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Standing Committee on Government Agencies

Intended appointments

Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Nominations prévues

1st Session
44th Parliament
Thursday 15 May 2025

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44^e législature
Jeudi 15 mai 2025

Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Thursday 15 May 2025

Jeudi 15 mai 2025

The committee met at 0900 in room 151.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the most scintillating standing committee at Queen's Park—let's live up to the name. It's the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, as you know, and it will now come to order. As always, all comments by members and witnesses should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin? MPP Pasma.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I have a motion to move before we begin.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): All right.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: I move that MPP Wayne Gates replace Alexa Gilmour as a member on the subcommittee on committee business for the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Is there any debate? All in favour? Opposed? That carries.

Wayne, you've got your work cut out for you. Congratulations.

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you. You can congratulate my buddies over there for supporting me, seeing that they did the motion once, we went against the motion, and now we're doing the same motion again. So it's a good start to the committee.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Oh, we're topsy-turvy.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: The first item of business will be the adoption of the subcommittee reports.

We have the subcommittee report dated Tuesday, May 6, 2025, from the certificate received on April 23, 2025.

Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Tuesday, May 6, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 23.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

We have a second subcommittee report dated Tuesday, May 6, 2025, from the certificate received on April 25, 2025.

Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Tuesday, May

6, 2025, on the order-in-council certificate dated April 25, 2025.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? I've got to stop myself from voting; I'll be kicked out before I even start. All those opposed? Carried.

We have a further subcommittee report dated Thursday, May 8, 2025.

Could I please have a motion? MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move adoption of the subcommittee report on intended appointments dated Thursday, May 8, 2025, on the order-in-council certificate dated May 2, 2025.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Any discussion? Are members ready to vote? All in favour? Opposed? That carries.

INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

MS. MICHELAINÉ LAHAIE

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party and third party: Micheline Lahaie, intended appointee as vice-chair, Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now we'll go on to the more exciting portion of the committee, and that is the review of an intended appointee.

We would like to welcome Micheline Lahaie. Micheline is nominated as vice-chair of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

You can now make an initial statement at your discretion, Micheline. Following this, there will be questions from the members of the committee. With that questioning, we will start with the government, followed by the official opposition and then the third party. Ten minutes will be allocated to each recognized party. The time in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted to the government side.

You have the floor, Micheline.

M^{me} Micheline Lahaie: Membres distingués du Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux, bon matin. C'est un plaisir pour moi d'apparaître devant vous aujourd'hui pour parler de mes qualifications et de mon parcours professionnel.

I'd like to start by outlining that I'm originally from Hamilton, Ontario, but I currently live in beautiful Calabogie, Ontario.

I spent 30 years as a naval warfare officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, and I was part of the first generation of women to go to sea.

During my military career, I deployed three times on international operations: twice as a bridge watchkeeping officer on board HMCS Preserver in the Adriatic Sea in the 1990s, and once on board HMCS Montréal as the operations officer in the Arabian Sea. I also participated in numerous domestic and international exercises.

Following my time at sea, I held roles of increasing responsibility and decision-making authority. Most key of these roles was my two years as commandant of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School. The school is the gateway to the Canadian Armed Forces, and at that time, it was the only institution providing recruit training and officer basic training to those entering the regular force. I led a staff of 170 personnel and approximately 4,000 students undertaking five different programs. I dealt with multiple sensitive issues within the student body, including training failures, sexual assault, serious injuries, and suicide attempts. My time at the school continues to be a career highlight for me.

Upon retirement from the Canadian Armed Forces in 2017, I joined the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. As a member of the board, I presided over cases involving veterans seeking disability entitlement for injuries related to their service. I judged over 100 cases in both official languages across the country. The work was incredibly rewarding, and it positively impacted the lives of many veterans.

In 2019, I became chairperson of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP. The commission is the review body for RCMP public complaints. During my tenure there, I decided multiple public complaints, initiated investigations and conducted systemic reviews. These activities led to substantive changes to RCMP training, policies and procedures.

As an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, I often dealt with serious child and family issues involving the military personnel I led. For example, I was involved in personnel issues that included marital breakdown, child custody, sexual assault and criminal charges, to name a few. More recently, as an adjudicator on police complaints, I made findings about the manner in which police dealt with youth in care.

You may be asking yourselves how my background lends itself to the role of vice-chairperson for the Child and Family Services Review Board and vice-chairperson of the Custody Review Board.

First, I've dealt with many sensitive issues throughout my working life, and through those experiences I've learned how to communicate well with those who have experienced trauma.

Secondly, I've held multiple leadership roles throughout my career. I enjoy mentoring and supporting those

whom I work with and helping them to achieve their professional goals.

