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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 25 April 2001

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 25 avril 2001

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Wednesday 25 April 2001

Mercredi 25 avril 2001

The committee met at 1008 in room 151.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Chair (Mr James J. Bradley): I'm going to call the committee to order. There are a couple of house-keeping matters to start with. I'll do the easy one first, and it is very minor. On page 2 of our information, called Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Report of the Subcommittee, Thursday, April 12, 2001, down near the bottom it should read "North Bay District Health Unit" instead of "District Health Council." It's called North Bay District Health Unit in that particular case. Many of us in our parts of the province have them called councils. I just want to ensure that is correct.

I also want to talk about some scheduling problems we have this morning. First of all, I should get a mover for the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, April 12, 2001.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): So moved.

The Chair: Discussion? This is where we'll have an explanation. We have a number of people coming before the committee whom we would like to schedule in a rational way. It may require the committee's starting slightly earlier. I know how eager members are to be here bright and early anyway to deal with these matters. I'll ask our clerk to describe our circumstances for you and ask for your assistance in the scheduling.

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Donna Bryce): On the April 12 certificate there were 12 selections. Now that the House is back and we're into our regular committee meetings, we really can't accommodate them all at one meeting. We have five who are scheduled for May 2, starting at 9:30. Following May 2, the deadline to schedule the remainder of them expires as of May 6. So what would be required is unanimous consent to extend the deadline for certain ones, and I can go through which ones that would be required for. We do have five who are available for May 9. We would need unanimous consent for those. There are two for whom we don't yet have contact information, so we don't know when we can schedule them. But you can give unanimous consent to schedule them, if we can get them, for the May 16 or the May 30 meeting. I can go through the names, or you can just go with unanimous consent for that.

Mr Wood: I'd like to hear the names.

Clerk of the Committee: For May 2 we have Margaret Andrewes, Early Years, Niagara.

Mr Wood: I want to know the names for whom unanimous consent is going to be asked.

Clerk of the Committee: For May 9 we would require unanimous consent for John Lacey, Liquor Control Board; Lynda Schreiber, Early Years, Halton; David Houlahan, Early Years, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark; Donna Treleaven, Early Years, Oxford; and Robert Anderson, Meaford Thornbury Police Services Board.

The two remaining ones we haven't contacted yet are Scott Post, Early Years, Chatham-Kent, and John Arnott, Early Years, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark.

Mr Wood: I would ask unanimous consent of the committee to extend by 30 days the date for consideration of those intended appointments.

The Chair: Any discussion? If not, all in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you, Mr Wood.

We now have the report of the subcommittee on committee business dated Thursday, April 19, 2001.

Mr Wood: I move its adoption.

The Chair: Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MARIO CORTELLUCCI

Review of intended appointment, selected by the official opposition party and the third party: Mario Cortellucci, intended appointee as member, McMichael Canadian Art Collection Board of Trustees.

The Chair: We have one appointment review today. This is a selection of the official opposition and the third party, and it is an intended appointee as member of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection Board of Trustees, Mario Cortellucci.

Mr Cortellucci, you may come forward, please. As you may have been informed, you have an opportunity at the beginning to make an opening statement. Any remarks you'd like to share with members of the committee, we'd be pleased to hear from you. Subsequent to that there will be questions from members of the committee. Ten minutes is assigned for each of the political parties.

Mr Mario Cortellucci: Good morning, Mr Chair, and thank you.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to tell you why I would like to serve as a trustee on the board of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. I'm going to go through some of my notes so I won't skip anything.

I was born in Villa Cortellucci, Teramo, Italy. I emigrated to Canada with my family in 1962. I was educated in Toronto. I co-founded my first company with my brother Nick in 1971. The company is still operating today.

I have also been active in many organizations including the Knights of Malta, Associazione Polizia di Stato, the York Regional Police board and the Canadian International Police Association. I co-founded the Downsview Soccer Club in 1969, which went on to win the Canadian championship for five consecutive years.

The Chair: Great record.

Mr Cortellucci: It's the only record.

