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Assembly  
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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

A-3

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

A-3

**Standing Committee on  
Government Agencies**

Intended appointments

**Comité permanent des  
organismes gouvernementaux**

Nominations prévues

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
44<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
Thursday 29 May 2025

1<sup>re</sup> session  
44<sup>e</sup> législature  
Jeudi 29 mai 2025

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Chair: Mary-Margaret McMahon  
Clerk: Vanessa Kattar

Présidente : Mary-Margaret McMahon  
Greffière : Vanessa Kattar

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Thursday 29 May 2025

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
ORGANISMES GOUVERNEMENTAUX

Jeudi 29 mai 2025

*The committee met at 0900 in room 151.*

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Good morning, everyone. It's a beautiful day out there—if you're a penguin or a seal, I guess. Welcome to the scintillating Standing Committee on Government Agencies. We 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? Okay.

The first item of business will be the adoption of the subcommittee reports. We have the subcommittee report dated Thursday, May 15, 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 15, on the order-in-council certificate dated May 9, 2025.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Is there any further discussion on that? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? Opposed? That carries.

Next, we have a subcommittee report dated Thursday, May 22, 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 22, 2025, on the order-in-council certificate dated May 16, 2025.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Any discussion on that? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

## INTENDED APPOINTMENTS

## MR. KEVIN SACK

Review of intended appointment, selected by official opposition party and third party: Kevin Sack, intended appointee as member, Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now move to the review of the intended appointees.

Our first intended appointee today is Kevin Sack, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. You will notice his jazzy tie.

Mr. Sack, you may make an initial statement at your discretion. Following this, there will be questions from the members of the committee. You can start.

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** Good morning, Madam Chair and honourable members. Thank you for taking the time to hear from me today and speak to me regarding my potential appointment to the Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. I've designed my remarks more as an introduction to myself, my career and how it connects with what the college performs. Of course, I'm happy to answer questions regarding specifics of the college's activities and articulate further views as they may be appropriate.

I live in the former city of Etobicoke, now within the city of Toronto, and I've resided there for the past 25 years. I grew up near Keele and Wilson, in a family where my father was a taxi driver and then a small business owner and my mother was a financial credit analyst. We were a family of five and, like so many others, my brother, sister and myself put ourselves through university, as there was pressure on family finances and living arrangements due to bankruptcies and tough times.

I graduated with a bachelor's in political science and immediately found my way into the federal public service as an immigration officer. This first summer role, which evolved into an 11-year career, taught me the value of helping people in great need, as we processed hundreds of government-sponsored and community-sponsored refugees. This, in particular, gives me insight into the great needs that people have regarding mental health and their own wellness. Many people still remained in the camps in Vietnam, and the international committee for migration asked Canada to accept people who were not sponsored otherwise. In addition, the arrival of community-sponsored refugees from Poland was an ongoing program that worked well, and we all worked hard to facilitate its success.

The role we had in the settlement of newcomers taught me quick and blunt lessons about how precarious life could be and how elusive a chance at happiness can remain for all of us. Being part of a second chance for so many touched me very deeply, and it does to this very day, and it puts me, I think, in large measure, before you today seeking this appointment.

Referring people to settlement and counselling agencies was important. While the job of an immigration officer and, later, an immigration adjudicator deciding refugee claims was difficult, the stress on people seeking genuine safety

was far greater. As an adjudicator, it was always difficult to explain the law and evidence to people unfamiliar with such formality, who were only seeking freedom and a new life. Just as the college has introduced many registration requirements and continues to change registration requirements and education and classification of registrations, this too was a complex set of rules that needed to be explained in a very simple manner.

Where the law allowed and a person met the definition of a convention refugee, the system worked to grant residence to those in greatest need. As both the enforcement process of immigration and settlement were two sides of the same department, it was always incumbent on myself and the teams I worked with to be respectful and helpful to everyone.

While working at immigration, I took an assignment to work on the emergency resettlement of refugees during the Kosovo crisis, which erupted as part of the war in the former Yugoslavia, and I lived near the 8 Wing base in Trenton for about eight months to help those arriving during the airlift. That too—working with the Red Cross and the military—became a very important part of my career and gave me, I think, the skills and the empathy that I have today for people seeking a new life and help.

As I started work in the policy area and I moved to Ottawa for a short time, the type of casework involved more and more evidence of mental health issues being a major underlying contributor to the circumstances that many people find themselves in today; hence, my interest in seeing people have access to the therapies that can help them the most. Education of the public, directly and through the media, became an important part of my role, and I felt fortunate to become a leader in that regard in the department.

Mental health issues have touched us all; I'm no exception. I do not hold myself out to be better at knowing other people's challenges. It's not my role. But I can tell you that my family have managed through very difficult times, when the help of professionals meant a lot. However, there's a recognition that such help does not always work, it's not always accessible, and it's not always affordable.

