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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 6 June 2001**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 6 juin 2001**

**Standing committee on  
government agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

Chair: James J. Bradley  
Clerk: Donna Bryce

Président : James J. Bradley  
Greffière : Donna Bryce

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Wednesday 6 June 2001

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Mercredi 6 juin 2001

*The committee met at 1006 in room 151.*

**The Chair (Mr James J. Bradley):** I'm going to call the committee to order. We'll perhaps do a little change around of the questioning. It is a little after 10 and I know members have other responsibilities, other places to go and things to do. So I'm going to commence this meeting. Do we have any business?

**Clerk Pro Tem (Ms Tonia Grannum):** No.

**The Chair:** No extra business at all so far.

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

## HELEN MULLIGAN

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Helen Mulligan, intended appointee as member, Grand River District Health Council.

**The Chair:** Our first intended appointee, as a member of the Grand River District Health Council, is Helen Mulligan. Please come forward. As you may be aware, you're welcome to make an initial statement should you see fit, and then you are questioned for up to 15 minutes by each of the three political parties represented on the committee. Welcome to the committee.

**Ms Helen Mulligan:** Thank you. Good morning, all.

I'll tell you what my activities are. It may illustrate best what my interests in the community are. In November of last year I was elected councillor for Ward 2 for the county of Brant, and as a member of council I was named by council and Mayor Ron Eddy, whom some of you may know, to the Grand River District Health Council. Thus I am here today for your questioning.

Other committees of council I sit on include the chair of the ambulance committee for the county of Brant and the city of Brantford, and the community services committee. I was also appointed by council to the Brant social planning council and the Brant County Board of Health, which in turn asked me to sit on the mental health committee.

In the South Dumfries service area, where I live, I attend the recreation advisory committee, Glen Morris Community Hall committee, St George/South Dumfries Trade and Tourism Association and the South Dumfries non-profit housing committee.

You may have noticed a common thread involving health and social services in that list. This is because of my past experience. For employment, I am a retired registered nurse. I worked in pediatrics, intensive care,

emergency and geriatrics. I was public relations officer and fundraiser for Operation Lift, which is specialized transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities.

I've been a small business owner and a coordinator of a craft show that attracted 3,000 people a year. For 20 years I did that little job, and I got rid of that one.

Community participation: I'm on the Trillium Foundation grant review team for Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk from 1998. I have been on the Brantford General Hospital Caring for Health campaign as an assistant chair, and that campaign ran from 1998 to 2000 and we successfully raised \$11.4 million under difficult circumstances with hospital closure.

Brantford General Hospital Foundation: I was president from 1993 to 1995 and a director from 1989 to 1998. I have been on the long-term-care committee of the Brant District Health Council from 1993 to 1998. I have been a member of the BGH school of nursing alumni forever, since 1964 or so.

St George/South Dumfries Trade and Tourism Association: I was president in 1998. I was on the South Dumfries parks and rec committee from 1995 to 1997 and on the non-profit housing committee from 1991 to 1994. I have been on our church board from 1972 to 1996, including chairman of admin and finance. I've been a 4H leader going way back, from 1977 to 1987, and did other things in the community such as fundraising for minor hockey. I was recently instrumental in starting a new Optimist Club in St George.

My newest projects: I have just been appointed to the grants committee for the Brantford Community Foundation and I'm now chairing a program called BITS, which is Brant Integrated Transportation Service, for specialized transit for persons with disabilities and seniors in the rural area. We're trying to amalgamate. We will amalgamate with Operation Lift in the city of Brantford.

My certificates include gerontology and business management from Mohawk College and nursing management from the Canadian Hospital Association.

Just a few comments: ongoing community involvement and leadership in a wide variety of interests demonstrates my genuine interest in public service. Having a background in health care combined with public relations and fundraising will bring a different viewpoint to the table for the Grand River District Health Council, if this committee approves. Serving the community is something I take seriously.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We will commence the questioning with the official opposition.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Good morning and welcome. I hope you enjoy the opportunity to sit down and talk to us about some health care issues in your community this morning. How is it you came to receive the nomination to this committee?

**Ms Mulligan:** This was the choice of Brant county council.

**Mr Crozier:** OK, and I think you did mention that, I'm sorry.

District health councils have a mandate, which I'm sure you're aware of, and yet a couple of years ago the government appointed the health care restructuring commission. Did you see any conflict or duplication of responsibility when the health care restructuring commission was appointed as opposed to the responsibility of district health councils? Was there any duplication there?

**Ms Mulligan:** Not having been involved with the health council, I believe their role was in an advisory capacity. Hopefully they were able to work with the restructuring commission. I wasn't part of that picture.

**Mr Crozier:** But do you see district health councils acting in a similar manner, in other words, taking into consideration the same issues that the restructuring commission would have taken into consideration?

**Ms Mulligan:** I see the health council as representing the views of the community.

**Mr Crozier:** And that's an excellent point.

**Ms Mulligan:** There were definitely differences of opinion with the restructuring commission.

**Mr Crozier:** At the time of the work of the health care restructuring commission in your area—you mentioned hospital closings in your opening remarks—were there hospital closings in the Brant area?

**Ms Mulligan:** Yes, St Joseph's Hospital was closed. It was just closed this spring.

**Mr Crozier:** Did you agree with that?

**Ms Mulligan:** Yes, I did. I go farther back in memory, to when my father was on county council at the time they were building St Joseph's Hospital, and there were questions in the community at that time as to whether there was a need for two hospitals. It's not a huge community, with 85,000 to 90,000 in the city itself, and a larger catchment area. There was always question of the need for two hospitals since day one.

**Mr Crozier:** What's the catchment area now of this district health council?

**Ms Mulligan:** I'm not sure of the exact numbers because it includes Haldimand-Norfolk. I'm not sure of their numbers.

**Mr Crozier:** So it would be somewhere above 90,000?

**Ms Mulligan:** Yes. Including the county, it would be closer to 180,000.

**Mr Crozier:** And you have one hospital?

**Ms Mulligan:** We do now.

**Mr Crozier:** Do you think, in your role as an appointee to the district health council, you should

review that situation as to the requirements of hospital needs in the area?

**Ms Mulligan:** The community's not asking for it any more. I think it's fine the way it is. If the health council wants to review it, I'll certainly be happy to be part of that.

**Mr Crozier:** But you're out in the community now, through the activities you've mentioned. You're certainly involved.

**Ms Mulligan:** I don't hear a request to have it re-opened or to keep it open. The community is in much greater need of long-term-care beds, and we're hoping that that building and some of that staff will be able to provide long-term care.

