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

**Wednesday 9 May 2001**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 9 mai 2001**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Wednesday 9 May 2001

Mercredi 9 mai 2001

*The committee met at 0933 in room 151.*

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

**The Vice-Chair (Bruce Crozier):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen and members of the committee. We'll get underway with the report of the subcommittee of Thursday, May 3.

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** I move its adoption, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** All those in favour? Opposed? We made it.

**Mr Wood:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I wonder if I could suggest that Mr Ort be moved to the end when we deal with the rest of the concurrences. Since I think we have our intended appointee here at the moment, I would make an order to move item 2 to the rest of the concurrences.

**The Vice-Chair:** Anybody have a problem with that? No? OK.

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

## JOHN LACEY

Review of intended appointment, selected by the official opposition party: John S. Lacey, intended appointee as vice-chair, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario.

**The Vice-Chair:** We're ready to call our first selection, and that is John Lacey, intended appointee as vice-chair of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. Good morning and welcome, Mr Lacey.

**Mr John Lacey:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair:** You may be familiar with the procedure, which is that you have opening comments, which is part of the government's time, and then there will be questions, if they are required, from the three parties.

**Mr Lacey:** Good morning. My name is John Lacey. I'm chairman of the Loewen Group, and my responsibilities are to try to restructure Loewen, which is in chapter 11 and CCAA in Canada. I've been on the board of the LCBO since June 1996, which was the last time I sat in front of this committee.

I'm also on the boards of Telus and Clarica, the insurance group, and on the Canadian Centre for Studies of

Children at Risk, which is part of the McMaster University program.

I'm an immigrant Canadian. I came to Canada in 1978 and have enjoyed this great country ever since.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, sir. We will begin the questioning. I don't know whether we have our regular rotation list here. We have a new clerk this morning. She's ready to do a great job for us. We will start the rotation with the official opposition.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Good morning, Mr Lacey. You have indicated that you have been on the board since June 1996 as a regular member of the board, and now this appointment is for the vice-chair.

**Mr Lacey:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I did some background reading, and it certainly must be an interesting role. There are some questions, though. With regard to delisting products, we have been given to understand that many Ontario wineries have a problem with the fact that the LCBO is delisting a significant number of products. That presents a problem for them. Would you have a particular opinion on this?

**Mr Lacey:** I'm not part of the listing committee, but from a board perspective I can tell you that we pay particular attention to Ontario wines. I think the chairman of the LCBO and the whole management team have done an outstanding job in developing Ontario wines.

You may or may not be aware, but it is my understanding that of our total volume in litres of wine sold now, Ontario wines would be over 40% of our total litrage. From that perspective there is a special committee within management to continue the development of Ontario wines and also a complement to the producers in Ontario, who have continued to improve the quality of Ontario wines.

I think you'll appreciate that from our perspective the ultimate decision-maker has to be the consumer. The LCBO doesn't have elastic shelves. It only has so much space. New products are coming out all the time. Some products perform well; some products don't perform so well. A very careful and considered process is applied to the allocation of shelf space according to volume and to consumer needs, and we pay particular attention to Ontario wines. I'm not sure that criticism is well founded.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Perhaps I can share with you an example that has been presented to me that gives me

some cause for concern. Last year some 400 products were delisted by the LCBO. That was an increase of some 250 products over the previous year. That's better than a 100% increase in the number of products that were delisted. Approximately 20% were Ontario products, and one particular product that was delisted actually went on to win an award.

When you explain to me that you attempt—and you are very careful—to ensure quality within the range of products that are offered to Ontario consumers, I appreciate that. But you can understand why some wine producers are concerned by the fact that products that are no longer available for sale in Ontario have actually won awards.

**Mr Lacey:** I can't comment on that. I'm not familiar with that particular case. From our perspective, I would assume that the listing committee paid particular attention to that. As I say, at the end of the day it comes down to consumer volume that dictates the issues. In the sense that only 20% of the 400 delistings were Ontario, that would be well below the 40% of the volume ratio I commented on earlier. So I think the other number we should know in terms of putting that in context is how many applications were made to go on to the shelves, because that could be a significant number.

0940

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Do you think that Ontario products should be given additional or special consideration above the products from other jurisdictions?

**Mr Lacey:** I believe they are extremely well-focused and -served inside the LCBO.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** With the present delisting rules?

**Mr Lacey:** Yes, and listing rules.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** And listing rules that give them no preference or priority?

**Mr Lacey:** I think there's very careful consideration given to Ontario wines.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** Good morning, sir. Just a couple of questions. What is the per diem or stipend as vice-chair of the LCBO? What do you understand it to be?

**Mr Lacey:** I believe that directors get \$100 per meeting and I believe the vice-chair gets \$140. I should make it clear to the committee that the \$100 I have been receiving is actually donated to Children at Risk, and if I become vice-chairman, \$140 will go to Children at Risk. I don't take any personal money out of LCBO.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That's very commendable. Do directors sometimes attend more than one meeting per day?

**Mr Lacey:** No.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Let me ask you this. Today is budget day. There has been a lot speculation about the next privatization move by the government. The LCBO is always on somebody's list somewhere. What is your personal attitude with respect to privatization of the LCBO?

**Mr Lacey:** I'm on record in 1996 as saying that I have an open mind on that. I think it comes down to two issues: to economics and to the will of the shareholders in

this case, and the shareholders are the citizens of Ontario represented by the government.

**Mr Gerretsen:** But the actual shareholder is the government of Ontario, whatever government happens to be in charge at any one particular time.

**Mr Lacey:** Yes, sir.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I must say I've been very impressed with what the LCBO has been doing over the last five to 10 years in upgrading its properties and facilities in most areas. It has certainly become much more business-oriented and -focused, and I totally support that. At the same time, I truly believe it is a business that should stay within the public sphere. You don't have a personal opinion as to whether it should or shouldn't be privatized? I mean, you've been there now for almost four to five years and you've got a pretty good insight into how the operation runs and the profitability of the entire operation. You still don't have an opinion one way or another?

**Mr Lacey:** As directors, I think our responsibilities are to try to make the organization as productive, efficient and profitable as possible within the rules of compliance of alcohol sales. There is a fine line on this issue as a retailer, a wholesaler and a distributor. But I do believe that our job as directors is to try to make it as profitable and as efficient as possible, and I certainly can tell you that in the last five years our expense ratios as a percentage of sales have gone down, our total volume has gone up and our total profitability has gone up. More important, our consumer satisfaction indicator has gone up considerably.

I don't believe we've got it as a fine-tuned drum just yet. There's still more work to be done to make this an even better organization. But I've got to tell you that certainly in my tenure it appears that we've got over 80 awards for store design and retail performance and what have you. The board is very much concentrating on trying to make it as efficient as possible. If we ever reach that—and it's highly unlikely that you ever get it perfect—and it's at its peak financial performance, then the shareholders should make the decision whether that's an organization they want to keep inside or whether they want to privatize. Like any board of directors, we listen to our shareholders.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Are you in favour of selling beer and wine in corner stores?

**Mr Lacey:** No, sir, I'm not.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Why?

**Mr Lacey:** I think the control aspect gets more complicated.

**Mr Gerretsen:** OK. Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any more questions? If not, we'll move on to the third party.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Good morning. Thanks for coming. You're moving from director up to vice-chair re this appointment. Any reason why you're making that move or how all that came about?