The world we live in has become faster-paced, and the pressures people face—especially young people, especially after COVID—have become even greater. However, the overall framework there now for various professions—specifically, psychotherapy and its treatments—and the regimen for demonstrating a proper education, competency and experience for registration is impressive; so too are the requirements for audit and ongoing education. I find that impressive.

I would like to contribute by using my experience in communicating sometimes complex processes in a manner that maintains fairness and protects the public. I'm very interested in ongoing education and access to services.

After working in several roles at the federal level, I joined the city of Toronto as a manager and then director of communications, working very closely with city councillors, the mayor and staff. That was also fundamental to my understanding of access.

My last major role was providing government relations and communications work for the 407 ETR toll road. While

at the toll road, I served on various committees to assist driver education and worked closely with the Ministry of Transportation. To that end, I briefed approximately five ministers in my 10-year career, and we worked with the ministry in communicating safety programs and ensuring drivers knew the very best of what they could regarding the toll road.

I've made myself very familiar with the laws, regulations, committee structure, registration and requirements of those seeking accreditation at the college, and the seriousness with which all of these areas are managed—specifically, my experience as an adjudicator will be helpful when hearing cases before the college. I have also noted that applications for the designation have increased considerably. I look forward to contributing to the college wherever needed. Thank you.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much for your words.

Questioning will start with the government side, followed by the opposition side and then the third party. Ten minutes will be allotted to each recognized party, and any time you took in your statement will be deducted from the time allotted.

Now the government has three minutes and 25 seconds. So be quick.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you very much, Mr. Sack. We really appreciate you being here. I will be very succinct because I'm aware of the time.

You talked about the experience you had within the ministry and your communications background, your adjudication background and stakeholder management.

How do you expect to contribute to the college council business, given your experience? How does that weave into it?

**0910**

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** Well, when I look at the government's stated pathway to mental health and recent announcements in the budget, and the fact that emphasis is put on community intervention, instead of sending people to the hospital, and making sure that there are adequate services, I think that the registration numbers and the backlogs of registration are an area I can assist with on the registration committee—as well, adjudicating complaints. There is a very good regimen in place for doing that. I think that I could contribute to that greatly.

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

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Thank you, Mr. Sack, for your insights and the information that you've provided today.

Can you share an example of a situation during your role as lead for communications and stakeholder relations of the Ontario Transit Group that will translate to valuable experience for governance of the college council?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** With the transportation group, there were certain roadblocks to co-operation between the public-private partnership and the ministry. My job was to overcome that. I found it unnecessary.

We worked very hard to put multilingual materials into ServiceOntario to describe things like plate denial, the need to pay tolls, the open nature of the toll road—that

there are not cash registers at the opening and closing, and we can't assign credit to people. That was complex, and I think we had to break through some previously held beliefs about the toll road. I think we did that well by always co-operating with the ministry, actually doing everything they wished and making sure that was done.

I also visited just about every constituency office in southern Ontario and spoke to constituency staff twice during my 10 years—because those are the true gatekeepers of your offices—where questions would come in concerning the toll road. So I made sure to make a visit there.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Dowie, with 48 seconds.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** Development stakeholder plans and effective communications were a core part of your professional background, as we saw in your biography. How do you think this will inform your perspective when sitting as a public member of the regulatory college?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** Well, I know that in working with stakeholders, especially when there are a number of approved professions and a number of colleges, protecting the public is the number one role of the college, and ensuring that controlled acts are managed well and that the audit system in place is managed well.

Right now, the college is not overwhelmed, but they have made a smart, strategic decision in how they apply self-audit and auditors in the field. I think that being a part of that—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much. If you could just—final sentence.

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** It would be helpful to them.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you. This challenges our Toastmasters skills.

Moving on to the official opposition: You have 10 minutes, MPP Gilmour.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Thank you, Chair, and through you: We're really glad that you made it out here, Mr. Sacks, and I thank you for being here.

You have a very impressive résumé. I note that your career has largely been in communications, stakeholder management, media relations and marketing.

You did speak about the immigration work, which was over 30 years ago, as your way into understanding the needs for mental health for a small subset of our population, refugees.

Given this career profile, I'm wondering what motivated you to be specifically looking at the council for the College of Registered Psychotherapists in Ontario.

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** There are many roles where recent, relevant experience is required. The experience I had at immigration was a life-changing experience for me and sticks with me, as was my experience at the city.

The experience in adjudication was dramatic. It required me to follow case law, precedents and jurisprudence. The only court that could overcome my decisions was the Federal Court of Canada. It was overturned only once. I look back at that experience as the best role I've ever had in my life, and I think that's why I emphasized it here today—by “best,” I mean most important and most rele-

vant. The city—dramatic role doing communications, especially around labour relations and other issues. But definitely that.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** The council, we know, makes decisions in the public interest related to registration requirements, the standards of practice, continuing professional development, as well as professional conduct for members, for psychotherapists, along with developing and monitoring regulations, policies and business systems for the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario.