**Mr Crozier:** Is that actively being looked at?

**Ms Mulligan:** Yes.

**Mr Crozier:** Great, because there is a need, I'm sure, in your area, as there is in mine.

**Ms Mulligan:** And that seems to have satisfied the community, too.

**Mr Crozier:** OK. Thank you.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Good morning, Ms Mulligan. Thank you very much for coming this morning.

Would you say it's your understanding that the health care needs of the members of your community are better served now since the closure of St Joseph's Hospital?

**Ms Mulligan:** I think they will be.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are they now?

**Ms Mulligan:** As far as acute care goes, yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** So it would be your opinion that the health care needs of people within the Grand River District Health Council catchment are better served since the closure of St Joseph's?

**Ms Mulligan:** As far as hospital care goes, yes. All the doctors, of the few that we have, are under one roof now, and I think it's a more efficient operation for all. There were a lot of transfers—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** More efficient: would you say that relates more to money or service?

**Ms Mulligan:** Service; probably money too, but service, particularly for things like rehabilitation. If a person had a stroke, they were admitted to Brantford General. When it came time, two to three weeks later, for rehabilitative care, they had to be transferred across town to St Joseph's. If they needed any testing, anything related to acute care, then they had to be transferred back to Brantford General. With one hospital, all of those needs will be taken care of in one institution.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You're probably familiar that across the province, since the closure of hospitals, while perhaps services can now occur on one site, there has been a trend that waiting lists to access health services have increased significantly. Would you know if that has been the case in this—

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Mr Chairman, on a point of order: I just ask for your indulgence. This committee is reviewing Ms Mulligan's qualifications as to being appointed to the district health council.

The line of questioning we get into is about needs in health care provincially. I would ask that the committee and the Chair have some discretion on the questions as to Ms Mulligan's qualification for the position and not on broader health care needs across the province. I don't think she's here to do that, to give opinions on what's going on provincially. Instead, she's here and she's been asked to be here by the official opposition to answer as to her qualifications to serve on this board.

**The Chair:** I think, Mr Mazzilli, I understand your point. One of the challenges we have is that members of the committee from all parties like to gather as much as possible what the views and opinions on issues in a specific field are of each of the people who have been proposed for appointment. If there were questions about the price of tea in California, that would certainly be out of line. But I think that's what we try to do: members of the committee like to get a general opinion of what the person's views might be on a number of issues related to health. If it were outside of health, I would certainly agree with you, and I appreciate your intervention, but I think you or anybody else should have the right to ask the questions within the purview of the field of health for the appointment. But I do understand the point you are raising and I thank you for raising it.

Continue, please.

1020

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Just by way of response, I think the record would reflect that my questions have related to the Grand River District Health Council. I think it's important that we understand if the intended appointee has some sense of the health care needs within the community she is nominated to represent.

If I might just pursue the issue with regard to the single site, it has been a pattern across the province that when there's a single site and perhaps single-site access to services, the waiting lists have increased. Is it your understanding that that has in fact been the case within the catchment of the Grand River area, that waiting lists for health services within the community have been increased or extended or lengthened?

**Ms Mulligan:** I have not heard that there's a waiting list for surgeries, for instance.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Or cancer treatment?

**Ms Mulligan:** Well, Brantford goes to Hamilton, mainly, for cancer treatment, so yes, there's a waiting list there.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I see. Also, you did make some reference as well to your community and the fact that there is a doctor shortage within your area. What ideas would you have, what ideas would you bring to the table, that might address or assist the district health council in ameliorating that particular situation?

**Ms Mulligan:** That's a good question. We have a very active committee that has the right people on it who are trying to solve that problem. We're short 30 doctors. That's our biggest health care problem in our community at the moment as far as I can tell. Are there doctors out there to bring to our community? Are there spare doctors

out there in this province who want to move? To my knowledge, I don't think so. I don't know where they're going to come from. I think we're going to have to wait for them to be trained. My idea on this is that if we can assist with education financially, that's my only solution.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** One final question.

**The Chair:** Actually, you don't have a final question—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Mr Mazzilli took some of my time.

**The Chair:** —because your time has expired.

At the risk of a Chair saying something, if you know of any, please send them to the Niagara region. We need 57.

Anyway, I'll go to the member for the New Democratic Party.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I want to make a pitch for Sault Ste Marie and northern Ontario too. If you know any doctors who want to—anyway, there's a need all over the province for doctors, and it's becoming quite critical.

One of the things I'd like to determine in view of the responsibility we have around this table to make decisions, whether we support or do not support the appointment of people to various boards and commissions, is a sense of what they think their responsibility is. Is it, on one hand, simply to drive the government agenda, make sure it is implemented with as few questions asked as possible so that a particular government can get on with doing what it feels is in its mandate to do, or, on the other hand, are you a voice of the jurisdiction, the area, the constituency you're appointed to represent?

I know I've had experience in my own community. I've been in this job now for almost 11 years and saw the district health council before the change, before it was turned into this very large geographic organization. I saw some of the work it was able to do in my own community around bringing people together around issues and coming up with suggestions and recommendations, and in fact sometimes, with the community, being quite effective in speaking to government about exactly what was needed for our area.

I guess the first question I would have of you is, what would your perspective be on your responsibility? Is it to the government which has appointed you to make sure their agenda is being delivered or is it to the people you live with in your area, to make sure you're getting the best that's possible by way of health care in your jurisdiction?

**Ms Mulligan:** My answer is both. I don't disagree with what's being done in Brant at the current time, but I also believe the health council should very much be a voice of the community.

In my past experience on the committee level outside of the health council, in relation to long-term care we had numerous community meetings with people who are affected by services that were needed. I understand that continues and I would hope that would continue. That would be my drive, to involve the community that's

affected by the health and social needs of the community so that we can have their voice to take to the health council's table so that we in turn can take that need to the government.

**Mr Martin:** Just by way of example, in my own community I had a meeting about two weeks ago with the administration of our hospital. They have before them some massive challenges, not the least of which is the building of a new hospital. They're waiting for a green light from the government on a number of fronts where that's concerned; plus, next year they will experience a significant deficit in their ability to deliver the health care that is required by the people who live in the district of Algoma.

We used to have a health council that represented the district of Algoma. It's now a health council that represents almost all of, or it does, northeastern Ontario with each community, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, North Bay and communities in between, with hospitals, all of them grappling with the same issues. They're told that if they run a deficit next year, a law is going to be passed that will put them in contravention of the law. They're wondering what they're expected to do if the demand is such that it costs more than they have in their budget to deliver.

I guess I'm asking you, what is the circumstance in your area? Is it similar? If they find themselves in that same very difficult bind, what would your recommendation through the health council be to government on that front?