Finally, I am an experienced decision-maker, having held positions of increasing authority during my time in the Canadian Armed Forces, and more recently as an adjudicator with two different federal organizations.

Je suis ravie par l'opportunité de rejoindre la Commission de révision des services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Commission de révision des placements sous garde, et de faire une différence dans la vie de ceux qui vivent en Ontario, la province que j'ai toujours considérée comme mon chez-moi. Ça me ferait plaisir de répondre à vos questions.

Merci. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Merci beaucoup, Michelaine. Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will start the questions now from the government side. You have five minutes and 56 seconds, so use your time wisely.

Ms. Laura Smith: I truly appreciate what you've contributed to Canada as a community, as a beginning remark—and I will be brief, because I've been warned.

The role of this tribunal that you will possibly undertake in the justice system is an ominous one, and it's wide-scope. I'm wondering, how do you perceive this role? I'm very interested, specifically—I used to work under the child protection act. You talked about your students—which hopefully will be integral to where you're moving. Can you discuss how you believe your past will enhance the work that you're going to be doing?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: First of all, I would say that children and families are at the base of our society. They form that critical base from which the rest of society builds, so there's nothing more important than supporting children and families.

0910

What I would say is that I had a lot of experience dealing with young people, particularly during my time at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, because we received students that—it was their first time from home. They had never left home before, and they came into the school, 17 years old and brand new. So it was about supporting them, making sure that their families understood what they were going through, and also encouraging them. That's such an important piece.

I see this role as being—it dovetails nicely with the things that I've done in the past. I feel that there's nothing more important than supporting children and families. So I think that I have something really meaningful to contribute to this particular organization.

Ms. Laura Smith: If I could just ask one little follow-up on that—you talked about students. What were the ages of those students, if you don't mind me asking the ranges?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I spent two years on the staff at the Royal Military College. We had 16-year-olds who came in. Then, at the recruit school, the youngest we would have seen would have been 17.

As well, during my time with the CRCC, we did receive police complaints dealing with children, where I had to adjudicate on those matters.

Ms. Laura Smith: I know you talked about the vast amount of people you served, but how many are we talking about?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: We had 4,000 students at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School at any one time.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Dowie.

M. Andrew Dowie: Madame Lahaie, merci et bienvenue. Moi, je suis francophile, alors excusez un petit peu ma grammaire parfois.

Comment est-ce que votre maîtrise de la langue française, ainsi que de la langue anglaise, peut contribuer à votre efficacité en tant que membre à temps partiel de la Commission de révision des services à l'enfance et à la famille? Est-ce que tu peux nous donner une expérience particulière que tu veux souligner où ta connaissance de la langue française a bien aidé votre situation?

M^{me} Michelaine Lahaie: Bien sûr.

Je vais vous dire que la langue française, je l'ai apprise à l'âge de 18 ans lorsque j'ai commencé au Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean, où j'ai fait mes études universitaires. Alors malgré le nom très francophone—mon père est un Franco-Ontarien—on n'a pas parlé français à la maison. Alors j'ai appris mon français dans le militaire.

Ce que je vais vous dire, c'est que c'est très important de donner les services aux Ontariens dans la langue de leur choix. Je trouve que d'avoir l'opportunité de—ça peut arriver même dans une audience où l'audience se fait en anglais, mais la personne est peut-être plus confortable en français, alors ils vont peut-être commencer à parler de certaines affaires en français. J'ai déjà l'habitude de changer de langue. Je trouve que c'est très important.

Lorsque j'étais à l'école de recrues à Saint-Jean, lorsqu'un membre de mon état-major rentrait dans mon bureau, c'était leur choix, la langue qu'il parlait. Alors si quelqu'un, mettons, qui venait du Royal 22^e Régiment à Québec rentrait dans mon bureau et commençait à parler en français, moi, je répondais en français. Puis si j'avais un matelot qui venait de Halifax qui rentrait dans mon bureau pour parler en anglais, je répondais en anglais. Fait que, je trouve que c'est une habitude importante.

Pour moi, c'était quelque chose qui était très important parce qu'avant de commencer au collège militaire, je n'avais pas eu la chance de parler avec ma grand-mère, qui parlait seulement en français. Alors c'était vraiment—pour moi, la langue, c'est très important.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Firin, you have the floor.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I just want to start off by thanking you for your service before I proceed to my question.

My question is, how do you ensure your decisions are fair and unbiased, and how do you manage and prioritize large caseloads?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: In terms of ensuring that decisions are fair and unbiased, I think the most important thing is to focus in on the file, review the legislation, make sure that the path that you're planning to head down with respect to your decision makes legislative sense.