I'm wondering if you can explain how your experience in communication and transportation qualifies you to carry out these duties. For example, what experience do you have with psychotherapy?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** My experience with psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapy is a personal one for my family. So—

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** Yes, that's great. So it's a personal one.

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** So it's a personal one.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** We all have, I think, a lot of personal experiences with mental health and psychotherapy.

What about your professional or personal experiences with health services in general?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** With health services in general, I find that, in reading and researching the role that I'm most interested in, which is the psychotherapist one, there is a need for greater access and there is a need for affordability.

I also noticed that a big part of my role in communications while at immigration and at the city was dealing with backlogs. Right now, the college needs more auditors. The college needs greater—not greater compliance with self-audit, but has moved to more self-audit. And communicating these guidelines to members—very important. I think I could really help with that. The number of registrations has gone up exponentially—I think 49% from the previous year—and I think that process has been automated to a certain extent, but I think explaining that process and having participation is something I could really help with.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I appreciate that.

Of course, part of the role is also assessing the registration requirements, the standards of practice in the field of psychotherapy and in adjudicating the professional conduct of registered psychotherapists, or in evaluating continued professional development in that field specifically. What experience do you have in doing those pieces of work, that you bring to this?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** Well, that would be my adjudication experience. I do not have experience in evaluating psychotherapists, obviously, but I do have experience in evaluating the credibility and evidence of materials quickly, for myself, in a quasi-judicial, administrative tribunal. I know about fairness. I know about our charter. And I know what's required in that setting very well.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I was wondering, also, if you could talk about—in 2023, the council undertook a review of its complaints and reports process in order to reduce the barriers, which you've mentioned a little bit, to provide

more supports to users, to increase trust and confidence in the college, and to improve the current practices by using a trauma-informed approach. That same year, the council received 123 complaints and reports and issued 62 decisions—that's more than half of them—relating to professional conduct and to patient care, including unsafe practices, consent issues and unnecessary treatment.

I'm wondering, given that you've just said your experience lies not in the field of psychotherapy, in trauma-informed care, but only in a personal relationship to psychotherapy, how, if you had been there in 2023, would you have been qualified to participate in that review?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** The college has an early-resolution process, and they have a self-education process.

I happened to read the numbers you're talking about last night, just by chance, and I see that self-regulation and submission of peer review and audit is 98% effective. People who don't comply with that are dealt with either administratively or disciplined. The numbers—well, no number is low in this regard, of course. But the numbers, if you compare them, I think, to the exponential increase in the number of people who have received their registered psychotherapist degree—it is low, and the college manages it. How they manage it—I'm not there yet, but how they manage it with a strong communications capacity as well as their commitment to always funding therapeutic advice for people who have been treated wrongly is very important, and I think that's an important part of the regulatory regime.

0920

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** In 2025, the Office of the Auditor General published a report on the community-based child and youth mental health program. The Auditor General—just for those in the room—described the sector as facing significant human resource challenges, noting that 78% of surveyed agencies had four vacancies for psychotherapists. And the Ontario Society of Registered Psychotherapists has advocated for incentives for psychotherapists to work regionally or in underserved areas.

Again, I'm wondering, given your lack of experience that you've just said here—that you do not have any experience in psychotherapy and in health services, more broadly—how are you going to contribute to addressing that significant human resource challenge?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** I've worked in immigration backlog offices. I've worked in city backlog offices.

I did read about the ongoing fragmentation of the delivery of health services. The government put that into the budget. They've added hundreds of millions—as well as their pathway to mental health, which is, I think, \$3.6 billion, and their commitment to community resources. It's an ongoing problem, and it's going to need the whole of government—I think is what the government has said in their most recent budget. The effect it has on young people is startling and needs to be addressed by every level of care, and I agree with you 100%.

What am I going to do about it? I'm going to make sure and make a contribution to making sure that people know what supports are out there. I see that the government is making efforts to establish hubs—where all of the government services are available in a hub. I think that's smart. I

think it will help and it will work. But I don't think that there's going to be an immediate quick fix. I just want to contribute my knowledge generally to that.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** One minute.

**MPP Alexa Gilmour:** One minute.

For my last question, I'm wondering if you can answer—have you made any donations to a provincial party, riding association or candidate in the past 10 years, and if so, which party, riding association, candidate, and how much did those donations total?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** I've never been a member of a political party until I left my government relations role at 407 ETR. I didn't feel it was appropriate. When I was at 407 ETR, we attended all the parties' events. They were wonderful to attend, and we donated to every party.