**Mr Lacey:** Very simply, the vice-chair, my predecessor on the board, obviously has resigned and Andy

Brandt approached me on the basis that I had been there for five years and asked me if I would be willing to take that role.

**Mr Martin:** Given that you've been part of what you've described just previously as a very positive evolution of that corporation in terms of efficiency and profitability—and I guess building on the question the Liberal member asked—and you said it depended on the shareholders whether they wanted to privatize this, do you not have any personal thoughts on why the shareholders would be looking at privatizing something that was so obviously profitable and successful?

**Mr Lacey:** I think you've got to ask that Premier that, sir. I'm not privy to his or the cabinet's thinking on that.

**Mr Martin:** As a successful business person yourself, in your own right, and having spent a significant bit of time over the last four to five years on this, if you were asked for advice, what would your advice be?

**Mr Lacey:** As a businessman whose career is about fixing companies and trying to gain shareholder value for companies—that's what I do for a living—I always advise shareholders to try to build an organization to the peak of its value before you consider doing anything with that because you get the highest multiple for its performance. Whether the LCBO is at that level or not—in my opinion it isn't at this point in time. But should the government wish to privatize, my advice to them would be to make sure it's at its peak value before you do that in order to maximize your value as a shareholder. But in terms of most companies, at the end of a long day, shareholders choose to either hang on to or sell assets, depending on their particular bent. I'm not privy to that.

**Mr Martin:** Moving away from the very narrow business concerns that I'm sure all of us have and the government has, there's also the issue that you referenced in your answer to the question of whether you supported selling beer and wine in corner stores. There's the question of the distribution of alcohol and the control of alcohol, and it is a substance that has potential to be harmful in the wrong hands, particularly where minors are concerned. What would be the pitfalls in that sense, from your perspective, with moving this out of the direct control of government and turning it over to perhaps a private operator or a private scheme?

**Mr Lacey:** As a specialized chain in the sale of alcohol, I think it's much easier to dedicate staff and resources and the design of stores to accommodate a fair and equitable control on the sale of alcohol to minors or people who shouldn't in fact be buying alcohol even as adults. When you put it into a general distribution where the staff are selling thousands of products in different environments, I'm not sure you get the same focus.

**Mr Martin:** Given that the rest of us don't have any insight here, particularly on this side of the table, as to what's going to be announced in today's budget, we all woke up to the news this morning that there was some vehicle of government that was on the block. You don't have any indication this morning as to where—

**Mr Lacey:** No, sir.

**Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** Nor do we.

**Mr Martin:** You don't care to comment any further?

**Mr Lacey:** No, sir. I'm not in a position to comment.

**Mr Martin:** Maybe we could have Mr Brandt come and enlighten us as to—

**Mr Andy Brandt:** My answer is the same as Mr Lacey's.

**Mr Martin:** Thank you very much.

**0950**

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** Welcome, Mr Lacey. I live in a little town called Listowel. We have one of your stores and a beer store, and I've often wondered why, in the marketing scheme and the control of alcoholic products and so on, the LCBO didn't—and I realize you do sell beer in six-packs and so on. A lot of people in small towns have to drive to both those locations. Why didn't you put a lean-to on the LCBO store and sell the beer out of it and make one trip for a lot of people?

**Mr Lacey:** I think that's been a long debate between the Brewers Retail and the LCBO for many years, and I'm not sure I have the solution for that.

**Mr Johnson:** Maybe a private bill would do it. Anyway, I did want to comment on both the marketing and the updating of the stores and to compliment the Liquor Control Board of Ontario for that, and also your work with the control of alcohol, not just the product and the selling of it but the control of it. We feel confident that that's been in good hands for some years, and I want to add my compliments on that.

**Mr Lacey:** Thank you, sir. I'm extremely proud to be associated with the LCBO. I think it's an organization that has grown very professionally as a crown corporation in the last five to six years, and I think that being associated with success is always useful.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** Thanks for coming before the committee, Mr Lacey. I just want to say that, based on your track record in the retail industry and the food and beverage industry, I think you bring some fabulous assets to the LCBO, and if you can get along with the current chair—

**Mr Lacey:** It's difficult.

**Mr Spina:** Yes, I know, he's a little testy sometimes, but I think you'll do a terrific job on the board, and I wish you well.

**Mr Lacey:** Thank you. It's not so much that he's testy; it's his jokes we can't stand.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any further comments?

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

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Lacey. We'll deal with concurrence at the end of our meeting, but before you leave, I would like to recognize for those who are here and for some who may be watching on TV this morning, that we do have here the chair of the LCBO, Andy Brandt, a former member. I won't go into the history, except to say that at one time he was interim leader of his party. Mr Brandt, we welcome you today and wish you well.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Mr Chairman, I move, with unanimous consent, that Mr Brandt be placed in the hot seat right now so we can ask him some questions. Is there unanimous consent?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Brandt:** Mr Chair, I don't want to be placed in the hot seat. I want to make one point of clarification that was raised by Mrs Dombrowsky.

**The Vice-Chair:** This is a bit unusual. Is this OK?

**Mr Brandt:** I just have a brief point of clarification.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Brandt, you have two minutes.

**Mr Brandt:** I only want to make one point of clarification. There was a rather sensitive matter raised by Mrs Dombrowsky with respect to a product that was delisted that had won an award. That was an embarrassing moment. The product won the Andy Brandt award. The Andy Brandt award is for the best red and white Ontario wines.

How that unfolded was a typical business situation. Although the product won an award, it did not sell particularly well. Immediately following the winning of the award, I indicated to staff the propriety, if you will, of re-listing the product. Subsequently, the product was re-listed and I want to tell you that as of yesterday the product is totally sold out.

I just want to clarify that we are sensitive to Ontario wine. We do try to focus on the success of those businesses. I think Mr Lacey answered the question in a very fulsome manner, but the reality is that it is an extremely competitive marketplace. We do work on a very direct basis and meet regularly with Ontario wine producers, and the specific product you mentioned was in fact looked after.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Brandt. We wish you well.

**Mr Brandt:** Thank you. It's good to see you all.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's always nice to be in the chair when something unusual happens.

#### ROBERT ANDERSON

Review of intended appointment, selected by the official opposition party: Robert C. Anderson, intended appointee as member, Meaford Thornbury Police Services Board.

**The Vice-Chair:** The next intended appointee, as member of the Meaford Thornbury Police Services Board, is Robert C. Anderson.

Good morning, Mr Anderson. Make yourself comfortable. If you have not been apprised of the procedure, you're free to make some opening comments, and then we will move in rotation to some questions if necessary.

**Mr Robert Anderson:** Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before you this morning with regard to the pending appointment to the Meaford Thornbury Police Services Board. I will begin by telling you that I have been a resident of Meaford for the past 40 years, and I would be a worthwhile candidate for the position on the board.

I worked for Union Gas Ltd as a service maintenance representative from 1959 to 1996, when I retired. After retirement, I opened my business, the Anderson Group Inc, natural gas services, of which I am owner and president. Presently I am working, involved in sales, service and maintenance. Because of my business, being out in the community so much, I do know a lot of people in the area and understand some of their concerns.

I have been a volunteer firefighter captain with the Meaford and District Fire Department from 1963 to the present time and find this a very rewarding and satisfying position.