We all have unconscious biases. There is a test for that. I'm aware of that test. I've had to use that test on myself in the past. It's very, very important to take the time to make sure that there isn't any sort of conflict of interest or any bias. And when there is bias, I think we all need to review that within ourselves.

In terms of managing large workloads, I've been part of two high-volume tribunals in the past, and I'm very comfortable with managing a large amount of work in a short period of time and prioritizing the work that needs to be done.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We'll go over to the NDP side. Take it away, MPP Gates.

MPP Wayne Gates: I thank you for your service in the military. We have lots of challenges in our military. It's nice to see that you've dedicated a good part of your life to that. My dad is a war veteran from World War II—obviously, he's not with us anymore. It is important. So I want to say thank you for your service.

I'm going to ask you a tough question right off the bat, because I'm a little confused about this. This is a full-time member's job, which is great. The compensation is more than I make, which—I was telling you what I make. You're applying for two jobs. Could you define what you think is full-time in this role and part-time in another role? You're really going to have two jobs: one full-time, and one—what? I'm trying to figure out why you would apply for two different jobs. I'm going to ask you questions on the next one as well. Full-time, to me, means I'm a full-time MPP; I don't do another job or another role. Like I said, the compensation is pretty good in this full-time role. So why are you applying for two different jobs?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: When I applied for the role, it was actually as vice-chairperson for both organizations. They are both full-time. My understanding is that the adjudicators who are with the Child and Family Services Review Board are also with the Custody Review Board. That is my understanding of the role. It was not like I applied for two separate roles. I applied for one particular role, and my understanding is that it is cross-accredited.

MPP Wayne Gates: Do you see where I could be a little confused on this? Full-time, to me, means full-time. I believe that family and children's services is really a full-time job.

I think I can speak for everybody here; we get lots of calls in our offices around this organization and around children, for the reasons that you talked about: mentoring, some of the abuse that they go through in their lives, some of the things between the marriage split-ups—very, very tough sometimes—lots of complaints on both sides, quite frankly. The organizations take a lot of heat all the time.

This, to me, is a full-time job. I'm glad that you have the experience that you have, and I'll ask you a couple of questions on that. But I'm a little confused on the full-time

role and doing two at the same time. I just thought I'd ask you that. So I want to thank you.

Can you help us understand the experience you have, if any, in child welfare, family law or children's rights that would directly relate to the work of the Child and Family Services Review Board?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: In my experience with the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, we often had to look at the different youth criminal justice acts across the country in adjudicating on police complaints, because there were often issues where police officers had arrested children and the treatment by police did not meet the standard that we would expect. That is the experience that I have primarily.

I would also say that during my time as a leader in the Canadian Armed Forces, I dealt with multiple family issues when it came to dealing with children—sailors who were deployed for, sometimes, nine months of the year and then coming home and the family being in chaos, and issues surrounding those children. So I have dealt with it from a leadership perspective. I think that is a really important piece—to be able to understand it.

The other thing I would tell you, in terms of children and families, is that I'm a stepmother of three very capable young adults. I came into their lives when they were young, and I have been there for them. I think that is also important, because I have that appreciation for what it is to be a parent.

MPP Wayne Gates: I will say that stepmoms are tough. I've gone through it with my own second marriage, so I can appreciate that—a very important part of their lives as well.

0920

The Child and Family Services Review Board deals with incredibly sensitive issues: adoption, secure treatment, and child welfare complaints—real-life decisions that affect children and families.

How prepared do you feel you are to adjudicate in those areas, given that your prior adjudication work, such as with the RCMP Civilian Review and Complaints Commission or the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, focused on completely different systems and, in a lot of cases, different issues?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: Decision-making is decision-making, and I believe that what I bring to the table is a vast amount of experience.

These issues are sensitive issues, and I've had a great deal of experience in dealing with sensitive issues, as I mentioned in my opening statement. I've dealt with suicide attempts. I've dealt with serious cases of sexual assault, in my past. I've dealt with cases of children who have been abused, in my past. So it's those experiences—but as well, it's the fact that I know how to communicate with those who have been through trauma. I've been through trauma myself. I think that is what I bring to the table.

There are a lot of things that I'm going to learn through the training. I understand that the training that Tribunals

Ontario provides is very robust and complete, so I'm going to learn a great deal about the statutes.

But when it comes right down to it, I've shown strong judgment in my past, and I think that is the most important piece for any tribunal.

MPP Wayne Gates: So, basically, you're confident that you can learn on the job, with the training. Hopefully that works for you.