However, since leaving, I was friendly with our Conservative candidate in my riding. I did make a donation of \$1,750 to the most recent campaign. That was the first time I joined a political party—very recently.

The interest wasn't there because I wanted to do government relations from a perspective of not being a member.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Now we're on to the third party, with MPP Smyth. Take it away for 10 minutes.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** It's nice to see you. Just going back in time again, it seems like there's always some way paths connect. Once again, I remember, as a reporter, you worked at the city of Toronto, so when I saw your name come up it was very familiar to me. I understand the enormity, having moved on from reporting and journalism into communications and then now—lives take many different turns, and career paths change. Seeing you move from the city of Toronto with that enormous job into the other areas of communications and stakeholder relations that you've gone on to through the years is quite impressive.

When you see Kevin Sack go into this Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, I'm thinking, "Okay, this is an interesting connection." As I say, people's career paths always change—case in point.

How did you find out about this position? Did you look for it, or did somebody clue you into it? How do you learn about appointments, in the general public?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** I wanted to serve, having essentially retired after a couple of roles after 407 ETR. I put my name into the order-in-council appointments system, and I indicated an interest first in being on the Licence Appeal Tribunal. I thought that was a good fit with my adjudication background—I still do, actually—but I was not successful, I don't think, in that. I never heard anything. That's the way that went.

Then, I did hear about this role, looking through the various openings. Knowing that my sister is a social worker and I have an extended family member who is a psychological associate, I found their work very compelling. Then, I found my own life experience, of which I could share parts, to be very compelling and of great interest.



When I looked into what the college does, especially with psychotherapy more so than psychology, I found that the controlled acts and the need to protect the public from those who hang out a shingle and carry on business as opposed to being part of the college's regimen was something I was keen on and something I'd be interested in doing. It is a big jump.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Are you familiar with others who you'd be working with in this position?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** No. I decided early on not to call the college, not to ask them for information. I felt that was inappropriate. I don't know if that was the right decision. But I certainly read all of their previous-year reports, all of their decisions, all of their materials and their rules. However, I just didn't feel it appropriate to contact them—I could have, but I just didn't feel this was appropriate, as a public member application.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Having gone through the report and investigating what you're possibly getting into, and as a communications expert, what are the biggest, most troubling issues that you see, and how would you fix those? How would you liaise with the public about this for transparency?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** I think the public knowing that there is a strong regimen of protection for the public—that is the role of the college. That is the bottom-line role of the college. If members of the college wish to advocate, they must do that on their own. It's not the role of the college to advocate for the value of the service. Members do that through their associations.

However, the availability of service carrying the designation and the hundreds of hours that are required to receive the designation is something that is very reassuring, and that could be communicated further. There's always a chance, as you know from reporting, to communicate more often and over and over again, especially as it relates to psychotherapy.

Psychologists can conduct psychotherapy. Psychiatrists can conduct psychotherapy, make a diagnosis and add medication. Psychotherapists cannot make a diagnosis; they can refer. So I think that is a fundamental difference.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** As pointed out, you don't have a background in psychotherapy, other than personal experience, which we all understand. But are you concerned that that could be one piece of the puzzle here that you don't have that could impact any perspective that you have?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** No, I don't. I think that in my other roles, there was a learning curve, and I think I could take that learning curve as a great challenge. I think there will be a learning curve here—it's obvious there would be—and I think I could embrace that and do very well.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** It's a part-time job, right?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** Yes.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Do you have any other work? Are you otherwise retired, and this is going to be your main focus?

**Mr. Kevin Sack:** I'd like to say I'm essentially retired, which I think means that I would still look for work if things came around that interested me.

However, the hours that are required just to prepare, as a public member, to appear before you today clearly tells me that if I'm putting myself forward for this, there are hours and hours that are required to be dedicated so that I don't appear as a public member completely out of touch with what the college is doing.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much, Mr. Sack.

0930

MR. JOSEPH NEISON MICALLEF

Review of intended appointment, selected by government party: Joseph Neison Micallef, intended appointee as member, Wilfrid Laurier University board of governors

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** We will now move on to the review of the second attended appointee, Joseph Nelson Micallef. He is nominated as member of the Wilfrid Laurier board of governors.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Sorry; it's Neison, not Nelson.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Oh, sorry.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I'm honouring my grandfather.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry. Joseph Neison Micallef.

Hello, Joseph. Welcome to the best standing committee at Queen's Park, bar none.

You may make an initial statement at your discretion, and following that, there will be questions, as you've seen, from members of the whole committee.

Take it away.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I'll just give you a two-minute overview of my background. I just recently retired from KPMG as a senior partner, having worked in public accounting for over 30 years, leading various national practices, with teams of over 50 partners and 300 staff across Canada. I've had tremendous responsibility in managing strategic operational governance, human resources and large technology infrastructure-related projects as well. I've had deep experience in a number of areas to which the board of governors is looking for with respect to my position—or request for position.