I have participated in charity events for the United Way, York Regional Hospital and the Muki Baum Association, and have co-chaired the annual Heart to Heart Ball in aid of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Why art? At the age of eight, I saw for the first time St Peter's and the work of Michelangelo. I became interested on the spot, and today I have an international collection which includes many Canadian artists. I founded Corfer Productions, which published *Passage to Canada*, on the work of Maestro Joseph Cusimano, who is an international metaphysical surrealist artist. Recently I sponsored the second edition of *Wind, Water, Rock and Sky, the Story of Cognashene, Georgian Bay*, published by the Cognashene Book Corp.

I have had many opportunities to visit the McMichael Gallery with my family and I can say I hold the collection in high regard. I was very pleased to offer to serve when artist George McLean suggested that my name be put forward for the trustee appointment.

I hope that the committee will support my nomination to this important position.

I thank you and the committee. If you have any questions, please ask.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir, for your initial remarks. I'll start on my left with the official opposition, followed by the third party, followed by the government members, in asking questions. As I indicated, each of them has 10 minutes, and you're free to give whatever answer you deem appropriate. So I'll begin with the official opposition.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Good morning. Welcome to the committee.

If you're familiar with the McMichael collection, the McMichael board, the operation of the McMichael gallery, you would know there is a considerable concern about the divestiture of some of the art that's held by the gallery at the present time. In fact, there is legislation, there is a legal obligation of the board of trustees to divest the gallery of perhaps thousands of works, but there aren't, in our view, any clear guidelines. How

would you approach the responsibility that you would have in the divestiture issue?

Mr Cortellucci: If I'm appointed I would be the rookie, so I would have to study the situation a little bit in detail. What I know today is minimal compared to what I should know when I will be there to really look at it and see what I could do.

Art is art. An individual might look at a painting and he would love it. Another might say, "Oh, I don't like it." Art has room everywhere. Art is an asset, so I'm pretty sure that when I learn more about the details of what is going on, I would probably give my opinion in a better way.

Mr Crozier: In your own interests, in what we can see by the background you've given, you certainly have an interest in the arts. I don't envy you the responsibility you would have in the case of these divestitures, because it goes, in our view, again, beyond perhaps even the art itself. It goes to how the gallery received the art. In some cases there are even—we always seem to have to get to this somehow—some tax implications. So if you're appointed to the board, and I have no doubt that you will be, you'll have an onerous task.

1020

You mentioned an artist's name in your introduction—Joseph?

Mr Cortellucci: Joseph Cusimano. He's a Canadian artist.

Mr Crozier: It was Mr Cusimano who recommended you for this?

Mr Cortellucci: No. It was George McLean.

Mr Crozier: Who is he?

Mr Cortellucci: He is a Canadian artist.

Mr Crozier: I'm sorry. That's the name I was looking at, George McLean. Is Mr McLean a friend of yours?

Mr Cortellucci: Yes.

Mr Crozier: Do you know how it was he knew that there was an opportunity for someone to be appointed to the board?

Mr Cortellucci: He is a member of the—

Mr Crozier: He is a member of the board so he certainly would be aware of that. That's good.

Do you know Blake Wallace?

Mr Cortellucci: Yes.

Mr Crozier: Did you speak to Mr Wallace about this appointment?

Mr Cortellucci: No.

Mr Crozier: It's kind of strange. Mr Wallace was going to be, we thought, appointed to the board but apparently is not now. Do you know why his name was withdrawn?

Mr Cortellucci: I don't know.

Mr Crozier: No idea. OK. I have no further questions.

The Chair: Mr Lalonde, do you have any questions?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The only question I have at this point is, in your past experience were you ever involved in political involvement?

Mr Cortellucci: Yes.

Mr Lalonde: You also said you were a co-founder, with your brother—what is the name of the company you operate with your brother?

Mr Cortellucci: Cortelli Construction.

Mr Lalonde: I don't know, Mr Chair, if I'm authorized to ask this question. Are you a cardholder of any party?

Mr Cortellucci: No.

Mr Lalonde: Thank you. That's all I have, Mr Chair.

The Chair: I should tell you, sir, whenever we're in opposition, the opposition people always tend to ask that question, so it's nothing new. The government members know that. It's interesting, when the government members were over on this side, they used to ask that question too. They don't ask that question now, for some reason.

Mr Martin of the third party.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'd just follow up on that, because we always want a little parity where that's concerned, in terms of appointments at this table. I note in your curriculum vitae that you've been active in municipal, provincial and federal elections. For any one particular party, or have you supported members of every party?