**Ms Mulligan:** Brantford isn't in that position at the present time, which is probably unique. It has not always been the case. We just received about \$11 million for excellence in operating, for being efficient at Brantford General. It's like having a gold mine dropped in our community. It's wonderful and it's well used, but it also illustrates that that hospital has been that efficiently operated. I have to question why that one is recognized as operating efficiently and some others haven't been. Does there need to be some sharing of information between hospitals? I'm sure there is at some level, but right now Brantford is lucky.

**Mr Martin:** Just on that front, the hospital in Sault Ste Marie didn't get that windfall because for some reason they weren't deemed to be of that excellent calibre. Frankly, in speaking to them, they don't understand because they've been doing everything in their power to deliver a service. As a matter of fact, I've been quite critical of them over a number of years for not delivering at a level that I feel is warranted if we're to receive the same level of service as everybody else in the province. But they're doing the best they can with the dollars they have, and I'm convinced of that. All of them are very professional and would not in any way do anything that would be less than their best effort, and yet Brantford gets \$11 million and we get nothing.

In your view, is that a good way to run a health care system, to be rewarding people and not rewarding people? It sounds to me on one front quite punitive.

Wouldn't it make more sense, and perhaps district health councils might want to look at this, to be funding hospitals according to their need as opposed to some criteria that are laid out that indicate whether one hospital is more efficient than another and rewarding them as such? I'd be interested in your view on that.

**1030**

**Ms Mulligan:** Again, it's a good question. I think it could use some discussion provincially.

**Mr Martin:** Actually, those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Now the government caucus.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I just want to thank you very much for attending. Based on what I've heard, I have no questions of you.

**The Chair:** Mr Miller?

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** This is my first experience in this and yours maybe as well. I've been very impressed with your qualifications, your community background. I hope they pay a lot for this job, based on the interviewing process we have to go through.

**Ms Mulligan:** Part of councillor's salary.

**Mr Miller:** The question I would have: you're involved in a lot of different organizations. Will you have time for this new responsibility?

**Ms Mulligan:** This is part of my responsibility. Yes, I'll make time.

**Mr Miller:** From what I've seen in terms of the questioning from the opposition, it seems to be a political forum, more questions to do with general health than specifically to do with your qualifications. But you seem to have an extensive background, and I think you've answered the questions very well.

**Ms Mulligan:** Thank you.

**Mr Bob Wood (London West):** We'll waive the balance of time.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr Wood, and thank you, Ms Mulligan.

#### KEITH SHIER

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Keith Shier, intended appointee as member, Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge grant review team.

**The Chair:** Our next intended appointment is an intended appointee as member, Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge grant review team, Keith Shier. I hope I've pronounced it correctly, sir.

**Mr Keith Shier:** You did, sir.

**The Chair:** Welcome to the committee. As you know, you would have an opportunity at the beginning, if you wish—this is one you may exercise or not—to make an initial statement to the committee, and then the questioning rotates with the three political parties.

**Mr Shier:** I do have an opening statement just to enlarge a wee bit on my resumé.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Keith Shier. My wife, Dorothy, and I live in Brock township,

which is the farthest-north municipality in Durham region and also the most northerly in the Greater Toronto Services Board area. We have a family of four and we are very proud grandparents of six grandchildren.

I'm a graduate of Kemptville College of Agricultural Technology. I'm a member and past president of Cannington Curling Club. I sing in my church men's choir. I'm a charter member of the Beaverton and District Conservation Club.

Our family business is primarily a dairy farm, with sidelines in freezer beef and house rentals. Dorothy and I are presently transferring both the responsibility and authority for our business to our two sons.

My public career started in 1976 on the local committee of adjustment. I have served on Brock council for 13 years, the last six years as mayor. Since we have a two-tier system, I also served on Durham region for nine years. As mayor of Brock township, I also served on the Greater Toronto Services Board. I was a member of the finance committee and the works committee of Durham region.

At the GTSB, I and Toronto Councillor Joan King co-chaired the countryside and environment working group. We were able to complete a GTA countryside strategy.

I served nine years on Durham region's children's aid board and I'm a member and past chair of Brock Community Care.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, sir. We'll begin questioning with the third party. Mr Martin.

**Mr Martin:** Just going through your resumé and understanding the responsibilities for the job, I don't doubt but that you will bring a great deal of experience and knowledge of your area to this position. Given your long history of public service and busyness, although I hear you when you say you're turning some of that now over to your children, which is always an exciting thing to be doing—to have taken an enterprise to a point where you can in fact do that in this day and age is always an exciting moment—why would you want to sit on a board such as this?

**Mr Shier:** I believe I have something to offer, and it fits very nicely with a lot of my interests. I have interests in arts and culture, the environment, sports and recreation, human social services, and it fits quite nicely. I may be winding down my public career; I'm not quite sure of that yet. This might be an interesting and challenging way to ease out in the next few years. Not that I want to take an easy way out, but it seems when I get out of one area of my life, there's a period of really wanting to continue doing something else. This seemed very challenging and something I wanted to do, and I'm really looking forward to it.

**Mr Martin:** Are you aware of any of the grants that this group has decided to give out in your area over the last couple of years while it's been in operation at the level that it has been restructured to do?

**Mr Shier:** I did read the list of grants, yes, but I haven't committed them to memory.

**Mr Martin:** I know whenever we come to public office, whether it's in our capacity as a member of an agency, board or commission or as a member of Parliament, we often have something in our mind we want to accomplish, we want to do. Is there anything in particular for your area that you want to make sure happens in your capacity as a member of this team? Is there something lacking or something you'd like to enhance or build on?

**Mr Shier:** I don't have anything specific. There are areas in sports and recreation that are needed. The arts, local theatre groups certainly could use some help. The environment—the conservation club that I am a charter member of is always struggling to raise funds for their projects.

I don't have anything specific, but there are general areas where certainly there is some help needed.

**Mr Martin:** You're probably aware that there is sort of a shadow side to this whole operation, which is the issue of where and how much of this money is generated through gambling activities across the province—mind you, well-regulated and overseen by government, which I think, if you're going to do that kind of work, makes a whole lot of sense.

Do you have any issues yourself around the expansion of gambling in the province? That obviously will have a tremendous impact on the amount of money that will be available to be distributed through the Trillium Foundation. I guess what I'm saying is, to some degree when you create an organization such as this that makes communities very dependent, to do these very exciting and interesting things, on the proceeds of gambling, there are people out there who suggest that will continue to create a greater and greater appetite for more, which means the province will have to introduce more and more gambling venues or opportunities for gambling. Is that a problem for you?