Over the years, I have been involved in minor sports. Last year I was involved as a volunteer in the Meaford flowers in bloom committee. I enjoy golf, fishing, hunting and all outdoor activities.

I was elected in the municipal elections in Meaford for two terms on the Meaford Public Utilities Commission.

I am a member of the Masonic Lodge, Meaford; Scottish Rite Canada; Rameses Shrine, Toronto; a member of the Centurion senior NCO officers' mess, Canadian Forces Base, Meaford.

I have been involved with police most of my life. My father, Inspector C.N. Anderson, was the longest-serving member of the Ontario Provincial Police—39 years—until the time of his death in a 1971 traffic accident. I have great respect for all police officers with regard to the job they do both in uniform and as private citizens.

I feel that through my honesty and integrity, I would help to provide civilian governance to the municipal police force.

Last but not least, I have been happily married to Gail for 37 years and have two sons and a grandson of whom I'm very proud.

Thank you for your attention. I will be pleased to answer any questions that I can.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Anderson. We will move to the third party.

**Mr Martin:** Certainly your history of service to your community is to be commended. Why would you want this appointment, given all the things you're involved in?

**Mr Anderson:** My wife asked me that same question. I felt I could bring some help to our board at the present time. As you know, we are in a transition period, being formed as the new municipality of Meaford, with Sydenham and St Vincent townships. But we are also involved with the Thornbury police services, which is Meaford-Thornbury. Thornbury has opted out to the OPP.

When the ad came out, I felt we needed local people on our board. Right now the board has three people from Thornbury and one from Meaford, who is the mayor.

**Mr Martin:** You've obviously got your hands full. There are some pretty major issues where policing in that area is concerned, I would guess, from the background we have been given anyway. One of them is financial—the difference in contributions that different areas have to make. How would you resolve that?

**Mr Anderson:** I really don't know how to answer that at the present time, because I've never actually sat on the board and I don't know the financial situation. I know that Meaford pays two thirds of the cost at the present time.

1000

**Mr Martin:** There are also the choices the service will have to make around who polices what. It seems to me there are three. There is the OPP, and I think there are two jurisdictions that had their own policing before. What would your preference be?

**Mr Anderson:** I don't really feel I should answer, because until I actually sit on the board and have the feeling of what's going on—from what I know locally, the people in our community like the local service, they like our local police, but costing and things like that would have to be found. They have all that, but I don't know those particulars at the present time. Until I find that out, I wouldn't want to voice an opinion on the cost one way or the other.

**Mr Martin:** Just to shift a little bit, policing has evolved over the last number of years—I heard this comment recently at the retirement of a police officer in my own community—from what used to be a police force to what is now a police service. It creates some consternation in some people's view. That comment seemed to crystallize two views of what policing should be and could be about. What's your view on how policing has evolved more into a service now, with community policing, that notion, that kind of approach?

**Mr Anderson:** I feel very strongly about the community policing aspect of it. We have officers who go into our local secondary school on a regular basis. They talk with the students, they sit there and they chat it up with them and everything else. Our local police force is involved in the community schools, which is the public schools sector: bike rodeos and things like that. I think that's very good. In the last year they're more visible in our downtown area, which they used to be years ago and then things changed. Now they're getting back into that police servicing aspect.

**Mr Martin:** You think that's a good way to go?

**Mr Anderson:** I think it's a good way to go because you have the public's support behind you at that time.

**Mr Martin:** There's also been an issue over the last few years, particularly where the Toronto police are concerned, but it's not just here; it's across the province. It's the issue of police and police associations involving themselves in the political activity of a community and of the province, and taking positions and stands on actually supporting people and not supporting other people who are running, who are more, say, sympathetic to some of the issues that are out there where policing and politics is concerned. What would be our view of that?

**Mr Anderson:** That's a hard question for me to answer, because I feel that policing and politics don't really jell together properly. The Solicitor General runs the Police Act etc. Politicians are fine too, because they

set what the Solicitor General does. I'm not sure just how to answer that at the present time.

**Mr Martin:** OK, thank you.

**Mr Johnson:** I don't have a whole lot of questions, but I wanted to welcome you here this morning. I assume this is Gail you've brought with you.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Johnson:** I was hoping it was, because I didn't want you to get carried away with the big city or any of the temptations that are before you.

I'm impressed with your background, with your commitment to your community and with the way you square those things with your experiences and with your endeavours for the future. Our small towns need the commitment and service of people like you to run all their institutions. The member for Sault Ste Marie was pointing out the difference we have between what we called our police forces and our police service, and part of it is to relate that it is a service, but I don't think we should ever forget that part of their job is to use what we call deadly force. We train them well, we hope they have the instincts to do their job well, and you'll be guiding them with all the wisdom and support you can get from your community.

I don't have many questions. It'll be a learning experience for you to get involved in this institution in your community, and I wish you very well with that.

The only thing I want to say is that with this evolution, if that's what it is, between a police force and a police service, I don't think we ever should forget that every policeman in Ontario is a peace officer. They are first a peace officer before they are anything else. Most of them live up to that far beyond our expectations. I wish you well.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you very much, Mr Johnson.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any further comments?

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

**The Vice-Chair:** We'll then move to the official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Good morning, Mr Anderson.

**Mr Anderson:** Good morning, Mrs Dombrowsky.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** My home is Tweed, Ontario. Our sons were hockey players, so we had occasion to visit the lovely community of Meaford during playoffs in some of those seasons, and it's a lovely part of Ontario. So I am familiar with your community.

Could you tell me how many residents there are in Meaford or would be within the jurisdiction of the area your police service would be responsible for?

**Mr Anderson:** I believe it's between 1,700 and 1,900 in the Thornbury area and then about 4,100 in Meaford. If you combine the townships of St Vincent and Sydenham, which we are now a municipality of, I don't know the actual figures for those municipalities.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Would we say upwards of 10,000 residents? Would that be a reasonable estimate?

**Mr Anderson:** I think that might be a little high.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Under 10,000 then.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** What would you consider significant challenges for a police services board in considering and providing direction for a police force or a police service that would be providing a service for only part of a municipal jurisdiction?

**Mr Anderson:** Which would be just the town itself?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Yes. Am I clear on that?

**Mr Anderson:** With the new municipality, we've now been combined with Sydenham and St Vincent, which covers a large area of the county. Their coverage would be a lot more. Right now we have eight officers. Probably that would have to be increased if we stayed with our own municipal force once Thornbury is out. There's also the option of joining with the OPP. I think there's an option of joining with the Owen Sound city police service, which would again increase the size of it and that would change things dramatically. But until such time as I actually would sit on the board and hear both sides of it and get the material presented to me, it's pretty hard to say what's going to happen there.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I'm sure you've had conversations with people within your community to try and understand their sentiments in terms of who they would prefer to protect their community. What's your read on that? What are people telling you within your own community?

**Mr Anderson:** The people within our own community, within the boundaries of Meaford itself, feel very strongly about our local police force. I've been involved with them since I came to Meaford back in the 1960s and have known every officer and every chief etc. The people themselves within the community feel they're better served at the present time by their local service because they can see them out there; they see the vehicles there.

1010

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** That's a great tribute to the force providing the service at the present time.

**Mr Anderson:** It is.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Have you had an opportunity to speak to residents in the new area, the area to which the service would be expanded, to understand what their sentiments would be?

