Nobody can go on the other side. The tracks won't move, but the property will be here.

That's what I want to accomplish if I get in the Trillium Foundation.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: You're welcome.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: First of all, I just want to echo what a number of my colleagues on both sides have said. Your story is very inspirational and your passion really comes through when you're speaking. You started off by saying you were a little nervous, and you shouldn't be, because you brought such a heartfelt, warm passion to your presentation. I really thank you for that.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I guess my question for you: Both in your work on city council and your work in business, I'm sure you've had the opportunity to interact with a lot of different community groups and to be involved with some charities or some not-for-profit groups, and you've touched a little bit on some of them. I wonder if you could talk about some of those relationships that you have in the community and how you think that might help you navigate some of the challenges that you'll face on the Ontario Trillium board—having a good, deep knowledge of your community.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: My passion has always been, like I said, for the community and for the people. Because if we have 1,000 people and I have a garage and nobody drives, I can't fix cars; but if we have 1,000 people and we've got 200 cars, there's a chance for me to fix cars. Even at 2%, at the end of the day, I'll bring some bread home.

The challenge is—I've been working with the community. When Bob Rae was in power he brought in the MVA, the market value assessment. At that time he gave the numbers, I brought a rally of 2,000 people from St. Clair and Lansdowne all the way down to Queen's Park. We won the fight.

My passion is to work with the community—not for the profit. The profit, I make it on my work. My profession is a mechanic. I went to school to learn to be a mechanic. When you deal as a mechanic, you deal with lawyers, you deal with doctors, you deal with city hall people and Queen's Park people and whoever. It doesn't matter; everybody comes through for gas. When you deal with these people, it means I serve the community—200, 300 cars a day.

Can I keep everybody happy? No. If the Trillium Foundation comes with an application, can we approve everything? No. If I say to you, "I'm here and we're going to approve everything," I'm only going to make a fool of myself. Each application is different, but like you said, if you don't have a passion for the appointment for the job, you have nothing.

I get up at 5 o'clock every morning, even today. I'm used to my gas station, and at 5 o'clock, I'm up.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for the government.

We have some time left on the overall clock. Madame Lalonde, would you like to ask some questions?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's a pleasure to be here, actually. I don't always attend this committee, but this morning, I consider it the highlight of my day. So thank you very much for joining us.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thank you.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: You said something that I would like you to—you mentioned applications: a "true application" and an "abuse application." Can you tell me what you mean—

Mr. Fred Dominelli: What do you mean?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: You said that as applications would come forward, there are "true applications" and "abuse applications." That's something you shared

with us earlier. I'm just thinking: What would be for you a true application that would come to your hand as a board member, and what would be an abusive application that you may see, that these are abusing the system?

Mr. Fred Dominelli: The true application—on the application, they have to list the organization: what kind and who they are. On the bottom, they have to list the director, the president, the chair. If all these people draw large sums of money, to me that's not an application to help because there's not enough money left. We do research before we approve it. We read.

The false applications, which are only applications to rip off the government, are the ones that come with phony names, a company which doesn't exist. They use—maybe the mental—99 Queen Street. They have somebody and they use that kind of thing. It is our job to do research to make sure that each application has been pure-checked to make sure it's a true application, so the money goes towards whatever they apply for, if it's kids or mental.

Now, which one is an important application? I have to tell you, it's between life and death. Each application is important. You go to the hospital, you have a finger missing—a guy comes with a heart attack; you're going to wait there. A heart attack is first. This is what Trillium Foundation is, and that's why, in all the years I've been around, and I've been a community man for a long time, I speak to people where they brag about how they rip off the government. It stays in my head because I say to myself, "You're not ripping off the government, you're ripping me off because I'm paying taxes." You never respect the dollar, so that means I want nothing to do with you because I'm paying you to brag.

That's the true application and the real application. It's up to the board to do a really fine check to make sure the application is true and the kids or the mental people get the service they need.

I can tell you, I have a lot of knowledge. I was on the board of the hospital on Queen Street. My gas station is just a block away from there, and I saw all kinds. I saw all

kinds. I have enough knowledge because I've been in the workforce. Don't forget, when I came here—14 years old, for me to survive, I worked for Silverwood milk at the Galleria mall, it used to be. I used to clean the stable and deliver milk, but I never ripped off the system. We never went to welfare. We never collected unemployment because we didn't believe in that. We believe in being honourable with high standards, and that's what my father gave me.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Excellent. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you very much. The time for questioning is over. You may step down.

Mr. Fred Dominelli: Thanks very much for having me here.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): We will now consider the intended appointment of Mr. Rod Jackson for member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Rod Jackson, nominated as member, Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mr. Cuzzetto. Any discussion?

Seeing none, I'd like to call a vote. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Mr. Fred Dominelli for member of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Fred Dominelli, nominated as member, Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Chair (Mr. John Vanthof): Thank you. Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by Mr. Cuzzetto. Any further discussion?

Seeing none, I'd like to call a vote. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

The meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1003.

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