1040

**Mr Shier:** I guess as a child, I was taught that gambling wasn't good for me—

**The Chair:** Sorry. I have a point of order from Mr Mazzilli.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I will just make it quick, Mr Chair. Some of the questioning again has nothing to do with the appointment. Perhaps if the Chair can just instruct the person before the board that certain questions, although they are opinion, he may choose to answer or may choose not to answer, because they have nothing to do with the position the person is applying for or being interviewed for.

I'm just wondering, on a broader policy issue that was asked by the member from the third party—that's a question the person before us may choose to answer or may choose not to, and it has nothing to do with why he is before this committee.

**The Chair:** Certainly a person who appears before the committee may give whatever answer he or she determines is the appropriate answer. Again in this particular case, since it is the position of the government that if we didn't have all of these gambling opportunities available,

we wouldn't have the money for Trillium, I think he's trying to determine what the opinion would be in terms of the funding and so on. So any witness can answer any way the witness sees fit to, just as we welcome your questions on virtually anything, Mr Mazzilli. I always enjoy your questions.

**Mr Crozier:** Chair, on that same point of order: I just want to point out—and perhaps the clerk can help us with this as well—I'm not aware of anything in the standing orders that limits the questions that can be asked by a member of this committee. I think it's time Mr Mazzilli, if that's the case, understands that. I can ask any question I want. I should be sure that they are sensitive, and in most cases I should be sure that they are on topic. But neither Mr Mazzilli nor anyone else, or the standing orders, as far as I know, can limit the questions I ask.

**The Chair:** Let us continue, if we can. We've heard from both sides. Mr Martin.

**Mr Martin:** Just on that same point of order, if I might, since I was challenged, I very seldom ask a question here that isn't in some way related or connected to my responsibility to try to make a decision on whether somebody should or shouldn't be appointed to a particular board or commission. That's all I'm trying to get at here. We have a real concern on this side that governments don't stack boards with people who simply tout or push the agenda of the government of the day. I think a healthy infrastructure of boards and commissions that represent different views and perspectives and come from different life experiences enhances everybody's opportunity.

But the thing that concerns me even more than that—and maybe we can put it on the table now, Mr Chair, and, I don't know, maybe we can bring it back to the House—is we come here week after week to participate in this exercise and there are often four or five members of the government who never ask a question. I just wonder why they come, what they understand is their responsibility on this committee.

**The Chair:** Mr Martin, as you may know, each of the political parties may or may not ask questions of the candidate, so I would not pass judgment. Any member may have questions or a member may not have questions. What I'm going to try to do is get you back on to the line of questioning you were on, sir.

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

**Mr Martin:** I think we were halfway through a question you were answering. I think the Chair actually put fairly concisely what the issue is that I'm trying to put on the table here: the growing dependence on revenue from gambling sources and the continuation of Trillium's ability to fund those wonderful things that everybody enjoys and appreciates in communities, and what your opinion might be on that.

**Mr Shier:** I do understand your concern. As I started to answer, as a child I was taught that gambling wasn't good for me. I certainly wouldn't promote gambling in Ontario in order to get more milk out of a cash cow. It is that simple. But I do believe that there are people who

will gamble. If that is the case—and I believe it to be the case—then I think it is prudent to put at least some of those proceeds to good use. The better use they can be put to, in my opinion, will be the legacy that we pass on to Ontarians. I would hope that I would have some input that would make some positive difference.

**Mr Martin:** Thank you very much. I appreciate your coming this morning.

**The Chair:** The government party.

**Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** I'd just like to say to the committee that I've known Mr Shier for my tenure in government. Having known his past, I think he'd do an excellent job of this and I'd be proud to support him, although I do have some concerns with his comments. As I mentioned, I know Mr Shier because of his past experience in government relations with us. But I find his comment about winding down very difficult. I don't think anything Keith does would be winding down, and I'm proud to support his nomination in the position.

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

**The Chair:** The official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Good morning, Mr Shier. It is very good to see you here this morning. I would like to understand a little bit about your being appointed to a team that will receive, I'm sure, a great many requests from agencies within your community, all with pressing needs; certainly to them they're important and deserve support. I'd like some sense or understanding from you about the issues or initiatives within your community that would be a priority for you. Are there particular areas that you think these funds should be diverted to?

When I consider some of the projects that have been successful in gaining support from the grant review team, they are projects that relate to providing better services within the community for children, for seniors. There has been money directed to service clubs, money directed toward health initiatives, social services, environment, conservation authority projects, recreation and culture. Just with the examples that I've offered to you, are there any there that are particularly outstanding for you, that you think would always be sort of at the top of the list of priorities?

**Mr Shier:** I probably would pay particular attention to anything relating to the environment and to young people. They're probably my priorities at this time. I have a concern about the environment and how we will leave Ontario for future generations. I also believe that if you invest in young people, we will reap great returns in the future. They are our future. I see that in my own family. I see that in our friends' families. Those areas where care is invested in young people, they've certainly reaped great returns.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Very good. I'd like to ask you if you have any political affiliation. Are you a member of any political party?

**Mr Shier:** No, I'm not.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Very good. Thank you.

**Mr Crozier:** Good morning, sir. You certainly do come well qualified. I appreciate in particular your muni-

cial experience, because that has a soft spot in my heart. Anybody who is supported by Mr Ouellette must be a person of good character. Having said that, you are mayor of your community.

**Mr Shier:** No, I'm not.

**Mr Crozier:** You aren't.

**Mr Shier:** I was until—

**Mr Crozier:** It says, "Present municipal experience." I thought you were still mayor.

**Mr Shier:** No, I probably made a mistake there.

**Mr Crozier:** So, you hold no public office now?

**Mr Shier:** No, I don't.

**Mr Crozier:** All right.

**Mr Shier:** That's not quite correct. I have been appointed to the committee of adjustment.

**Mr Crozier:** That's fine. All I was going to get at, and I was going to give you the opportunity to comment on it, was that if you held municipal office today, it is kind of hard to advocate on behalf of your community on one side as mayor and to a grant review team on the other. I'm sorry, I misunderstood that. I wish you well.

**Mr Shier:** It was my fault.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I think all questions have been completed, sir. You may step down. It was nice to have you with the committee this morning.

1050

#### DINEKA VAN ROON

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party: Dineka Van Roon, intended appointee as member, Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit.

**The Chair:** The next intended appointee is Dineka Van Roon, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit. Is Mrs Van Roon here? Would you come forward, please. Welcome to the committee. We even have the light on already for the microphone there for you. Make yourself comfortable right there. What happens is that we welcome an intended appointee to make an initial statement if she or he is inclined to do so. It is not necessary, but if you feel inclined to do so, you're certainly welcome to do so. Then each of the parties represented on the committee has up to 10 minutes—I said 15, I think, before—to direct questions. Welcome to the committee.