**Mr Anderson:** I only spoke briefly with the mayor of the new municipality, Mr Shortt. He feels very strongly about our local force, and he's a resident of St Vincent township.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Oh, very good. You know as well, Mr Anderson, it is rather regular on this committee that appointees would be asked about previous political affiliation. Do you have any?

**Mr Anderson:** No, I am not a card-carrying member of any political party.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Have you been?

**Mr Anderson:** No.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Have you assisted in any political campaigns?

**Mr Anderson:** I could say no, that I haven't. I can tell you honestly that I am Conservative and that's been

throughout my life, but I've never actually joined any party.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I appreciate that. Thank you very much. I have no other questions.

**Mr Gerretsen:** We need people to be involved in the political process. I think it's a plus if anybody says they were involved with a political party. Obviously, I hope it's the party that I support and am a member of, but I can certainly appreciate that.

I noticed that you were elected to two terms on the public utilities commission in Meaford.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Of course, utility commissions have disappeared now.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, they have.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Do you have any opinion on that? Do you think that was a negative step?

**Mr Anderson:** I believe it was, in one sense, because you lose that local feeling. But I believe in deregulation, because it opened things up for the public sector, that had to of course get rid of the utilities themselves.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Of course, deregulation so far has meant only increased prices for the consumer out there.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, I know that.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You're not in favour of that, are you?

**Mr Anderson:** Not really, but it happens. I'm not in favour of gas prices going up at the pumps, but it happens.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I was on a utility commission for eight years in Kingston when I was mayor of that community. If you had a separate commission looking after the activities of the utilities, it just seems to me it used to get a lot more attention from a sort of overseeing body than it does currently, when it's lumped in with all of council's other business etc. Do you share those feelings?

**Mr Anderson:** I do share that with you. Our local electrical utility has joined with, I believe, Hydro One. The transition hasn't actually taken place yet. But talking to the local boys, and I know them very well, who work for the electrical, we're going to lose them. They're not going to be, let's say, at our beck and call. If something happened very quickly and you needed them immediately, it's going to take longer for them to be on the job than it has.

**Mr Gerretsen:** When were you elected to the utilities? You didn't mention the years here. Was it fairly recently or was it some time ago?

**Mr Anderson:** No. It was quite some time ago.

**Mr Gerretsen:** In the 1980s?

**Mr Anderson:** No, I think it was back, actually, in the late 1970s.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Do you have the same sort of fear that this may happen to police service boards as well, that they may be taken over by councils and in effect disappear?

**Mr Anderson:** I would hope not. I would hope that would not happen.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Right. Just so I'm clear on some of your earlier statements, you're going into this with an

open mind as to whether or not the Meaford police should continue as a separate entity rather than be amalgamated with other forces. But what you're hearing from the public out in your area is that most people would prefer to see the identity of the force maintained the way it is currently.

**Mr Anderson:** Yes, they would. The local residents of Meaford proper feel very strongly about that.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Yes. I wish you well. I think it's a very interesting experience to serve on a police service board. With your background, I'm sure you will do a very good job.

**Mr Anderson:** I'll certainly try, sir.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Anderson. As I mentioned before, we'll deal with concurrences at the end of the day. You're welcome to stay with us or go on your way.

**Mr Anderson:** I'll probably take my wife shopping now.

**The Vice-Chair:** Oh, oh.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Maybe you'd better stay, then.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair and members of the committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** Ms Schreiber is not here yet. She's not scheduled to be here until 10:30, so we can recess until she arrives or deal with—

**Mr Wood:** I'm not sure if we can deal with concurrences.

**The Vice-Chair:** Yes.

**Mr Wood:** I guess I should place a motion, then. I move concurrence re Mr Ort.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any discussion?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** A recorded vote, please.

#### Ayes

Johnson, Kells, Spina, Wood.

#### Nays

Dombrowsky, Gerretsen, Martin.

**The Vice-Chair:** The motion is carried.

**Mr Wood:** I move concurrence re Mr Lacey.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any discussion?

**Mr Johnson:** A recorded vote, please.

#### Ayes

Dombrowsky, Gerretsen, Johnson, Kells, Martin, Spina, Wood.

**The Vice-Chair:** The motion is carried.

**Mr Wood:** I move concurrence re Mr Anderson.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any discussion?

**Mr Johnson:** A recorded vote, please.

#### Ayes

Gerretsen, Johnson, Kells, Martin, Spina, Wood.

#### Nays

Dombrowsky.

**The Vice-Chair:** The motion is carried.

Having dealt with those, I suggest this committee recess until 10:30.

*The committee recessed from 1017 to 1022.*

#### LYNDA SCHREIBER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Lynda Schreiber, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Halton Regional Health Unit.

**The Vice-Chair:** Ms Schreiber, welcome. Make yourself comfortable at the table. There's water there for you if you so choose. The procedure is that you have the opportunity to make some opening comments of your own, and then we move to the various caucuses for the question and answer period.

**Ms Lynda Schreiber:** As you heard, my name is Lynda Schreiber, and I'd like to thank the members of the committee for having me before you this morning. It is indeed a pleasure and my honour to be here to apply for the position on the Early Years Steering Committee of the Halton Regional Health Unit. As I understand it, you will ask me questions after I've just made a short statement, and the questions will be related to what is a volunteer committee. I think it's interesting that I'm going through this to be a volunteer. Some day I'll learn how to say no, but for now I say yes continuously, especially when it comes to children's services.

As you've seen from my resumé, I have an extensive background as a community volunteer. I'll highlight some of those activities and add where committees and commitments are missing due to space limitations on my CV.

My first real volunteer work was for a youth agency which sought to assist young people in need of housing in a safe environment where they would be encouraged to reach their full potential through education, counselling and/or work opportunities.

I served also as a volunteer for the Youth Employment Service advisory committee in Burlington in the 1980s.

I've canvassed for various charities and medical research organizations over the years. I think I started when I was about 10, and that was a long time ago.

In addition, you will note that I was a school board trustee for six years. Of course, my eyes were opened to the world of early years issues at that time. It became very clear that there is a universal need to offer voluntary programs to parents for nurturing bright and happy youngsters who are ready for school, to identify early any hurdles they may have to overcome, support groups,

early learning opportunities and so forth. The school system was clearly not the place to fix those young people's problems at that time.

Research certainly supports the common wisdom of our grandmothers about what constitutes good parenting: nutrition, social activities, physical activities and so forth. It will always be the case that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

A lot of the work was done in Halton while I was on the board, by the district health council, was to facilitate better speech-language programs for youngsters not yet in school. This was an enabling program that had been long awaited by the parents.

As the mother of two rambunctious boys born in the last decade, I became familiar with the many opportunities in our community of Halton. I also became aware of the many gaps, particularly in areas more remote than southern Oakville and southern Burlington.

For the past three years I was a regional and city councillor, serving on the health and social services committee. Our staff kept us up to date on early years initiatives, such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, and programming and funding opportunities in other areas.

Also, it became very clear that partnerships were the way to go as the dollars shrunk over the years. I am well versed in the needs of our impoverished children in the area and hope that we can see through these early years initiatives some innovative new programming which brings together multisector funding partners on behalf of all our children, as they are our future.

I look forward to serving my community and am prepared to give you answers to your questions at this time. Again, I thank you for having me here today.