Mr Cortellucci: I have supported all members.

Mr Martin: That's an interesting history. I don't think there is anybody around this table who doesn't appreciate that it's important to have people involved in politics. It's a very worthwhile endeavour and contributes in a very serious and significant way to the development of the public life of the province, and we should all give some time.

This appointment, though, to the McMichael art gallery board: I note your keen interest in art and experience in art. There is certainly some question at the moment, particularly with the passing of Bill 112 and the reappointment of the McMichaels to the board and the changed mandate, that there may be a narrowing of the kind of art that would wind up in that collection. I would hope that you have given that some thought in terms of your participation on that board. What is your perspective on what should be in that collection and what shouldn't?

Mr Cortellucci: It's hard for me to say as of now, but I believe Canadian art—the name itself, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, states the future.

Mr Martin: “Canadian art”—there are a lot of Canadian artists out there. The criticism by some was that we were moving away from the very Group of Seven-type, nature-oriented art into other forms and types of art.

I note here that your appreciation of art extends to—what's noted here—the “internationally known metaphysical surrealist artist Joseph Cusimano.” There are Canadian surrealist artists. If that kind of art was presented, would that be acceptable, in your view, in the McMichael collection?

Mr Cortellucci: I believe the board would make a decision on that. It would not be only up to an individual.

Mr Martin: What would your position be, though?

Mr Cortellucci: I would have to see the art itself, what is really presented, because metaphysical surrealism depends on what's in front of you, and I think a decision would be made at that time.

Mr Martin: There's also the other question of this gallery having collected, over the years, a number of very fine pieces of art from various and sundry artists and the disposition of those art pieces. Do you have any thoughts on how that might be done or if it should be done?

Mr Cortellucci: I could not answer until I really see what's there. Again, a committee, a board will make a decision together, like a decision is made together here, to see what to do with the existing art.

Mr Martin: Did you understand the real nervousness around this in the art community out there? There were a number of very significant people in the arts in Ontario who were very concerned about the passage of Bill 112 and the reappointment of the McMichaels to the board in the way it happened, that in fact we will narrow the scope and the opportunity?

There aren't that many art galleries of the stature of the McMichael out there for our Canadian artists to get exposure. Do you understand the nervousness, the anxiety that might be in the art community around this question and perhaps the appointment of members who will make decisions about their life's work?

Mr Cortellucci: Yes, I would recognize that there's nervousness, but I believe that a good committee, a good board will make the right decision for everybody. It won't be a decision for an individual; it will be a decision for the total of artistic Ontarians and Canadians.

Mr Martin: The question of financing and funding: at one time this collection was 100% funded by the provincial government under Premier Bill Davis. Now there's a big push to make it more independently financed. What's your feeling there? Will that in itself limit the opportunity that's there to expose and give Canadian artists a chance to have their works looked at and appreciated and perhaps, in the end, purchased?

Mr Cortellucci: I believe that once you involve the community, the private sector, the message of artists is more out there. When it's financed by one source, that kind of limits it; the word is not spread. You can advertise all you want, but word of mouth through people who participate in fundraising, for whatever the case, will probably open more doors for Canadian artists to be seen by the masses.

Mr Martin: There will be those who say that leaving it simply to the commercial value of the art in that way will leave out a whole lot of people who otherwise might have got their foot in the door and been able to develop their art further. I'm sure there are lots of artists out there who in their early years, because there was no interest by some sponsoring corporation or business, depended on the little bit they would get from other sources—the volunteer sector or government. Had they not had that, they would not have been able to develop to their potential. The fear here is that with the move to the new

rules and regulations under Bill 112 and the rejigging of the board, the scope and opportunity will be very narrow.

Mr Cortellucci: Again, I believe that art has to be sold to the masses. The McMichael gallery has to be shown to people in order to have revenue. I go back to when I was little. I was exposed to art at a very early age, and I started collecting art at 15 years of age—mind you, a little bit of money. I think we should expose all Canadians to our artists from anywhere in Canada.

1030

Mr Martin: Do you know the McMichaels at all.

Mr Cortellucci: A little bit, yes.

Mr Martin: Do you have any concern that their view of what that collection should be will inhibit its potential?