**Mrs Dineka Van Roon:** Mr Chairman and honourable members, my name is Dineka Van Roon. I'm married to John, who is here with me. I have three grown children. I would like to tell you a little bit about myself. I'm an immigrant from Holland. In 1951 we came to Canada. I was five years old when the Second World War started. Because of that, I know a little bit about hardships for children. My father was able to buy 200 pounds of tulip bulbs. We ground them into flour and made them into pancakes. That's how we survived.

Then, when I was nine years old, I believe, a farmer in the south of Holland told us that I could come there

because they had more food than we had. They gave me two slices of bread the first time. When I ate those two slices of bread, I became so sick that I wasn't allowed to eat for two weeks after that. This is what I mean—I know what it is to be hungry, and I know what hardships are for children.

In the early 1990s, we took in a boy who was seven years old whose mother had to go to jail for three months. The three months' care turned into much longer. Even though we were not official foster parents, the CAS allowed him to stay at our house. He lived with us for about seven years. We became official foster parents in that time. He is now living on his own, but we have weekly contact with him.

One of our children is a single mother with a child who turned four in April. Her child was born two and a half months premature and weighed 1,100 grams. He had a number three bleed in his head, number four being the highest, which made him very high risk for cerebral palsy. He was in Kingston General Hospital, which is a fantastic hospital, for three and a half months. When he was discharged, my daughter was given papers to fill out for a severely handicapped child, because that's what the hospital expected him to be.

While my daughter was on maternity leave, she sang to him, she played with him, she read to him, she exercised him. When she went back to work in November, I became his full-time babysitter and continued stimulating him. When he had his final check-up in Kingston at age two, he had recovered totally, and had no problems whatsoever. For the past two years he has been going to daycare once a week so that he can interact with other children, and he's registered for junior kindergarten in the fall.

The reason I have applied for this Early Years Steering Committee: I would like to bring this same family-oriented perspective to the committee. I feel I have a lot to offer in terms of experience and personal commitment to ensuring that every child in our region has access to the kinds of services that have so greatly benefited the boy we looked after and my grandson.

Finally, as someone who chose Canada as our country to live in, I think it's a nice opportunity for me to give something back to a country that has given us so much. I would like to read a poem that says it all for me.

One hundred years from now,  
It will not matter what kind of car I drove,  
What kind of house I lived in,  
How much I had in my bank,  
Nor what my clothes looked like.  
One hundred years from now,  
It will not matter what kind of school I attended,  
What kind of typewriter I used,  
Or how large or small my church,  
But the world may be a little better  
Because I was important in the life of a child.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We will begin the questioning with the governing party.

**Mr Miller:** Certainly. Welcome to the committee today. My wife is Dutch, so I have an attachment to people of Dutch origin.

My question—I don't doubt you have a great commitment toward the importance of the early years in the development of young people—what sort of experience do you have in other community organizations or any other committees in your community?

**Mrs Van Roon:** Not much right now, except I've been involved quite a bit with the children's aid society and being concerned with children who are taken away from parents. My husband was a tour bus driver for the last 10 or 11 years, so I have been unable to be active in that field very much.

**Mr Miller:** Also, have you had a job outside of the home?

**Mrs Van Roon:** No. I was looking after this seven-year-old boy, who turned 15 later on, full-time and also my grandson full-time. So I think that is already a major undertaking.

**Mr Miller:** Very good.

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

**The Chair:** No further questions from the governing party. We'll jump to the official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Good morning, Mrs Van Roon, and thank you very much for coming this morning.

This is I think a very important committee to which you are intended to be appointed. You indicated that you had decided to apply for it, so did you read an ad in the paper? Is that how you came to be appointed?

**Mrs Van Roon:** No, someone suggested it to me, that I would be a good candidate for it.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Was this someone in your community who is involved with children's issues?

**Mrs Van Roon:** No. Someone in Dr Galt's office.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Oh, I see. OK.

That was a lovely story you told us about your grandchild. Certainly in my role as children's critic for the official opposition I truly appreciate your story—so many times I think that we don't value some of the things you described in terms of stimulating youngsters and the positive effects that can have—also, your own life experience and your understanding of what it is to live in very trying and difficult situations.

I was wondering, are you familiar with the Early Years Study? This was a document that was commissioned by this government to consider how best to address the needs of children within the province. Are you familiar with this?

**Mrs Van Roon:** Yes, I am familiar with the Mustard and McCain—

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** And the work of Dr Mustard and the honourable Margaret McCain. Given that, and given your understanding of your own community and the needs within your community, would you be able to share with us some sense of how you think your community might begin to better address the needs of families and children? Are there any particular issues or ideas you would bring to that conversation as a member of the

steering committee that you know will assist children in your community?

**1100**

**Mrs Van Roon:** As you said, and also as I said in my little notes, it's extremely important to start very early in life and to stimulate children. In that report it says 25% of children are not ready for school at age six, and they should be. So my input would be, yes, let's look after this age group. It's a very, very important time in a child's life.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Yes. Is it your sense that child poverty is an issue in your community?

**Mrs Van Roon:** Not that I am really aware of.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You haven't been made aware of that yet.

**Mrs Van Roon:** We all have the poor with us all over.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** With regard to the steering committee and the challenge fund initiative, are you aware that those dollars have come from the federal government?

**Mrs Van Roon:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** It's part of the health accord, actually, so that it's support from the federal government, which assists provinces to build healthy Ontarians, to build a healthy population. The federal government is focusing on investing in Ontario's children in this particular way, and that is your charge as a member of the committee, to consider ways—because what might be needed in one community may not be a priority in another.

You talked about your grandson attending one day of daycare. Are you familiar with the daycare needs, with the child care needs within your area?

**Mrs Van Roon:** In Campbellford we have a very good daycare.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Do you know if it's sufficient for your area?

**Mrs Van Roon:** It apparently is because we decide on the day of the week that he goes and we phone and there's always space for him. We felt that it was very important for him to go there so that he would interact with other children because we of course are elderly, my husband and I.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Do you know if it's a regulated space or a non-regulated space?

**Mrs Van Roon:** I'm not sure. There is a board so, yes, I imagine it's regulated.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Very good. That would conclude—

**Mrs Van Roon:** We live in the area of a large prison so we maybe tend to have families of the prisoners in our area, so that may be a different reason for helping children. I mean, it's different from maybe other communities in that sense.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Any further questions from the official opposition? No. Then we go to the third party.

**Mr Martin:** Thank you for coming this morning. I appreciated your opening comments, particularly where

you spoke of the need to make sure that young people—children—didn't go hungry and had all they needed to give them a good start in life.