This is another interesting question—I hope you'll appreciate it. You've been appointed to the board as a full-time vice-chair—if you get voted on. It normally happens that you get voted on in this committee. All the other vice-chairs currently serving on the CFS board are part-time. Why is your appointment different and full-time? Do you know?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: That would be a question for Tribunals Ontario. I applied for a full-time vice-chair process through a transparent, open and rigorous process.

MPP Wayne Gates: I can appreciate that.

It's a good time to ask a fair and a reasonable question: Do you belong to any political party?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: No, I do not.

MPP Wayne Gates: Have you ever worked on a campaign?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: No, I have not.

MPP Wayne Gates: Would you like to start?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: No, I won't. Thank you.

MPP Wayne Gates: Just asking—you're always looking for volunteers, right?

I think one of my colleagues on the other side, actually, talked about the importance of knowing French. We have a lot of French-speaking people in the province of Ontario. I've been trying to encourage the Premier to learn how to speak French—I think it would help him on his job—but he hasn't taken me up on it yet. I think it is an important part of your role as well.

Just in my area—not a lot in Niagara Falls; we don't have a lot of French speakers, but a lot in Welland, though, which is in Niagara, and a lot up north.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: And in northern Ontario, as well.

MPP Wayne Gates: Yes, I was just going to say, a lot up north as well.

I think that will be a great help for this particular job.

How would you respond to people concerned—and this is an important question too; you've already answered a little bit of it—that someone without a background in child welfare is now being placed in such a significant leadership position on this very important board?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I have a strong leadership background. Maybe I don't have a background in child welfare, but I think what that means is that I bring a different perspective to the table. I think when you have decision-makers within a tribunal who come from diverse backgrounds, the tribunal is made stronger by that.

While I don't have that specific child welfare background, I have a tremendous amount of decision-making background, and I also have a large experience in dealing with child and family issues, as a leader and as a stepmom.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'm not going to go on the stepmom. I could talk about that forever.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Well, you only have one minute and 18 seconds to talk about that.

MPP Wayne Gates: It's good when the Chair jumps in on you there.

Again, I think this is a fair and reasonable question: With children's safety and well-being at stake in every case this board hears, what steps do you plan to take to build subject matter expertise in child welfare issues, and how would you earn the trust of families and advocates? This is a very important—

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I've always been a strong believer in professional development throughout my life. I'm highly professionally adaptable. During my time in service, I was posted into roles for two years at a time and then moved on. I certainly wasn't an expert in delivering recruit training, but I became an expert. I wasn't an expert in police complaints, but I became an expert. I wasn't an expert in veterans' issues, and I became an expert.

So I would suggest that my background and the fact that I'm dedicated to professional development and learning my role is what's required.

MPP Wayne Gates: I've been a politician now for 25 years, and I'm certainly not an expert yet. So you're always learning.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: Exactly.

MPP Wayne Gates: Normally, this is when I'd say, "Thanks for your time," but seeing as I'm going to question you again in about 15 to 20 minutes, I'll save that.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I understand.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now we're moving on to the Liberal Party, so we'll take it away with MPP Smyth. You have 10 minutes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: It's lovely to have you here. Thank you for your service. As a stepmom of a child who's in the Canadian Armed Forces, just about to finish his tour, I commend you for all that you've done—your résumé is incredible—the dedication to the Armed Forces, and all your work.

When I first saw your appointment, my thought—from youth and child services and Child and Family Services Review Board—from the military to that, it felt like—military training. Clearly, you have done so much work at sea, in the military—and then turning to child and family services. It felt like the hardened officer or—what was your highest rank?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: It was navy captain.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Right—and now this, and you're a stepmom as well.

In the transition from military to this type of role—and I understand you've dealt with all kinds of people in certain circumstances—do you see that there's a different touch required?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: There absolutely is a different touch required. I learned through the time I spent within the military training systems that everybody is an individual and you have to meet them where they stand. I

believe that one of my best qualities as a leader is that I'm very collaborative with people, and I think that I do have a soft touch when it's required. It's important to understand that everybody deals with different things in their lives, and I think it's important to spend more time listening than talking.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: In all the training that you've had throughout your career, with the military and all the things that you've done, has there been any family mediation that you've dealt with or anything that would help you in terms of mediating disputes—that was formal training that you got in that regard?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I haven't had specific formal training other than that we did learn a little bit about alternate dispute resolution during my time in service.

There were multiple times I was called upon in leadership roles, where I had to sit down with individuals and mediate a situation in the hopes of ensuring that it didn't progress beyond that.