If you want me to delve into any of the respective experiences I've had, I can do so at your request, but I could go on for days and days because I've had a good career.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you very much for that.

Government side, you have a lot of time. You have eight minutes and 54 seconds. MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to speak to you today, and thank you for putting the application in on this important position.

You talked about your work with KPMG, human resources and new infrastructure that the world is now facing. Today's students are facing new in-demand careers that are completely different from my generation and, I'm assuming,

yours—we might be of approximately the same age; I'm not sure.

I'm just wondering how you're going to really bring what you have in your previous life into the university as it continues to meet its organizational goals and prepare students for the new world.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** It's a big question.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** It is.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** You're right. I mean, 30-plus years ago, I graduated from my graduate studies.

I think Laurier is looking for a financial expert, so as a CPA and a fellow to the CPA profession, which I'm quite proud of, I think I meet the definition and terms—at least legislatively speaking or regulatorily speaking—of a financial expert.

We all know that the schools, the universities and colleges are facing tremendous pressures, not only from a transformative perspective in dealing with, as Ms. Smith has pointed out, the skills in demand for tomorrow and beyond, but also financial-related pressures as well.

Part of what I'm hoping to bring to the university—by the way, I'm a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University—is hoping to support that organization through a number of these very transformative years, not only to ensure that the students and the faculty are able to—their needs and the attractiveness of the university continue to be met, but also looking at strategic matters from an operations and financial perspective, which is key; revenue generation opportunities and the like, to ensure the sustainability and the high quality that the university and the institution puts forth. That is where I'm looking.

I will say, from a university perspective, I also do teach at York University, as an adjunct professor in the area of tax law, and one thing that I will point out is that the universities certainly are needing to—and this isn't a Laurier-specific statement, but I think in general, with respect to the university academics as a whole—act as a skills connector. That is, I think, their primary value. If there isn't an enhancement between the university's role, government, the economy and also employers, I think it's going to be very difficult to ensure there's an alignment with respect to skills and demand, as Ms. Smith has pointed out, and of course, what the universities are turning out in terms of the students. Having hired hundreds of kids over my lifetime in the career, I can honestly tell you there are various programs and schools that do it extremely well, from a partnering perspective, and there are others that do not. So that is kind of where I'm hoping to make a difference, quite honestly.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you for presenting this morning.

Something that's talked a lot about in the halls of the Legislature and in the halls of academia is how to bridge the gap between post-secondary education and careers of the future.

Having passed through the system as well as having taught as an adjunct professor, what are some of the gaps

you've seen over the years, both from when you were a student yourself and after? As you say, you've hired hundreds of students, so what are some of the gaps you've seen that you'd like to see filled through the board of governors—in all universities, but specifically Wilfrid Laurier?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I think there are a tremendous number of gaps.

If we're just focusing on educational preparedness with regard to the students themselves, I think one thing that I'm hoping to be very helpful in facilitating is that connectiveness.

Again, over 30-plus years ago, I graduated from graduate school, and I have to tell you, things have certainly changed.

As I have taught at York University, one thing I do know is while various programs etc. may be of a preference for students etc., sometimes those programs might be out of line with regard to economic and skills-based demands that we need to obviously do a better job at putting our kids towards.

With hiring students over the years, a lot do come in and might have certain aspects with regard to the curriculum, with skills that are somewhat aligned, but I think employers are doing a lot more of a job trying to train and better ensure that the effectiveness of their skills—or, at least, honing their skills—are better aligned to what we need, not only in the CPA profession, but across multiple different fields. Whether it's advisory or tax or consulting, it really doesn't matter—technology, which is huge. So I'm hoping to help with that, given my fortunate experience across those few decades.

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

**MPP Billy Denault:** Thank you, Joseph, for being here and sharing a bit.

A current focus of Ontario's post-secondary institutions is ensuring that students are graduating into in-demand labour market fields where they can pursue rewarding careers and advance both the local economy and Ontario's economy as a whole.

Can you talk about the importance of ensuring strong partnerships between the university, municipal partners, and local employers?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Well, hopefully, I've done a bit of that throughout the last few responses.

Again, I think it's incumbent on the institution to obviously maintain those connections. Like I said, I think the primary skill or focus of the university is really as a skills connector, and that really does mean relying on the data that is available from all different parties, whether it's municipal or provincial government, federal etc. If you don't analyze the data to understand where and what jobs and skills are literally in demand and where there might be a shortfall with regard to programs and the curriculum that is being put forth by the institution, I think there's going to be a very big mismatch in terms of what we have.