Mr Cortellucci: No, I don't, but I am very grateful to them for, in 1965, making such a donation to the Canadian people. I'm grateful to them, and I wish there were more people like them in Canada doing what they have done for Canada.

Mr Martin: But do you understand that they were well paid for that donation over the years?

Mr Cortellucci: I don't know their finances, I don't know the details, but what I see is what they left up there.

Mr Martin: OK. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your questions. Members of the government party.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): It isn't so much a question as a bit of a statement, a little bit of advertising for my riding and a little bit of history.

Mr Cortellucci, I represent the whole of the county of Perth and about a third of Middlesex. In the south end of Perth county is a town of about 6,000 called St Marys. The reason I'm mentioning this is that I didn't know this history until I started to represent that area. St Marys, Ontario, is known as Stonetown. It's known as that because not only is it the home of St Marys Cement, which is part of Blue Circle now, but a lot of the buildings in St Marys—the old opera house, the town hall, the library and most of the storefronts—are made of stone. Of course they had their own quarries, which later became cement quarries.

Your forefathers from Italy helped to create this town in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As a matter of fact, I have a history book released by the museum there a few years ago. I'd like to send you a copy, just because of the contribution of the Italian community to my part of the province. Also, St Marys, as you may know, is the home to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.

I respect your appointment to this important board because you bring not only a keen interest in the arts but your business background. My family background: my dad was in business but he's also a farmer. In a lot of societies around the world he'd be called a peasant. If I'm referred to as that, I take that as a compliment because we made our living and our earnings from the land.

But I wanted to tell you that art is in the eye of the beholder. I have my own very unsophisticated eye of art, but I respect the eye you bring to this important position.

From what I've heard of you this morning, I'm very pleased to support your appointment.

The Chair: Any other members of the government caucus who wish to speak?

Mr Wood: We'll waive the balance of our time.

The Chair: You're going to waive the balance of your time? Thank you for informing me of that.

Thank you very much, sir, for appearing before the committee this morning. You are free to leave the particular seat you're in now. The committee will now consider your appointment and make its decision and you'll be appropriately notified, sir. Thank you for being with us.

Mr Cortellucci: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I will entertain a motion.

Mr Wood: I move concurrence re Mr Cortellucci.

The Chair: The concurrence has been moved. Any comment?

Mr Martin: I won't be supporting concurrence. I get disappointed sometimes when people come before us who aren't willing to be open and honest about their political connections. In this instance, even though I still don't know what political party this gentleman supported, I have my hunches. It would have been more forthright of him to have simply put it on the table. We've had people come before us here who have been very forthright, no difficulty, no problem, have put it on the table and then we all know. In this instance I still don't know, and would like to have known.

In his resumé he references his long involvement in municipal, provincial and federal politics. Well, at least in the provincial and the federal you normally have to be aligned. It would have been interesting to know his alignment, in that we see this government, over and over as we come to this table to look at appointments, appointing one loyal Conservative supporter after another to almost every board, commission and agency in this province, and I don't think that's healthy. I think you need a good balance, a good mix of different kinds of people from different walks of life, from different political persuasions.

It's hard to make an appropriate and proper judgment when you don't know these things. So my hunch—even though the gentleman being proposed certainly has, by way of his resumé and his presentation this morning, some keen interest in art and some involvement in and understanding of art, I just wish he would have been more forthcoming in terms of where he's coming from and his political affiliation and connection. So I won't be supporting the appointment.

The Chair: Any other comments on the intended appointee? If there are no further comments—

Mr Wood: A recorded vote, please, Mr Chair.

The Chair: So that all members of the committee are aware, a recorded vote has been requested.

Ayes

Barrett, Crozier, Johnson, Kells, Lalonde, Wood.

Nays

Martin.

The Chair: The motion is carried.

Before we adjourn, I should mention for Hansard that we have had with us at the back two students from St Catharines, Jonathan Lau and Erik Holody, from St Francis Secondary School. They are here as part of their studies to follow the local member of Parliament and see just what it is the local Member of Parliament does.

Interjections.

The Chair: They'll see the reverence in which the Chair of this committee is held.

We certainly welcome them to the committee.

I'll entertain a motion for adjournment until May 2 at 9:30 am.

Mr Wood: So moved.

The Chair: All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. The committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1038.

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