I had numerous cases, when I was commandant of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, where we had really delicate family issues, where we had parents coming into the school, and had to sit down and talk to them about what had happened and really try to manage that situation—ensure they were heard and ensure that the situation was brought to a quick resolution that was palatable to all parties.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: What do you see could be your biggest challenge in this new role as the vice-chair of the Child and Family Services Review Board?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: It's going to be adjusting to a new process, to a new way of doing business. I've read through the annual report, and there are some—getting to know a new case management system, the technical pieces, and just getting to know new colleagues. I've existed in the federal sphere for so long, so this is a different piece for me—coming into the provincial sphere.

I approach everything with an openness to learn and just really wanting to make a difference.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: What about the sensitivities of this kind of role?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: When you have a veteran coming before you who is suffering from a severe case of post-traumatic stress disorder and he's called upon to explain his symptoms, and you can see the individual vibrating in the room, in front of you, and you have to calm that down—I think that is probably going to be one of the most relevant experiences that I've had to this particular role. I've dealt with people who are really not well, and they just need to be heard.

0930

MPP Stephanie Smyth: What kind of cases do you think you'll see that are going to be most sensitive and most challenging?

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I think that the children's aid complaints are going to be the most challenging, just because you have an organization that is trying to serve children and families, and then you have other individuals on the other side of that. Trying to bring that to a resolution

that's palatable—and always keeping in mind the fact that at the end of the day, there's a child who's impacted by that decision—I think is going to be the most challenging and most sensitive piece to deal with. That's something that I'm always going to keep in the back of my mind—is that at the end of the day, there's a child who's involved in this, and that child is the most important person to be served by the justice system.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: I did some work in child-focused mediation, so I know how that can be key.

Even in your own personal situation, you've clearly had some kind of involvement in divorce and in being a stepmom. I guess you can get entangled in the parental issues and keeping the child focused first.

Is that something that you think that you've got enough training on, or would you seek more training on that, to that end?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I don't think you can ever have enough training. I think that I do have a focus on the child, but I recognize that I don't know everything and that this is a new role for me.

I'm really excited about the rigorous training process that Tribunals Ontario is going to provide.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much for your terrific questions. We are done this portion.

Review of intended appointment, selected by third party: Micheline Lahaie, intended appointee as vice-chair, Custody Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Now we will move to the review of the second intended appointee, who happens to be the same—Micheline—and is also nominated as vice-chair of the Custody Review Board.

Micheline, you're still on the hot seat, so you have the floor now, if you'd like to do your presentation.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I would just be giving you the same presentation a second time. I don't know; do we need to put that on the record?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): It's at your discretion.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I'm comfortable to say that my opening remarks from the last hearing stand.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Stand—and everyone has memorized your opening statement, so I'm sure it is top of mind.

We will start with the government side. You have nine minutes and 29 seconds.

Ms. Laura Smith: You covered so much of this before, but I think it's still relevant to talk about your previous employment and also your community engagements. You gave us a very wholesome look at what you did professionally. I'm interested in diving into the community engagements and how that would affect or be able to enhance the role that you're taking with the Custody Review Board.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I'm currently a member of the board of directors for the Royal Canadian Naval Benevo-

lent Fund. The fund is a long-standing fund. It has existed since the mid-1940s, in the wake of World War II. It was originally created by an endowment that was provided from the UK from World War I, from prizes that were received from boarding ships. We provide support to sailors, naval veterans and their families. It's a very important role, because going to sea is a very particular thing. We in the navy like to believe we're very special. We're very special, we're very different, and going to sea is a very particular thing.

Sometimes when an individual is deployed on operations and there is an issue at home with the family, either the family reaches out for support—and we've been there to provide support. It sounds like a trivial thing, but when the washing machine dies and somebody is away and there's not funding—we were there to provide that sort of thing.

We've provided funding to help with emergency child care. When individuals are called off to sea because there's a vessel in distress, and sailors need to go out and help those individuals, then there is a requirement for emergency child care sometimes, particularly when the family is dual military. So we provide funding to assist with those sorts of emergency child care services as well. I think that's a really important thing.

I really believe in the mission of the fund in supporting sailors and their families.

Ms. Laura Smith: Yes. Obviously, that's very important work.

I'm going to pass my time over to my associate.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Firin.

MPP Mohamed Firin: I have a question. What is your understanding of the mandate and responsibilities of the Custody Review Board?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: The Custody Review Board reviews placement decisions regarding young persons being held in detention or custody and makes recommendations to the provincial director regarding the placement of youth. It derives its authority and jurisdiction from the Child, Youth and Family Services Act and the Youth Criminal Justice Act. My understanding is that these are essentially investigations that are done, and then there are findings and recommendations made to the provincial director, and it's ultimately the provincial director who has the decision-making authority. So it's an investigative process.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you for your presentation this morning.

Thank you for your service.