I came to Canada in 1960 from Ireland. I was the oldest of seven children. We moved to a little town north of Sault Ste Marie called Wawa, and even though there was lots of work up there for people, it was hard work. We didn't have as much as some have today, but we certainly had lots of food and a warm and safe home to live in and lots of support. That, I would dare say, is some of the reason that I've been successful in my own life. It concerns me because what's happening out there today to so many young people is not like that.

You said to the previous questioner that you'd read the Early Years Study and knew of the authors. In that, they make the comment that people in community initiatives spoke often of having to deal with basic needs of families first:

"A family who does not have a place to live is not going to be able to provide a stable home environment for the children. This message was reinforced by provincial children's services organizations who spoke of their member agencies seeing more children who are going hungry, children who have to be taken into care of children's aid because the family is homeless, more family stress and more mothers with children in shelters for the victims of family violence.

"The reduction in 1995 in social assistance benefits has probably increased the number of children below the low-income cut-off point. Homelessness is affecting some families and children in some centres because individuals cannot afford market rents and there are waiting lists for subsidized housing.

"We are not in a position to judge the scale of need in this sector, but these issues clearly contribute to some of the difficulties of some families at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. It is difficult to be a good parent if you do not have adequate housing."

They're talking about children who are hungry and they're talking about children who don't have proper housing. What's your take on that? What was your immediate response to reading that in that report?

**Mrs Van Roon:** My response would be, my daughter who had these problems said to me, "Mom, what would a person do who doesn't have parents or family who can help?" That's exactly why I would like to be on the steering committee: to see what could be done for families who have no other family to fall back on like she was able to.

**Mr Martin:** If it became obvious to you in your work on this committee that one of the more immediate issues is the lack of resources to families to actually feed themselves, buy good clothes, particularly in the wintertime and that, would you be asking the committee to speak to the government about perhaps revisiting their decision to reduce income to people on assistance by 21.6% in June 1995?

**Mrs Van Roon:** I'm not sure that in many cases money would be the only problem, though. I would really

want to find out what the reason is for the family having problems.

**Mr Martin:** I've been to at least six communities in the last three months talking to people about this issue. In every instance, they've said to me—and there was actually a grandparent in Elliot Lake on Friday when I was there, who is now looking after his grandchildren. He's finding it difficult, with the income that he has, to put food on the table and provide the opportunities that these children obviously need if they're going to develop to their fullest potential. Certainly there are lots of people out there who are suggesting—and many of them who work on the front lines with families and children—that one of the most immediate needs is more money to buy food so they can feed their children at home before they leave for school in the morning.

**Mrs Van Roon:** Certainly I would be looking into that. But I would find out first the reason why they can't feed children or why they don't have clothes.

**Mr Martin:** Have you heard of the child tax benefit supplement?

**Mrs Van Roon:** Yes, I have.

**Mr Martin:** Then you know that it was a program introduced by the federal government a year and a half to two years ago in response to a resolution passed in the federal House of Parliament in 1989 which said that they would do everything in their power to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000.

We know that in 1989 one in 10 children was living in poverty; in the year 2000 it was one in five. We were told a couple of weeks ago by Campaign 2000, a group organized to keep the government's feet to the fire on that commitment, in Toronto, the industrial heartland of the country, that now one in three children lives in poverty. The child tax benefit supplement was meant to give poor families a little extra money to feed their children, an average of, say, about \$80 a month per child.

**1110**

This government has decided to claw that money back from families on social assistance, families on the Ontarians with disabilities support program, families dependent on the provincial government for help going to school under OSAP. Now we find out that—in Elliot Lake on Friday—they're also clawing it back from seniors who are looking after their grandchildren. The criterion, the defining line, seems to be if you're working or not, if you're poor, if you're vulnerable and at risk, but if you're getting money from the provincial government, they don't feel that you deserve that little extra to feed your family. What's your opinion of that?

**Mrs Van Roon:** I certainly don't want any children ever to go hungry or without food, without clothing, without shelter. But I would like to know the reasons why this is happening. That's probably something that I will really be involved in if I get on the steering committee.

**Mr Martin:** You made the comment earlier, I believe—and maybe you can correct me if I'm wrong—that we will have the poor with us always. I don't think you

mean we shouldn't be doing all we can to make sure we minimize that.

**Mrs Van Roon:** We should be helping, oh definitely, 100%. I'm in favour of helping poor people.

**The Chair:** Any questions from the government? You've had your questions. Any more questions? I'm giving you another chance.

**Mr Wood:** We've already waived our time.

**The Chair:** OK. I always like to give you a second chance just in case.

**Mr Wood:** There are no second chances.

**The Chair:** Mr Wood says, "There are no second chances." He's right. Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. That completes the questioning. The committee makes its decision at the end of the day.

**Mr Martin:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I was just wondering if the Chair would inquire for me as to what it is the government feels is the role of this committee if they never ask a question.

**The Chair:** The government may use its time, Mr Martin, for whatever it chooses. The opposition may—

**Mr Martin:** If I might just put on the table, if you would indulge me, Chair: on a couple of occasions they have in fact decided to withdraw some names based on the questioning of this side of the House, but never on any questioning from their side. If we didn't ask any questions of those two people they withdrew, would those names have been allowed to go through and be appointed? What effort do they make above and beyond the simple recommendation of the order in council to determine whether people are appropriate for these appointments or not?

**The Chair:** That's something on which each member of this committee makes a personal decision. I do not know the answer to any of those questions. If the government members wish to tell anybody why they ask questions, what questions they ask, that's their business. If the opposition wishes to do that, that's their business. Each of the three parties may utilize its time in whatever way it determines is appropriate. That's the way we will leave it. I really don't think we should engage in that kind of conversation.

Our next intended appointee may not be here right now, in fairness, because she is scheduled for 11:30 am.

**Mr Wood:** Why don't we deal with concurrence?

**The Chair:** OK. I think that's a good suggestion from Mr Wood to deal with concurrences in the interim.

The first concurrence would be the intended appointee as member, Grand River District Health Council, Helen Mulligan.

**Mr Wood:** So moved.

**The Chair:** Mr Wood moves concurrence in the appointment of Helen Mulligan. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

Next is the intended appointee as member, Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge grant review team, Keith Shier.

**Mr Ouellette:** I'll move concurrence.

**The Chair:** Mr Ouellette has moved concurrence. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

The next one is the intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, Dineka Van Roon.

**Mr Wood:** So moved.

**The Chair:** Mr Wood has moved concurrence. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

We have dealt with three appointments. All three appointments have been confirmed by the committee.