A recent study not too long ago—and it may have been a KPMG study, for that matter. There's over a \$21-billion gap in terms of what they say is a jobs gap. But I don't

believe it's a jobs gap; it's a skills gap, from my understanding, and I think that's because there are very different skills that we're looking for in today's day and age, that perhaps certain curriculum—and again, this is not Laurier-specific—may not have been keeping up with.

**0940**

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** MPP Firin, 49 seconds.

**MPP Mohamed Firin:** Through you, Chair: Thank you, Joseph, for your presentation.

A university's board of governors is responsible for making decisions on behalf of institutions, including selecting presidents, passing budgets and approving plans for future initiatives.

As a potential board member, what do you hope to do to ensure the continued success of Wilfrid Laurier University and other institutions in the sector as a whole?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** That's a good question.

I think part of the job of the board of governors is extremely important. I think, quite frankly, holding a high bar with respect to governance and oversight is a key role.

Obviously, with respect to strategic and action plans that the university puts forward, those are done in collective with the board of governors, with thousands of inputs—that's my understanding—from various participants.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Over to the official opposition: 10 minutes, MPP Gates.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I just wanted to say my middle name is Joseph—and yours is Joseph. I just wanted to say we have a little bit of a connection. I just thought I'd raise that.

My wife graduated from Wilfrid Laurier and became a teacher and then a principal. It has a very good reputation as a pretty good school—some good sports teams. A lot of people who go to university follow the university's sports teams and stuff, how they're doing. I don't know if you've done that. I follow Wilfrid Laurier quite regularly during the football season. And I go to Brock a lot.

But that's not why you're here.

You've had a long and distinguished career in financial services and tax policy, with major firms like KPMG and EY.

Can you speak to how your professional experience will inform your contribution to the Wilfrid Laurier University board of governors, particularly around budgetary oversight and fiscal governance?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Other than the fact that I am a CPA and financial literacy is supposedly—and I can attest that it is—our strong suit, I hope to bring those skills—but not only that. My two alumni firms to which I belong certainly have had me in extremely high national leadership positions, and I've done so successfully—leading those. So, certainly, dealing with operational, financial governance and human resource-related matters has been something that I've been doing—not only for the best of my clients, but also for the best interests of the firm, in leading those practices. Financial services happens to be one of our key foundational strategic pillars—but I've had quite a large, different experience across a number of industries

over my 30 years, with financial services just being one of the latest ones.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that answer.

This is something that I always ask everybody, as we saw with the last person who was here: Have you ever made any donations to the PC Party or to any of its candidates or riding associations in the last five years?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I knew those questions would come.

Yes, I am first and foremost always respectful of my democratic right to support a political system of such. As pro-business, and certainly someone who looks out for—or at least, as someone who's concerned about the economy and its growth, I always support the party I think is aligned with those principles. PCs happen to be one of those parties. I have felt some of their principles and policies certainly align with my interests. But that's not to say that I have exclusivity with respect to my political focus on any one particular party—again, I think it's what's in the best interest of our economy as a whole, and for the people and the community they serve.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** That's a nice speech, but my question is, how much have you donated to the PC Party, and to whom?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I've always participated in donations year after year, but—quite frankly, the amount is the maximum I would obviously do.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I would say that if you're donating the maximum, you're donating a fair amount to the PC Party.

I will also say that you do have the right to donate to whoever you want, but I think it's important for people who are making a decision, especially on this side—just how close you are to the PC Party, when we're trying to find people who don't really relate with just the PC Party. What we find in this committee, a lot of times—they seem to appoint people who donate to them.

It sounds to me like you've donated financially a fair amount—and has it been over five years, 10 years? How long have you been donating to the PC Party? And do you belong to a riding association at all?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I donate—over the years, I can't tell you how many times.

Do I belong to the riding association? I do. I actually sit on the board for that one particular riding.

That being said, I think, with respect to my financial credentials, as a CPA, my independence and integrity is, quite frankly, key to the profession.

Quite honestly, I wasn't solicited by this party whatsoever. There was an opening. The board has very much wanted my expertise, and their requirement to join the board—and so, by doing so, this position came available. I certainly sought it out, no differently than any other public member out there. So I don't believe there has been any patronage or other sort of related privileges that I've enjoyed just because of, in my view, quite an insignificant amount for a donation.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Well, it's not insignificant, for one thing.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** For me, it is, but that's—

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Maybe to you it is, but it certainly isn't to me. I struggle to even do my own campaign at the maximum—so it's significant when I do it. That's for sure.

You said something about people who support business. I want to be very clear that our party supports business. I support small and medium-sized business—always have, for my entire career. A lot of the people who work on my campaign, quite frankly, own businesses. I just want to make sure that people don't take the false thing there—that I don't do that.