I found it interesting—the role that you played with the federal government and the tribunals. Because of all your experience there, I want to ask a question: How do you actually prepare yourself to conduct the hearings? What kind of preparatory work do you do with that?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Something you might not have picked up on is that I'm actually a very nervous

person, so presentations are not easy for me. I can tell you that when I woke up bright and early this morning, I visualized how it was going to look in this room. I visualized your faces, thought about how it was going to be—I did all of that, and I do that in advance of a hearing as well. I visualize what the situation is going to be. I do rigorous preparation, looking at the file, looking at what's in the file, going through and highlighting things. The other part of that is looking at the legislation and seeing—“Okay, this is the question that's before me. Look at the legislation.” You always have to go back to the legislation because that is the key guiding principle.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): MPP Dowie.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Welcome back to the second round.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: It's like I never left.

Mr. Andrew Dowie: Yes.

You were recommended for this process, following the Tribunals Ontario competitive, merit-based recruitment process. So congratulations for getting here.

I'm hoping you can describe for us your experience of going through the process and exactly why you believe you are the best candidate for the role.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I was looking for something different. I felt that I was ready to move to something more provincial-based. I was checking the website, and this opportunity popped up, so I applied for it.

I was contacted about a month later to do an interview. I sat through a 45-minute to an hour-long interview with two individuals from Tribunals Ontario. And then I wrote an exam which was really to check my writing style, but also to look at how I would deal with the leadership situation—so I wrote an exam that was due 24 hours later.

Following that, I was contacted by Tribunals Ontario, and I went through a process that included conflict of interest—they did a conflict-of-interest assessment on me.

And then I heard a week ago from the Premier's office that I was coming here to talk to all of you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): It makes this look tame.

MPP Vickers.

MPP Paul Vickers: It is evident that in your advocacy you have an extensive background.

How has your overall experience assisted you—in being a fair and impartial adjudicator on the CRB?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: One of the things that's very interesting about the CRB is the fact that it is investigations—and in my last role with the CRCC, I ordered investigations. I was heavily involved in investigations, so I think that's an important piece.

I've had a lot of experience in my life, and I've been all over the world. The navy gave me that. I was so fortunate. I think that gives me a different lens on things. I'm glad to be able to take all that experience I've had at the federal level and internationally and bring it back to the provincial level. I think that any experience we can have in life makes us better in terms of understanding what other individuals are going through.

0940

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We have a few minutes for MPP Rosenberg.

MPP Bill Rosenberg: Through your nervousness, I can hear the passion in your voice.

What values guide your leadership style, especially in oversight and accountability roles?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Transparency in all things is very important.

I've said before that I believe we need to listen more than we speak.

And we need to be fair. Fairness, treating everybody the same, isn't necessarily equity. We need to treat individuals in an equitable fashion, to ensure that the decisions rendered with respect to their lives are fair and transparent.

I also believe heavily in accountability—and accountability means that I hold myself accountable. I'm not afraid to admit when I've made a mistake. That is very, very critical—and supporting the individuals I work with. We want to make sure that people feel valued in their workplace. We want to make sure people feel that the work they're doing is important, and we want to make sure that people feel they're supported.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): There are just 43 seconds left.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I just wondered if there are any additional insights or information you believe would be beneficial for this committee to consider, which haven't been addressed by the opposition, ourselves, or the third party.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: In 30 seconds or less?

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): In 20 seconds—18 now.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Okay. I'm highly professionally adaptable.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Wow. That was nine seconds. Excellent.

On to the NDP: MPP Gates, you have 10 minutes.

MPP Wayne Gates: Welcome back.

Are you aware of any of our problems in our jails, with our youth?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: No, I haven't dug into that yet. I will obviously be digging into that.

MPP Wayne Gates: You didn't do any research at all prior to—

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Well, I certainly did a little bit of reading in advance of my interview with Tribunals Ontario. But I know that, once again, we're going to get a lot of training before I undertake this role.

I know that there are a lot of issues within the detention centres. I've heard about those things on a more global perspective, but I haven't dug specifically into the issues with detention centres in Ontario for the youth.

MPP Wayne Gates: Well, I think it's fair and reasonable for me to say that I've had a lot of concerns around our detention centres—around staffing, around the violence that's going on within our system, in our jails. They're overcrowded. Everything is overcrowded.

We have the Niagara Detention Centre in our area.

We have an incredible amount of violence in those facilities—not only between inmates, but also inmates with staff—because they are underfunded. They are underfunded, for sure, and they're understaffed.

It is a very important job that you're taking on.

When you talk about youths who end up in that particular system—and you can check this out when you do your training, hopefully. We've had a number of young people actually die in our facilities. Some are being put in confinement, and they're just left there for days. The staffing is not there.

When you take this job on—because that's kind of where I went with the questions. How can you do both?