**Mr Crozier:** Chair, while we have a few minutes, I'd like to raise once again and ask the question as to whether the clerk has received any written information from the Public Appointments Secretariat with regard to our question on being informed of opening positions and that sort of thing.

**Clerk Pro Tem:** No, not to date, and a letter did go out signed by the Chair of the committee to the Public Appointments Secretariat asking for that response. We haven't received it.

**The Chair:** Mr Crozier, any comment on that?

**Mr Crozier:** I just can't imagine why the public secretariat, perhaps the general manager—I see we have a couple of notes from him this morning on some withdrawals, but why they would take so long to answer our inquiry. I'm distressed by it. How is that? I will use the word "distressed."

**Mr Wood:** I'm told, Mr Chair, a draft has been prepared and it's awaiting a sign-off, so I will do what I can to encourage action as quickly as possible on this matter.

**The Chair:** We thank Mr Wood for his kind assistance. Mr Martin?

**Mr Martin:** There was another issue raised by the member for Perth, if you'll remember a couple of meetings ago, on the question of the circulation of the yellow sheets that we used to get in the House that we no longer get.

**The Chair:** Mr Johnson did raise that issue at committee, yes.

**Mr Martin:** I was wondering if there was any response to that inquiry.

**The Chair:** The response, to my knowledge, is that I receive it now in the House myself, so it has been resumed. The idea and operation of sending those to individual members of the committee—we do receive them in the House.

**Mr Martin:** Good. OK, I'm sorry. I didn't get mine.

*Interjection.*

**The Chair:** I'm informed by the clerk that that will continue.

**Mr Martin:** I probably got it but didn't recognize it.

**The Chair:** Well, from time to time I think what happens is they appear on our desk and then they may be taken up to our offices, but we do have that followed up and I think that was—

**Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** Got you outnumbered now.

**The Chair:** Mr Kells has arrived.

*Interjections.*

**The Chair:** I'm going to call a brief recess, not just because Mr Kells is here, until the intended appointee is with us.

*The committee recessed from 1117 to 1129.*

## BARBARA PURDIE

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party, Barbara Purdie, intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit.

**The Chair:** We are resuming at exactly the time we are scheduled to resume for our next intended appointee, who is an intended appointee as a member of the Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit, Barbara Purdie. You can come forward. As you know, you may make an initial statement if you choose to do so. Then you'll be questioned up to 10 minutes by each of the political parties if they see fit. Welcome to the committee.

**Ms Barbara Purdie:** Mr Chairman, members of the committee, I am both pleased and honoured to come before you today as a potential appointee to the Early Years Steering Committee for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit. My prime reason for being here is a passion for children.

I have 22 years of experience as a paediatric physiotherapist and currently am employed by a children's treatment centre that provides speech language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, augmentative communication services, therapeutic recreation, family supports and preschool resource services to children from birth to 19 years of age. Our catchment area includes the counties of Haliburton, Victoria and Northumberland, a large geographic area which is the focus of this Early Years Steering Committee.

I have recently become responsible for the centre's therapy services that are provided in Haliburton county, so I'm developing a better understanding of the needs in that community. I have been part of a centre initiative to design and implement a high-risk screening program for babies born too soon or with difficulties at the time of their delivery. I am well aware of and firmly believe in the value of early intervention.

As clinicians, we have strong links with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, the infant development program and local child care and preschool programs. In our area, our centre is the major service provider for speech language services through this preschool speech initiative.

My volunteer work also comes from a love for children. I have spent six years on the board of directors of Peterborough Youth Services and eventually resigned my position as chair of the board to do a three-month volunteer placement at an orphanage in Kingston, Jamaica. This orphanage was a haven for children with cognitive and physical impairments whose families could no longer care for them because of extreme poverty.

For the past five years, I have volunteered at my children's public school, initially in the classroom and for the past two years on the school council. I am presently chair of the school council and also a voluntary member of our regional school council.

My husband and I have two children, ages seven and nine, who have benefited from a stimulating, supportive environment from infancy. We moved to the country when our daughter was one and then faced the dilemma of finding child care. Our children are with their fifth child care provider, and my husband and I are fortunate in that we both drive and can afford to pay for what our children need. Our children have benefited from nursery school, again because we have been able to afford the program and also because we have been able to provide the transportation to get our children to the program.

In 1996, when our local school board moved to cut the junior kindergarten program to reduce costs, my passion for children surfaced again. Through letters and presentations to the board of education, as a community we were able to convince the board to save the program by moving to an all-day, alternate-day program, thus reducing busing costs.

Personally, at home and through my volunteer work, and professionally, I am committed to children. I applaud the Early Years initiative and am excited that I may be a part of it. The need for early, coordinated, accessible services for all children is one that I am glad to see being addressed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We'll start with the official opposition.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** I was just so very impressed with the credentials that have been presented to us. I'm particularly interested in a couple of the comments you made. Welcome and thank you for coming, Ms Purdie, to share your thoughts with us today.

You have made some comments about your own personal experience with regard to child care. You've indicated that you have been able to afford to provide that service. Are you aware, or familiar, if there are waiting lists for child care services within the area that you will be working?

**Ms Purdie:** Most definitely. I know one of the day-cares has—when you're pregnant, that's when you put your name on the list, if you're looking at licensed child care. I think there are more spots for home-based services, but certainly the licensed facilities have long waiting lists.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** If I could just go back a little bit, you applaud the Early Years initiative. Are you aware that the dollars for this have come from the federal government, part of the federal accord?

**Ms Purdie:** Yes.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You know that when those dollars were transferred and when that agreement was signed in September of the year 2000 the federal government assigned \$2.1 billion to the provinces. Ontario will receive approximately \$855 million over the next five years. The first instalment was \$114 million on April

1 of this year. The federal government said that those dollars could be directed in four specific areas: prenatal and postnatal care, literacy programs, family services and child care. Are you aware that the province has chosen not to send any of those 114 million new dollars from the federal government to support child care services in the province?

**Ms Purdie:** I was aware of that. I know that child care agencies in our area are quite up in arms about it. I think it is an issue that the committee needs to look at, especially if you look at families who need to go out to work and can't find licensed child care. It is difficult.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You are a particular advocate of regulated child care and those services for families within the community.

You also made some reference to the challenge that, in rural communities, transportation can be for families in accessing child care. Do you have any sense or perspective about a centre setting for child care or a home-based setting? Do you have both within your community? Do you think one might be more ideal than another, or should it be dependent upon the needs of the community?

**Ms Purdie:** I think it really should be dependent on the needs of the community. I'm sure people are aware of the geography that this particular steering committee would represent. It's huge, and I think the needs are very different in each community. We'd have to look at each community very differently as to whether home-based or actual centres would be most appropriate.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are you aware if poverty is a significant issue within the area you will represent?