**The Vice-Chair:** We will begin the questioning with the government members.

**Mr Wood:** We will waive our time.

**The Vice-Chair:** Then we'll move to the official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Good morning, Ms Schreiber. Thank you very much for your presentation. There are just a couple of things in your presentation—the one I have here in front of me in print—that I wanted to clarify. You've indicated here in this document that you were a trustee on the board from 1999 to 2000. I think this morning you said you were a trustee for six years.

**Ms Schreiber:** Sorry, that was a typing error. I was elected in 1991 and served until 1997.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** So you were a trustee until 1997 and then you were elected to council in 1997, and it has that you served there to the year 2000. Do you continue to serve in the role of councillor?

**Ms Schreiber:** No.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I see. Very good.

Before I had this role I was a school board trustee, so I certainly do appreciate the opportunity that role provides to understand the development of children and when it is best and most appropriate to assist families and youngsters and provide supports to them. You did make an interesting comment related to your understanding and

your experience in this regard and your concern about when the dollars have shrunk over the years there was a need for more community intervention and partnerships. Do you have an opinion on the fact that when we are talking about our children, the most precious resource that any society has, our young people, that the investments that have been directed toward our most precious resource have shrunk? Do you have an opinion on that?

**Ms Schreiber:** I think that they've shifted a little bit. Certainly my experience in Halton is maybe different than other areas, because our experience there has been very positive over the last few years with the—I forget what the dollars were called but I think they came from Health and Welfare Canada.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** They were federal dollars, yes.

**Ms Schreiber:** We've been able to really maximize those dollars in terms of doing preventive programs with the children. As the school board certainly struggled over the years after Bill 82, I think it was—I've lost track of my bill numbers—when special-education students were all integrated, that added challenges for the educators. As it is related to early years, we've been fairly fortunate so far in Halton and in fact have performed quite well in some pilot projects. I don't know if I can answer your question any better than that.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I was only making reference to your statement that dollars have shrunk. I wanted you to perhaps indicate the areas where you noted that and if you had an opinion on the fact that there had been in fact a divestment in our most precious resource.

**Ms Schreiber:** Again, I go back to the integration of special education students. That's what created the challenge. As we got more and more needy children in the system, the dollars weren't available to meet their medical, psychosocial, whatever, those sorts of needs they were presenting at the time. That's why SEACs became very important to school boards, to advocate on behalf of those children.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You do understand that in your role on the steering committee you will be making recommendations about how provincial funds should be spent within communities. Are there any particular programs that you personally believe should be priorities for your community?

**1030**

**Ms Schreiber:** Not specifically as they relate to the early years. Our expertise and research tell us we need to pour more resources into it and build those partnerships, but I don't know that a needs assessment has been done in Halton per se. I'm really happy with what we've done with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children dollars, in terms of helping moms right from the beginning and the outset, for nurturing and breast-feeding programs, those sorts of things. But beyond that, I can't tell you off the top of my head what a needs assessment would show.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are you familiar with the Early Years study, the McCain-Mustard report?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You're familiar, then, with family parenting centres and the role they would have within a community?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are you familiar with the report from Campaign 2000?

**Ms Schreiber:** No. I've heard of it, but I'm not that familiar with it yet, to be honest.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Is homelessness an issue in your community?

**Ms Schreiber:** The social planning council has identified housing as a priority issue in Halton, yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Is child poverty an issue in your community?

**Ms Schreiber:** There are pockets of fairly severe poverty, in my opinion, in Halton.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Do you believe that, as part of your role on the steering committee, those are issues you need to deal with?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes. There are community groups already looking at those issues, and we're quite pleased with that.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I know my colleague has some questions.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Just so I understand it correctly, did you run in the 2000 municipal election?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes, sir.

**Mr Gerretsen:** And were you defeated?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I believe you stated earlier that what brings you back into this is the fact that you believe in services for children.

**Ms Schreiber:** I never really left that volunteer element.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Right, and that's very commendable. Do you think it's a positive move by the province to claw back the child tax credit for families on social assistance?

**Ms Schreiber:** I'm afraid I'm not very familiar with that.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Families are getting less money, as a result, than they would be getting if the child tax credit were, in effect, given to families for their use and hopefully for the use of their children. Do you not believe that families who are on social assistance having less money than they would have if the child tax credit was not clawed back is detrimental to the children in those families?

**Ms Schreiber:** I've heard that and read that; however, the information I received when I was a councillor was that money was being used by the regional government in the way they felt was quite appropriate, so I'm afraid I don't really have a personal opinion.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Was that money used by the regional government? You were a regional councillor at the time.

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes, it was.

**Mr Gerretsen:** In what kind of programs?

**Ms Schreiber:** It was put into programs in the community for children. We have child-parent centres, we

have drop-in centres for moms, breast-feeding programs, other things like that.

**Mr Gerretsen:** So it's your understanding that money in effect was used by the government and delivered over to local governments so they could run programs.

**Ms Schreiber:** That's my understanding. I certainly stand to be corrected if that's not correct, but that's my understanding, that it was redirected dollars.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Let me ask you something else. Do you think it's a positive move for children's services for the ministry responsible for children's services no longer to be a separate ministry, as it was until just recently?

**Ms Schreiber:** Years ago I certainly advocated on behalf of there being a ministry of the child. We went even further than having a children's secretariat in our advocacy for children. But I don't know what the Premier's reasons for doing that would be at this time.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You may recall that when the ministry was first set up, which I believe was about two years or so ago, the government lauded this as a great positive move, that it was going to place a much greater emphasis on the needs of children. By the ministry disappearing, would it not lead you to believe that they've either changed their mind or whatever they said two years ago was just window dressing?

**Ms Schreiber:** I hope not, and I hope these committees are a signal to the community that the government, regardless of who it is, cares about children and families.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You're familiar with the fact that the McCain-Mustard report recommended a separate ministry for children's services?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** And that the government's not following up on that.

**Ms Schreiber:** I would support a ministry for children, but I don't know—

**Mr Gerretsen:** You would still support that?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** And you would advocate that?

**Ms Schreiber:** Yes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Because you seem to have some very powerful friends in powerful positions in this government, from just reading your resumé etc. You would advocate that strongly?

**Ms Schreiber:** I believe in a ministry for children, yes, as a mother and a person in our community.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Do you believe that the downloading of some of the provincially paid-for services to the local level and to the regional level has helped or hurt children's services that are delivered at the regional level?

**Ms Schreiber:** In Halton, a lot of our children's services programs are in fact paid for 100% by the province, so I'm afraid I don't have experience with what you just said.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Well, if that's the case, I hope you will put in a good word for eastern Ontario, because we could use 100% paid-for provincial services as well when

it relates to children's services. Will you do that on behalf of the children of eastern Ontario?

**Ms Schreiber:** Sure.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. That concludes the—oh, excuse me. Mr Martin.

**Mr Martin:** I know you didn't see me a few minutes ago in terms of my being here—

**The Vice-Chair:** I have a big jug of water in front of me. Mr Martin, please.

**Mr Martin:** I want to be as straight up and honest as I can with you on this. There are some concerns out there being raised by people in the field delivering programs at the moment, struggling to try and meet all the needs that they see, who are fairly cynical of setting up a whole new structure to enter into an area that they're already trying to serve.