Have you had any formal or—why don't I do this one first; yes, that's good—informal relation with members of the Ford government, including advising on tax, fiscal or education policies, within the party or within the riding association?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** No, I do not.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** So you don't do anything with the riding association?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Advising on anything? Absolutely not.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I think you already said this, but I think it's important to say it—have you ever been approached by anybody from the PC Party to seek out a position like this, or have you had anybody from the PC Party approach you?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Absolutely not. I applied, obviously, through just the public posting that was out there. Honestly, I did so of my own accord, and I felt, once I reached out to the university board members themselves and the university faculty—that's sort of how the discussion started, to see if I would be of interest. But no, that has never happened.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** I appreciate that.

You're a graduate of the university, and now you're being considered for a governance role.

How familiar are you with the current state of universities in the province of Ontario—but also in terms of funding, student affordability, and faculty relationships?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I'm extremely well-versed in the challenges that are facing our post-secondary education system. I do think it's multi-faceted—of a concern and issue that has obviously led to some of those areas of difficulty. So I am familiar with those challenges.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Do you believe that Ontario universities are being adequately funded by the provincial government, especially when compared to other provinces across this country?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I honestly, without looking further from a comprehensive perspective into a number of different areas, whether it's student services, student programs, faculty ratio, revenue generation—things I have not been able to see, as I'm not yet a board member on the respective university, in order to determine what an appropriate response to that is.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** Have you read in any of the papers that universities are cutting programs, cutting courses?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Yes, I have read a number of those—not to mention that I've also seen the announcements, since I do, as I mentioned, teach at York University

as well. So I have seen various programs as well—witnessed them—being cut.

**0950**

**MPP Wayne Gates:** As a faculty member and a teacher at York University, a high-profile university, I'm sure you talk to your students quite regularly as they proceed to go on to different careers and that kind of stuff.

Is it not concerning to you, as an individual and as a teacher at a university, that we are cutting courses that are needed?

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** One minute.

**MPP Wayne Gates:** One minute.

Is that concerning to you—or is it just, “Well, that's the way it is”?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** No, not at all. I think program review is healthy, quite honestly. I think we have to be very specific. As a financial person, obviously, what's really necessary is understanding what those programs are, from not only a student preference, but also how aligned are they with where employers are looking to obviously put forth recruitment efforts from those various faculties—so, quite honestly, I think to just have a one-size-fits-all and say “all programs that are discontinued” is inappropriate. I think without further understanding which programs and why those may not be appropriate or may not necessarily be something that the university can continue to support, especially in light of, obviously—

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Sorry; that's the time.

Thank you very much for those questions and answers.

Now we have one final round, and that is with MPP Smyth from the third party.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Thank you for being here today.

I just want to follow up on what you were being asked by the other members about programs, and your experience with KPMG and hiring all kinds of students over 30 years you were there, watching.

You talked about skills development and skills in the university aligning with the real world. You talked about programs now being under consideration. Review isn't always bad, right? Changing course and direction can be very, very effective, as you were saying, when it relates to local economies. Do you see any red flags, though—concerns and things? If you're on that board, you're able to make a determination of things that could be done to make that education as fruitful as possible.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** With respect to program reviews, my view is that it's an appropriate governance review that needs to be done on a fairly regular basis—I'm not saying biannually or anything of that nature, but I certainly think we have to reassess and look at what the programs are and how they align, not only taking into consideration the students' preferences and the community, but also looking at the employers.

University is extremely expensive, and I think making sure that they're getting their investment from their education—it appropriately helps them with that. Especially, we

know, debt loads with respect to students are rising, so we want to ensure that they have well-paying jobs and careers. Part of that is making sure that those programs that are under review are appropriately meeting those respective sorts of metrics and KPIs, in my view, to ensure that they are a good investment. That's the only thing, at the end of the day, that will attract students and faculty to those programs and to those institutions.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How do you take off the financial lens? You're going to be always looking through that—the numbers—when you're on this board. There could be a program that is not generating a lot of revenue for Laurier, but it could have an incredible impact out in the community. How are you going to be able to make a determination that way and not always be influenced by the dollars?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I'm a business person. Even though I'm a CPA and obviously have financial expertise, I do look at other areas—qualitative matters—that are important.

One thing I do like about the university is, when they've done their strategic plan, their action plan, they have solicited a very large number—apparently thousands, from what I've heard through inquiry—of inputs. Those aren't just from external employers and the government—but also from the student body.

Again, my job, from a governance perspective, at least looking at the mandate of the board of governors, is to ensure that all the various aspects and inputs are being appropriately weighted and considered equally, to ensure that the decisions that are made—and, again, I'm all about accountability—are in the best interests of students and the school as well.

I think those are where I bring those unique perspectives, to ensure that balance is there.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** All we talk about is affordability right now, right?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Of course.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** How many times have we talked to our kids? It's another generation of concern for all of us, as parents.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I have three kids myself.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So you know education is absolutely critical going forward.