This particular issue, quite frankly, for the province of Ontario, is one that has to be addressed—not only with the youth, but with our jail system, officers, staffing.

I was out the other day, and a lady came up to me and talked about her daughter, who was a nurse there and got beaten pretty severely—it was by a younger person, a youth, maybe.

You've been in the military. You've probably seen it all—or seen a lot more than I have, I guess, working in a plant and then being a politician. I will say, though, I don't get nervous to speak at any of these—I get nervous meeting my daughter's boyfriends, but coming here to speak, I don't get nervous.

I just want to give you a heads-up, because the jails are—because it's in my area, because I see the write-ups; I've seen the realities of parents who have lost youth in that system. If you get on this, which you probably will, really take the job seriously and try to fix some of those problems.

And to your point, yes, it's legislation, and it's done by the province, but I don't think the province puts enough attention to our youths in our jails and in our system. Because once they get there—it's the point that we have to get them rehabilitated so they don't go back. And what we find is that most youths go back in, and then they end up in tough situations.

I don't see any direct experience in your background—and the reason I'm asking these questions again is because some people might only tune in to see who they're appointing to different boards here, so they may watch the first part and might not see the second, not even realizing you're the same person. So I think it's important for you to say it again, if you feel that's where you've got to go.

I don't see any direct experience in your background related to children in custody, restorative justice, or the youth criminal justice system. If you haven't worked in that space before, how will you get up to speed quickly enough to serve the needs of these highly vulnerable youths in our system?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: As I stated in the previous hearing, I have a tremendous amount of experience making difficult decisions in my background, either as an adjudicator or as a leader. I've also had a lot of experience in dealing with very sensitive issues, including veterans suffering from significant cases of post-traumatic stress

disorder. So what I bring to the table is a strong history of well-reasoned decisions and a strong willingness to learn.

I'll also mention that I'm a stepmother to three very successful young adults, and I learned a great deal from that role as well.

In my time in the military, I dealt with some really, really sensitive issues, dealing with children and families. I've learned a great deal from that.

I also know enough to know that I don't know everything. I believe in professional development. As I mentioned, I am pretty professionally adaptable. I learn things quickly. I'm not afraid to ask questions.

I think that the experience that I bring to bear from all across the country, as well as from my time doing international operations, will serve the people of Ontario well.

MPP Wayne Gates: I appreciate that.

This is a question that I asked last time, because I'm still a little confused on it. You're being appointed to both the CFSRB and the CRB. How do you plan to balance responsibility between both boards? Will the full-time nature of your role on one board limit your time and focus on the other? Maybe you can define what you think is going to be the full-time role on the one board and the part-time role on the other, and how many hours a week you think that would take up in your time.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I will reiterate that my understanding is that it's a full-time role for both boards, and the majority of the adjudicators on one board are members of the other board.

Basically, it comes down to prioritizing your work. It comes down to making sure that the things that might be seen as urgent are not overridden by the things that are important. It comes down to making sure that if there's a child who is in crisis, that has to be the first priority. Regardless of whether that's with the CFSRB or with the CRB, that needs to be the focus. So it comes down to looking at those sorts of things.

The other thing I will tell you is that as a military officer deployed at sea, I had 18- and 20-hour days. So I can assure you that I am really exceptional at managing my work. I'm really exceptional at managing my sleep. And if I have to work long hours to better serve the people who are coming to these tribunals, I will do just that.

MPP Wayne Gates: I can appreciate that, being a politician. But I'm still going to say, as clear as I can, that in fairness to taxpayers and to both circumstances, I believe that it would be in the best interest that you pick one and put all your full-time effort into serving that one, rather than trying to split your time. We only have so much time to put to each one, and both of these boards are incredibly important to young people in our community.

I'm not questioning your ability. I'm not questioning any of that. I'm questioning the amount of time that you have to put into these.

We can all work 12 or 14 or 16 hours—I'm sure all my colleagues have put in 12-, 14- or 16-hour days, particularly working here, and then going home on the weekends and trying to balance family and doing events and doing other things that you're doing.

I just think that these are so important that that would be a consideration that I'd like you to take. I'm not telling you what to do. I just think it's a consideration, because these are so important. There's nothing more important than our young people in society, and they're going through incredibly tough times right now.

0950

Anyway, I'll give you another question. I don't know how much time I have left—

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): One minute, 32 seconds.

MPP Wayne Gates: I'll talk quick.

The youth in our custody system often come from incredibly difficult situations. What will you do to ensure your decision as a board member reflects those realities and doesn't simply mirror the approaches of the system you've worked in before?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: You need to look at each individual situation individually. You can't make decisions based upon what you've seen in the past or what you're expecting to see in the future.