I was at a press conference about a week and a half ago where the Campaign 2000 people, the Toronto chapter of that, indicated that we now have one in three children in Toronto living in poverty. In fact, some of the background material that was provided to us here this morning indicates that during the Fraser Mustard-McCain consultations, a number of people raised the issue that a family that doesn't have a place to live is not going to be able to provide a stable home environment for their children. This message was reinforced by provincial children's services organizations that spoke of their member agencies seeing more children who are going hungry, children who have to be taken into care of children's aid society because the family is homeless, more family stress and more mothers with children in shelters for the victims of family violence. We've got a problem out there, a huge problem.

My colleague from Kingston mentioned a few minutes ago the initiative of this government to claw back the national child tax benefit supplement, which averages something between \$80 and \$100, depending on your income per month per child to top up and give you a little bit of money to maybe buy extra nutritious food or to pay the rent if that's becoming a problem as inflation takes hold, and that in fact that money is being clawed back from any family on provincial assistance, whether that's the Ontario Works program or the Ontarians with disabilities support program. It's being taken away. And you're right in fact that some of that money is being used to provide other programs, such as the Healthy Babies program.

My view is that the government should be using some of this money they're getting from the federal government, which is substantial—just under \$1 billion over a two- or three-year period—to actually be providing those programs as opposed to taking money away from the very poor who need it to feed themselves, and that the \$1 billion in surplus that was announced in last year's budget and the \$4 billion that is being projected by way of tax break in this budget and the subsequent budget could be used to feed hungry children.

Given that there are concerns out there by some folks that this is going to be nothing but a public relations exercise by the government to send out a message that they are caring, when in fact the reality is showing as different, how do you see yourself in any way being helpful or responding or dealing with that once you're appointed to this committee in your jurisdiction?

**Ms Schreiber:** I honestly don't envision the committee as being public policy-makers. I wish I had that authority, but I don't anymore. But I think it is an opportunity—I served on a committee, in fact chaired one of the first multisector committees in Halton for children's services, recreation, leisure, those sorts of things, and we found that the partnering, multi-sector approach was really useful and beneficial.

Halton, again, may be unique in that we are a relatively wealthy community with lots of business opportunities for partnering. But I think the role of these committees and the role of any of us who are child advocates is to ensure that people come to understand the issues that are important to families. So while I may not be in a position to affect tax law, I certainly hope that I can advance the position and plight of children in our society by continuing my involvement.

**Mr Martin:** This government almost consistently and in every initiative where poor people are concerned has actually divided the poor into two groups: the deserving and the undeserving. The deserving are those who are able to get off the system and get out there and get a job, whether it be minimum wage, part-time or whatever. It doesn't matter the circumstance. As long as they get off the system, then there's a little bit of assistance for them. But if you stay on the system for all the reasons that people get locked into that, you're punished by way of, for example, the clawback of the child tax benefit supplement and other things.

**1040**

Would it be your personal view—I think it's important, for people who come to these committees and work on these committees, that we understand what their position would be—that there are two groups of poor people out there, those who want to get off the system and work, and those who just don't and therefore they should be punished?

**Ms Schreiber:** I live across the street from one of the large pockets of poverty in Aldershot in Burlington and I don't know that there are people who don't want to get off, quite honestly. The people who live there are very proud, and the reason they're locked in has to do in many cases with their children. I'm hopeful these types of programs will be enabling programs for those families to move on and put smiles on their faces. I think you're characterizing it in a way that's different than my personal experience with the impoverished in my community.

**Mr Martin:** I agree with you. I'm sharing with you my experience of what's happening to people who are coming to my office, who are being advocated on behalf of by groups such as the Campaign 2000 group, that in

fact poverty is increasing, that people are becoming more and more impoverished, that the breadth and the depth of it is alarming, and that the initiatives of this government aren't relieving, even though, as they say, the economy is better, they're creating more jobs and they're pushing more people off of welfare. But we still have a growing problem of poverty in the province. My hope is that people like yourself, who obviously are going to have some influence once appointed to this board, will advocate with the rest of us that we shouldn't be demonizing or vilifying anybody in poverty, that we should be trying to help them to help themselves, to help their children and to get on with their lives.

I note in your resumé that some of your training is in the area of criminology. I hope that isn't indicating in any way your view, and I don't think it is from what you've shared with me so far. But I have to tell you that this government has been very effective in putting those they target as a problem, such as the poor, such as unions, such as civil servants, into a bag, shaking them up and then rolling them out and presenting them as somehow of a criminal element. I don't know what your view on that is, but certainly it's not my opinion anyway that anybody on assistance is a criminal. That wouldn't be your experience, would it?

**Ms Schreiber:** No.

**Mr Martin:** OK. There are lots of challenges out there. As I said, when I was at this press conference a week and a half ago with the Toronto chapter of Campaign 2000, their biggest plea to the government was to give those organizations already out there trying to do a job the resources they need to actually do that job. They were saying that, for example, the new municipality of Toronto, which delivers a lot of children's services for this community, is in desperate need of more resources to actually reach out and help the many people they see coming to them, or living in communities they serve as having difficulty, and that your group in an advisory capacity would advise the government to make a choice between giving more tax breaks and actually providing the money that they're getting to these kinds of programs so that we don't have children in poverty in this province.

**Ms Schreiber:** Is that a question?

**Mr Martin:** No.

**The Vice-Chair:** Is that it, Mr Martin?

**Mr Martin:** Yes.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Ms Schreiber. We'll deal with concurrence at the end of the meeting.

**Ms Schreiber:** Thank you very much.

#### DAVID HOULAHAN

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: David Houlahan, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's my understanding that Mr Houlahan is present, if you'd join us at the table. You are given an opportunity to address the committee and make

some comments, after which we will have a little question-and-answer period. Make yourself comfortable, and welcome.

I should just point out for the record that you're the intended appointee as a member of the Early Years Steering Committee of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

**Mr David Houlahan:** Correct. Good morning, Mr Chair and members of the committee. I wish to thank you in advance for this opportunity to be with you here this morning. I'd like to take this time to give you a brief background of myself with respect to being considered for the appointment to the Early Years Steering Committee of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

I'm a resident of Montague township in the county of Lanark. I'm an owner of a business in the town of Smiths Falls. As the parent of two children ages five and seven and an active member of my community, I feel I have a direct connection to the local needs of children. As a business owner for the past 14 years, in the insurance industry, I've worked with families from every walk of life and in all areas of the tricounty.

My appreciation of the socio-economic framework in this area is real. As an insurance agent, I've utilized my company's resources to provide education materials to daycares, schools and community initiatives regarding fire and bike safety. I've been able to provide support to local fire departments, health initiatives such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, preschool speech, parish works and community service projects.

As a parent, I've been actively involved with agencies for daycare, education and recreation and religious training for my children. I am certainly aware of the issues facing rural families today—in our area, transportation and daycare spaces.

As a member of different organizations, I've participated in organizing special events as a leader of workshops, seminars and as a teacher of course curriculum.

My interest in the steering committee is twofold. First, I feel that the steering committee will have a significant role in our community in increasing availability for programs to children and families.

Second, on a personal note, my oldest daughter, now seven, experienced the benefits of early intervention for which I'm now a strong advocate and that's the reason why I've applied to be on the steering committee. Weak muscle tone and a low threshold to sound presented a number of challenges for her in activities with her peers and family. Through my involvement in my community I knew how to access occupational therapy for my daughter.