**Ms Purdie:** It is, but again I don't know the extent. I've spoken to some people in Haliburton. We actually share an office with family services there. I know that has been a comment from them in the past, that poverty is certainly an issue in that community but, again, the extent of it, I don't know. It'll be something the committee would probably have to get more information on.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** You wouldn't have a sense if it's an issue that has increased in the last five to six years?

**Ms Purdie:** I know it has in Toronto, but I'm not sure about our communities, actually. I can't comment on that.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Obviously you're very involved with your community, with children's issues, family needs and so on. How has it been that you've come to be an intended appointee on this particular committee? Did you see an ad in the paper? Did someone approach you?

**Ms Purdie:** Three areas: because of where I work, we had some of the communications that had come in and we had talked about it at the management table; I did see it in the paper as well, in the Peterborough Examiner, and then the junior kindergarten teacher at my children's school had approached me as well. She was applying for the Peterborough committee and so we had some discussions about the value of this kind of committee and my interest level.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Very good. Given your extensive experience in your role in providing services for families and children, you don't think you might be seen as having a particular bias at the table, that you might be seen as coming with your own agenda?

**Ms Purdie:** I don't think so. Personally, that's not my area. I think what I would bring to the table is knowledge of the existing services and maybe how we could better link services together that are there and maybe offer more supports for families. Whether people think that, I'm not sure. That's not my agenda.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Are you employed by the county?

**Ms Purdie:** No. I'm employed by the Five Counties Children's Centre. It's not county-run.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You're finished with your questions? Any further questions from the official opposition? If not, we will move to the third party.

**Mr Martin:** Good morning and thanks for coming. Your credentials and background and experience are unquestionably valuable. The only thing I want to query this morning is some of the underpinning, where this particular organization is concerned, and your understanding of some of the issues that I feel very strongly about.

There's been some criticism that the introduction of this program is a bit of a smokescreen. Campaign 2000 and some of the folks lobbying on behalf of better child care, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, have been quite critical in that it hasn't responded to the two things they felt very strongly needed to be responded to immediately by this government. This gives out the impression that they are concerned and going to do something when in fact in the area of child care they're not and in the area I've got most concern about, poverty, there's really not a whole lot happening either. The Early Years Study: you're familiar with that?

**Ms Purdie:** Yes.

**Mr Martin:** It says in it, and I won't quote the whole thing because I did earlier, "Some of the people involved in community initiatives who spoke to the committee as it travelled the province said that the basic needs of families are not being met. The family who does not have a place to live is not going to be able to provide a stable home environment for children. This message was reinforced by provincial children's service organizations who spoke of their member agencies seeing more children who are going hungry, children who have to be taken into care of the children's aid society," and the evidence goes on.

**1140**

I've been travelling the province since before Christmas, into probably a dozen communities now either with my forum, the People's Parliament on Poverty, or to stop the clawback of the child tax benefit supplement. Everywhere I go, people are coming out and talking about an increase in stressed families. What would your perspective be in terms of what this organization does, first, to try to put in place a good base or foundation from which

to provide all the other things children need in order to do well, and on the issue of poverty?

**Ms Purdie:** When you're talking about "this organization," do you mean the Early Years Steering Committee?

**Mr Martin:** Yes, the organization that you're being appointed to here. Is that what you mean?

**Ms Purdie:** Yes. I'm just trying to clarify it. It's a long question. I think poverty is an issue, and we have to talk about it around the table in conjunction with all of the other issues that are affecting infants and young children. I agree with you. Poverty is not pleasant. It is a motherhood kind of thing. We need to work toward getting rid of it. It is not going to go away overnight. If locally in our communities we feel it is a strong issue, then we should come back, and hopefully the minister will listen.

**Mr Martin:** I would suggest it is more than unpleasant; it is a fundamental piece missing. The fact that the government in 1995 reduced income to some of our more vulnerable at-risk families by 21.6%; if you add in inflation, we are talking about an over 30% reduction in the power to provide basic needs for children and families. Are you aware of the national child benefit supplement program?

**Ms Purdie:** I have some knowledge of it.

**Mr Martin:** It was introduced a year and a half to two years ago by the federal government because they passed a resolution in 1989 that was unanimously endorsed that child poverty should be eradicated in the country by the year 2000. Campaign 2000, an organization set up to keep the government's feet to the fire on that, are saying that where child poverty was one in 10 in 1989, it is now one in five. In fact, there was a report by Campaign 2000 a couple of weeks ago that suggested that in Toronto it is one in three.

What's happening is that the federal government, in an attempt to actually do something, and I think it's a good attempt, missed the boat on one particular important piece of it. They deliver a cheque in the middle of the month, on average \$80 per child per family, to go to food, clothes, whatever. If a family is in any way dependent on the provincial government, whether it is Ontario Works, a support program for Ontarians with disabilities, whether it is somebody who's dependent on the provincial government for OSAP, going to school or—we heard in Elliot Lake on Friday where there's a

grandparent who's decided to look after his grandchildren and, because of that, gets the supplement through the national child benefit. If they're also getting some money from the province, no matter what the avenue, it gets clawed back dollar for dollar. So they're punished for looking after their grandchildren.

There was one man who got up and he was actually crying, trying to explain to us how difficult all of this was. The family in the first place gave up the child, and that's difficult, because they felt that somebody else could probably look after it better than they could, given the meagre income they have. Now the grandparent finds out that the little bit of money the federal government is flowing to families most at risk and vulnerable, which he figures he is, to look after this child is being taken back.

Don't you think we should all be sending a message to this government to stop that practice? Would you be encouraging your group, this organization, to send that message if you got appointed?

**Ms Purdie:** You've certainly got a lot more information on the subject than I do. I would like to have more information on it before I could come up with a definitive answer. It is something the committee needs to look at in our own jurisdiction.

**Mr Martin:** Your gut reaction to that would be, if that in fact is what's happening, if it turns out that I'm telling you the truth—

**Ms Purdie:** You really want an answer there, don't you, Mr Martin? I really think I'd like to have more information on it.

**The Chair:** The governing party.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. You may step down.

We will now deal with the final concurrence today, which is the intended appointee as member, the Early Years Steering Committee of Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge District Health Unit, Barbara Purdie.

**Mr Wood:** So moved.

**The Chair:** Mr Wood has moved concurrence. Any comments? If not, I'll call the vote. All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Any other business before the committee?

**Mr Wood:** I move we adjourn.

**The Chair:** Moved by Mr Wood that we adjourn. All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried.

*The committee adjourned at 1146.*

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