I'll make sure that I go through the file rigorously, that I have a look at all those things.

I do have experience in restorative justice—we did a little bit of that with police complaints—and I think that is an important piece as well.

It's just a matter of taking the time and realizing that every individual is an individual.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Over to the Liberal side: MPP Smyth, 10 minutes.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: Both of these roles are very heavy, and I think the discussion about one or the other is interesting. Maybe that's something the government needs to consider, but I'm not here to adjudicate that today. Clearly, you feel that you're up to the task, to deal with both of these jobs or situations.

What I want to talk about is your approach, with all that you've seen in your career—so much dealing with human nature and all the sad things that you've seen when dealing with the people you've worked with over time.

Are you jaded at all when you see a circumstance—when you're in a circumstance now with the Custody Review Board, you're going to hearken back to what you learned in the military. You've seen it all. I guess that's a concern I might have—"I've seen this before. I know how this works," and you adjudicate it as such.

Would you describe yourself as hopeful and there to see the positive and ways to deal with these situations that aren't all necessarily one way or the other?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I would say that I am a person who's hopeful. I do believe in a brighter future.

Where I got the opportunity to really see that was when I was at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School. Every Thursday, we would do a graduation. So, every Thursday, I would have the opportunity to see the organization that I served through the eyes of those who were new to it. That is a gift. Whenever I find myself in a

situation where I'm starting to feel a little bit negative, I go back to that space.

We need to make sure that children and families are treated fairly by the system. It's not my job to say, "Well, this isn't working. This is never going to work." It's about finding the proper solution for that child or family in the instant—and in this case, with the CRB, finding the right solution for that child.

We all can get negative sometimes. Sometimes you need to just take a walk, meditate and bring yourself back to being hopeful.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: And you're hopeful that—as MPP Gates was saying, you have seen some really dire circumstances there with children in this whole system.

Would your approach be one not automatically custody-driven, but finding other creative ways to reform a person at this stage in their life?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: Absolutely. I think we need to be creative in our decisions. As long as we're guided by what the law says, there's nothing wrong with being creative in the decisions that we make, that keep the individual, but also public safety, in mind.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: When you're dealing with a review board like this—it's a board, so do you have to come to consensus together on how to deal with the situation? That's the only thing I'm wondering.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: As I understand it, the Custody Review Board does the investigation, makes findings, and then those findings are forwarded on to the provincial director for the decision.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: When you're dealing with others on the board—how would you say you are in working with others, in coming to consensus, coming to decisions? I know, in the military, you can have the rank and you make the decision, and that's it. But this is more, I guess, in some ways, collaborative, when you're dealing with circumstances that are so sensitive.

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: I always try to be collaborative in my approach. I do realize that at the end of the day, when I'm a decision-maker, I'm accountable for my decisions. But I think it's worthwhile to get diverse opinions and views from individuals. I think that's what makes a decision even stronger. So I've always tried to be collaborative in my approach when I'm dealing with other people.

MPP Stephanie Smyth: How would you find your peers would describe you throughout the stages of your career, dealing with children or as a commandant—if you were to say how people would look at you and describe you as a person and as a leader?

Ms. Micheline Lahaie: People said that I was an individual who was professional, that I was kind. I had a lot of individuals who told me that when they talked to me they felt like I listened to them. I'm action-oriented. I believe in getting the job done. I'm also a person who's not afraid to admit when I don't know something and to ask questions. That's how they see me.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Thank you very much. I want to thank you for your time and your passion. We didn't see any jitters at all today.

Also, as everyone has mentioned—I want to echo—thank you for your service.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: Thank you so much. It has been a pleasure.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): All right. Stay tuned, I guess.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Michelaine Lahaie, nominated as vice-chair of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Michelaine Lahaie, nominated as vice-chair of the Child and Family Services Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by MPP Smith. Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Congratulations.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): We will now consider the intended appointment of Michelaine Lahaie, nominated as vice-chair of the Custody Review Board.

MPP Smith.

Ms. Laura Smith: I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Michelaine Lahaie, nominated as vice-chair of the Custody Review Board.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by MPP Smith. Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

Double congratulations. I hope you have a skip in your step today as you leave.

Ms. Michelaine Lahaie: I'll skip back to Union Station, to get the train back to Calabogie.

The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon): Well, enjoy. Thank you.

We're talking about a certificate extension now, guys.

The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the April 23, 2025, certificate is set to expire on May 23, 2025. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? No? Okay.

Next, the deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the April 25, 2025, certificate is set to expire on May 25, 2025. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? No? All right.

That concludes our business for today. Thank you all for your questions—and your staff for their work. The committee now stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1000.

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