At three and a half, first privately and then through our local community care access centre, she received programming from an occupational therapist and has been able to increase her muscle tone to a level of that of her peers. As she has learned strategies to cope with noisy and busy environments, this has allowed her to focus on

learning. Now she excels in academics and I'm proud to say she's in the top 5% of her class.

Ladies and gentlemen, early intervention does work. It is this personal experience above all that drives my application for membership on The Early Years Steering Committee of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. It is this, in conjunction with my business and volunteer experiences, that contributes the skills, knowledge and vision that I can bring to such a position. I thank you for your attention this morning and look forward to any questions you might have.

**The Vice-Chair:** We will begin our questioning with the official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Good morning, Mr Houlahan. You have indicated in your remarks that you are aware of issues that are challenges for families with children in your particular part of Ontario, and you did name transportation and daycare spaces. Could you elaborate, particularly with regard to daycare?

**Mr Houlahan:** No problem. In terms of spaces in daycare, there are limits and there are waiting lists. We all know that.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Do you think that's acceptable?

**Mr Houlahan:** Is it acceptable? No. But why is it not acceptable, would be my next question.

1050

In certain areas, due to population limitations—in our rural area, our biggest hurdle to accessible daycare goes back to the transportation issue. We are a very spread-out community in the tri-county. I believe even in your riding—you have North Frontenac, right?

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Yes.

**Mr Houlahan:** So you know what I'm talking about.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I sure do.

**Mr Houlahan:** There's a great distance between communities. Because of that, it's hard to establish daycare facilities that are going to allow parents to take their kids there or whatever. What I would like to see, for example, is maybe resource centres where parents can take children for not only daycare but educational programs, parenting programs. I feel a community of, let's say anywhere from 50 to 200, in that area, can develop that; that's what I mean by access to daycare facilities.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I guess I'm a little confused, because even if there are parenting centres, in rural Ontario transportation continues to be an issue; it's a matter of getting from home to the centre.

With regard to daycare spaces, do you believe the government should have some role in ensuring that there are adequate numbers of regulated spaces within communities throughout Ontario, both in rural and urban centres?

**Mr Houlahan:** The need is there for daycares, but there should be a choice for parents if they want to put their children through that kind of program. With the steering committee, I believe our focus should be on the early development of a child no matter where that child is placed, whether it be in a home or a daycare setting.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I wouldn't disagree with that. But the issue continues to be the fact that there are not enough spaces available for people who need them. Accessibility and affordability are two of the most serious issues that relate to daycare. My question to you again would be, do you think the government has some responsibility to ensure that families and children have access to this very important service within their community?

**Mr Houlahan:** I think the government does play a role, but I believe it is the community initiatives that should dictate on daycare spaces.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** The Mustard-McCain report very clearly indicates that what families contribute to the early development of their children is very important. Since 1995, since this government took office, there has been a reduction in social assistance for families in need of that. That has had a direct impact on children in the province. We have seen the number of homeless families increase because families no longer can afford to pay their accommodation costs. We know there are more children living in poverty and more children frequenting food banks. Do you think this policy has had a very serious and negative impact on the early development of children in Ontario?

**Mr Houlahan:** I'd have to say that poverty is an issue, no question about that. Any poverty is a tragedy. I also think we have to look at other developmental things for children, whether the child is involved in an abusive home, is there a literacy program for that child? Within the report too, my reading of it is that these developmental factors could go across all socio-economic situations, not just the poor.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are you suggesting we not pay attention to the issue of poverty within communities?

**Mr Houlahan:** On the contrary. I think that issue should be addressed, as well as others.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Glad to hear that. One last question: are you familiar with the report of Campaign 2000 that deals specifically with poverty?

**Mr Houlahan:** I've heard of it; I've not read it, no.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Would you be going to that?

**Mr Houlahan:** I would be interested in reading it if I'm appointed to this committee. That would be one thing I hope our committee in our tri-county would have access to and review it.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I think you should.

**Mr Gerretsen:** First of all, thank you for appearing. Undoubtedly, you are very passionate about the issues relating to children. Let me also congratulate you on a statement of experience that actually says something in written form rather than in the point form that we so frequently get and doesn't really say anything.

I'm somewhat confused though, I'll be honest with you. It seems to me that there seems to be a reluctance on your behalf, on behalf of other candidates who have come before us who are going on these various steering committees, to admit to the fact that there are an awful lot of people on social assistance or in extremely poor

situations who, in effect, are getting less assistance now than they did in 1995. And there seems to be a total reluctance to sort of say, "Well, it's wrong," and they really don't think this is affecting the kids somehow. That, to me, seems like a preposterous situation. Basically we've cut people back from welfare, from—I don't know—\$1,200 to \$900 per month for families with children, and there's an unwillingness to say, "Yeah, that really affects those kids." Regardless of what side of the political fence you're on—left or right—surely to goodness the fact that a lot of these families are getting less money now than they did before is going to affect the availability of the resources that are there for the family. Would you not at least agree with that?

**Mr Houlahan:** I would say, yes, that is a factor.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Well, you're very honest then, because many of the people who come—

**Mr Houlahan:** I'll say one thing: I agree it's a factor, but I think we cannot pigeonhole ourselves into saying this is one area and now let's beat this one, OK? I think that when one looks at the development of a child, one has to look, in this particular committee, from zero to six. That's a huge gamut of development. We're talking about programs, for example, about why mothers shouldn't smoke. You have fetal alcohol syndrome. Before the child is out of the womb, you've got problems, OK? Those need to be addressed too. I'm not diminishing the concept of poverty, but I think there are a lot of other issues on the table, too, which we all have to address.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Absolutely, sir, I couldn't agree more.

In looking at your CV, you almost seem to have the same kind of work experience the Premier has. You taught for a year as a supply teacher, and, I think, so did the Premier. Then you decided to go into better fields. Do you sort of emulate the Premier in his career, and are you a golfer? That's what I want to know. I'm serious: why did you leave the teaching profession?

**Mr Houlahan:** Why did I leave the teaching profession? I actually was in the insurance arena, and in our community there was a shortage of supply teachers at that time. I put my name forward to help out that particular rural school.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Oh, I see. So it was never your intention to become a teacher on a full-time basis?

**Mr Houlahan:** No, no.

**Mr Gerretsen:** OK. Well, that's—

**Mr Houlahan:** But I enjoyed my experience, what I did in the classroom.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'll ask you the same question I asked a previous witness in the other hearing: with great fanfare the government announced a couple of years ago that it was going to have a minister for children's services, and I was hopeful, as were many other people, that the government was really going to place a larger emphasis on children with having a ministry set aside to deal just with that issue. Now it has sort of disappeared. It's been rolled back into Community and Social Services. Would you agree with me that that's a negative move, if in nothing

else, at least in the perception that is being created out there?

**Mr Houlahan:** I can't speak to why the Premier would have eliminated that position and rolled it into one, which I believe is the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I will say this much: as a result of that, I think our committee has an even more important role to advocate for child services.

**Mr Gerretsen:** The final question I have deals with the federal child tax credit situation, which of course is not available or has been clawed back from people, for families on social assistance. Do you think that's a proper thing to do? I know the money goes into other organizations that are using it, etc, such as the healthy babies initiative. But to me it almost seems as if those initiatives are, in effect, being paid for by the people who are no longer getting the money the federal government feels they're entitled to. What do you think should be done in that particular situation? Should the province do the right thing—in my opinion, anyway—and give the child tax credit, pass it through directly to the families, or not? Do you have any views on that? Take a stand.