Affording education is a real struggle for many, many young people in this province. Loans and grants and stuff only cover so much.

How committed are you to Laurier keeping tuition affordable—we're always talking about the economic metrics of where the economy is right now—and in line with the affordability crisis as well? Do you even know what tuition is right now for Laurier? I don't, but I—

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** Unfortunately, I do. I have a 17-year-old daughter who is going to be attending school, so I'm helping her look at various programs.

Also, I do weigh, "What are they going to get out of it?" That's a lot of money that is going to be put forth to that education, but I want to make sure it yields the right things that not only make sense economically.

To be honest with you, I do think tuition hikes have to be looked at very—

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** So what's acceptable, in your view?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I think we would only look at that by—external comparabilities of what the cost of education is.

I'm not suggesting that we need to have just carte blanche with regard to increases in tuition. At the end of the day, all that's going to do is really narrow the population who can actually afford to attend the universities, or to not come out with an exorbitant amount of debt load, which obviously hinders many other different things down the line. I think we have to be very cautious.

From my understanding, the board of governors are very much sensitive to the implications of raising tuition, but I think that's where it's incumbent to ensure that the revenue-generating aspects and opportunities, making sure there are various other sources—endowments, effective use of and returns on capital assets, and also looking at other partnerships that need to be, obviously, effective—to help to keep tuition down. So I think it's going to be a very complicated thing, and I thrive on complexities.

That's my view on that.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Just to go back again to ensuring that you have the programs in step with labour demands, with the economic demands, could you see yourself putting forward, with the experience that you have—and the various programs that are offered at Laurier—any specific programs, maybe adding new curriculums to the university? So instead of cutting and finding efficiencies—adding to that with your real-world experience?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** One hundred per cent, I think it's important to look at all the various programs that are offered and what they yield. I think continuing education is a huge part of the university's focus.

I have consistently been going to school my whole life. I just recently took some executive education programs in ICD and directorship-type areas, because I think skills are changing and we need to refresh on various issues. I think that advanced executive education throughout the entire life cycle of a person's career is, quite frankly, a great opportunity.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Finally, I'm just wondering, are you familiar with any of the other members of the board of governors you might be working with? And do you think you're in step with them, or would there be undue pressure on you to cut, cut, cut, find the numbers and get efficient?

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I don't know yet. I have not been able to meet them on a more personal level—other than looking at some of their career backgrounds and bios that are publicly available. But I have asked various questions in the interview—to ask about the dynamics.

Looking at some of the strategic plan that, again, the board of governors has looked at and approved, I can see the various thinking that goes behind what is in it, and it covers people, operational and budgeting-related aspects. So I think it's very thoughtful with regard to the various

factors that they perceive as being something that contributes to the success of the institution itself. Clearly, there isn't just one narrow focus on just financial and budgetary matters. They really do look at the health and well-being of the entire student body and faculty. That is very exciting to me, or at least of interest—maybe not exciting, but it's interesting.

**MPP Stephanie Smyth:** Well, you're in numbers. That's exciting too. Maybe this is just adding to that.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Thank you so much, MPP Smyth, for those probing questions.

Thank you very much, Joseph Neison Micallef—sorry about that.

**Mr. Joseph Neison Micallef:** I'm proud of my grandfather.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Proud of your grandpa? We are too, even though we don't know him. We want to honour him.

We will now consider the intended appointment of Kevin Sack, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Kevin Sack, nominated as member of the Council of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Concurrence in this appointment has been moved by MPP Smith.

Any discussion? Are the members ready to vote on Kevin Sack? All those in favour, please show your hands. All those opposed, show your hands. That carries.

Congratulations to Kevin Sack, wherever he is.

We will consider the intended appointment of Joseph Neison Micallef, nominated as member of the Wilfrid Laurier University board of governors.

MPP Smith.

**Ms. Laura Smith:** I move concurrence in the intended appointment of Joseph Neison Micallef, nominated as member of the Wilfrid Laurier University board of governors.

**The Chair (Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon):** Concurrence in the appointment has been moved by MPP Smith.

Any discussion? Seeing none, are the members ready to vote? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? That carries.

Congratulations, Joseph Neison Micallef. You are the newest member of the Wilfrid Laurier University board of governors. You'll have a skip in your step today.

Thank you very much to Joseph and everyone.

Now we have a certificate extension request. The deadline to review the intended appointments selected from the May 2, 2025, certificate is set to expire on June 1, 2025. Is there unanimous consent to extend the certificate by 30 days? I heard a no, so unfortunately that is not possible.

That concludes our business for today. This committee now stands adjourned. We will see you next Thursday.

*The committee adjourned at 1003.*



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