**Mr Houlahan:** My information on it is limited, OK? My feeling is, as I said before, that we have to look at the whole issue, not only just for the poor but all aspects of the socio-economic realms in the province. We're here to help everybody, not just some few people.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Well, that's a little disappointing, I must say, but good luck anyway.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Gerretsen. We'll now move to the third party.

**Mr Martin:** I guess I'm a little disappointed to hear you bob and weave where the issue of poverty and children is concerned and the issue that there's a bigger—in my view, there's nothing more challenging right now than the issue of families in poverty and the question of how those children participate in the programs they need to better themselves and become like you and I, participating members of the communities in which we live.

#### 1100

Let me very briefly talk to you about Campaign 2000. In 1989, in the federal Legislature, all parties unanimously approved a resolution that child poverty should be wiped out in Canada by the year 2000. Canada is a rich jurisdiction. Ontario is a rich jurisdiction with lots of money. We're giving tax breaks by the billions to all kinds of people in our province, and yet here we are into 2000-01 and where child poverty was one in 10 in 1989, it's now one in five across Canada, and in Toronto alone according to Campaign 2000, which was established in 1989 to keep the government's feet to the fire on this issue and to make sure they actually achieved the goal they set for themselves, we now have one in three children living in poverty. It doesn't matter which cut-off you use, that's the circumstance.

It seems to me that if you have that number—I think we're talking about 471,000-plus children living in poverty—it's a huge difficulty in a jurisdiction such as

ours where, as the government claims, we have had unparalleled economic development, have done a great job of creating jobs, have knocked all kinds of people off the welfare rolls, and yet poverty is growing at a speed and a level that is unparalleled. Do you have any thoughts on the impact of social policy on early childhood development?

**Mr Houlahan:** I can't speak for the Toronto area. I have looked at our area. I think what we have to do is take a needs assessment for our area, and if those are a concern from the community, they should be addressed through our committee.

**Mr Martin:** It's a fact, and it was mentioned by both Mr Gerretsen and myself this morning already, that the provincial government has in its wisdom chosen to, and this is an issue of social policy, and take away any contribution the federal government—to give it credit, although it is also culpable in this if you look into it further, in delivering a national child tax benefit supplement to all low-income families across this country, but it didn't limit provinces from actually clawing that money back from families on social assistance or on the Ontarians with disabilities support program. That's in fact what they're doing. They're taking between \$80 and \$100 per child per month away from some of our most vulnerable and at-risk families. That could be used to feed some children before they go to school so they could learn and participate in some of this early childhood.

If you had a chance to talk to the government about that through your involvement in this committee, what would your position on that be?

**Mr Houlahan:** I think we have to address that issue. As well, as I said before, we have to address the broader spectrum of child development. I think we have to look at all avenues, and if the community feels through their presentations to us—then it's our obligation to put that forward to the government.

**Mr Martin:** But you wouldn't be driven in any particular—given, I note particularly, your very active faith connection, and it's the same faith I belong to and the social gospels that I hear about in church on Sunday and that I look at in time of reflection myself, you wouldn't bring any sort of personal commitment to that task? As a member, you would wait for the community to indicate to you whether it was a priority or not?

**Mr Houlahan:** I have to speak for the community. If the community wishes to address those issues of, say, breakfast programs etc and they are presenting these proposals to us to take to the government, I would strongly support that.

**Mr Martin:** But you yourself won't take any personal responsibility—

**Mr Houlahan:** I would be one of 10 members. We have to listen to what the people in our community are telling us they want to see funded.

**Mr Martin:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair:** Is that it, sir? Thank you, Mr Martin. The government—we started with the government, so I guess we're all set.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I would like the government members to ask the witness some questions.

**The Vice-Chair:** I think I'm one click behind on my little list here. Anyway, to the government side.

**Mr Wood:** We'll waive our time.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you, Mr Houlahan.

**Mr Wood:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Ms Schreiber.

**The Vice-Chair:** Concurrence has been moved. Is there any discussion?

**Mr Gerretsen:** Recorded vote, please.

#### Ayes

Johnson, Kells, Martin, Spina, Wood.

#### Nays

Dombrowsky, Gerretsen.

**The Vice-Chair:** The motion is passed.

**Mr Wood:** I move concurrence re Mr Houlahan.

**The Vice-Chair:** Concurrence has been moved. Any discussion?

**Mr Martin:** We've had a number of people before us over the last few weeks as appointees to these new advisory committees on early childhood initiated by this government. In most instances, after we've at least shared, in the small amount of time that we have, the concern on this side of the floor that is out there re the question of poverty, we've had the members seeking appointment identify with that and say, yes, they would take some personal interest and give some leadership and be concerned about that. But I have to say I was disappointed that this person wasn't willing to identify that as something he would be willing to take some personal leadership on or look into and would simply wait until it bubbled up from the community. I would suggest that it's already bubbling up. I don't know a community in this province right now that isn't seeing and hearing and feeling the very difficult effects of some of the social policy initiatives of this government and how they play out in the lives of some of our most at-risk families and vulnerable children. So this morning I can't support this appointment, given my sense that there was no real personal interest shown in this particular subject at this time.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Far be it from me to disagree with Mr Martin, with whom I agree almost 100% of the time particularly when it deals with social issues. I believe in his sense of compassion and in his sense of fair play and justice for those who are disadvantaged in our society. I share some of the views that he has as well with respect to the leadership role that Mr Houlahan didn't seem to be willing to take. On the other hand, I must admit that I was very impressed with Mr Houlahan's CV. Obviously he has done an awful lot of community work. I was particularly impressed with the fact that he has experienced

at first hand, through the work with his daughter, the tremendous need there is for early intervention.

I will reluctantly support his nomination because I think that he does bring something to the table. Hopefully, once he is on this committee, he will see the tremendous need there is out there, particularly in the tri-county area, which is basically a rural part of the province that has great needs etc, and he will take that leadership role. Something tells me deep inside that he will do so. So I will be supporting his nomination.

**Mr Spina:** I agree with what Mr Gerretsen has said. The history that Mr Houlahan brought forward with respect to his personal experience I thought would have answered the questions that Mr Martin had asked. He does take a personal feeling and has direct experience in realizing the importance of early childhood issues.

I think there is an opportunity and I think that's one of the reasons he wanted to be on this steering committee, to do exactly what Mr Martin said. Why he didn't answer his question I suspect is because it may have been more politically motivated in terms of the way Mr Martin's question was structured. But I believe Mr Gerretsen and I both feel that Mr Houlahan does have a very sincere role

in contributing to the steering committee. That's the reason we didn't ask a whole lot of questions. We understand what Mr Houlahan's background is and what his intention, his contribution will likely be, so we will be very much supportive.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. Any further discussion?

**Mr Johnson:** I'd like a recorded vote, because I want to go by John's deep inside instincts.

#### **Ayes**

Gerretsen, Johnson, Kells, Spina, Wood.

#### **Nays**

Dombrowsky, Martin.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you. That is carried. Is there any further business before the committee?

**Mr Wood:** I move adjournment of the committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** Adjournment has been moved. The next meeting will be 10 am, May 16.

*The committee adjourned at 1111.*





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