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**THE ORDER-IN-COUNCIL APPOINTMENT OF PATRICK ROGERS
TO THE ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY ***

Prepared for:

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

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INTRODUCTION

This document was prepared to assist Members participating in the Committee's review of the Order-in-Council appointment of Patrick Rogers as a part-time member of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority. (The members of the Authority form and are its board of directors). It describes the role and operations of the Board, presents information about the appointee, and suggests possible lines of questioning.

ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY (TVO)

Enabling Statute		Responsible Ministry	
<u>Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act</u>		Education	
Agency Type		Most Recent Annual Report	
Operational Enterprise		<u>2019-20</u>	
Activities of the Agency			
TVO is Ontario's publicly-funded media organization, which has a mandate to provide high-quality English-language educational programming and services through broadcast, distance education, and interactive web access. Distance education for secondary school credit is provided through the Independent Learning Centre (ILC).			
Board Membership			
Statutory Number of Members: 9 part-time		Position¹	Remuneration
No. Appointed by Cabinet: All		Chair	Up to \$350 per diem
Term of Office: Up to 5 years; plus 5 year renewals		Vice Chair	Up to \$250 per diem
		Members	Up to \$200 per diem
Position Requirements			
No members of the Authority shall be public servants employed under the <i>Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006</i> .			

BACKGROUND

TVO was created in 1970 as a Crown Corporation with a mandate to use electronic and associated media to provide educational opportunities for all Ontarians. TVO's broadcast license is governed by the federal *Broadcasting Act* and CRTC licensing.

¹ The Lieutenant Governor in Council may designate one of the other members as Vice-Chair, and shall appoint a person other than a member of the Authority as Chief Executive Officer.

TVO is the Ministry of Education's partner in digital learning, providing educational and cultural multimedia content and services through television and digital media including videos, video games, mobile applications, as well as subscription and social media platforms. TVO also offers a range of children's programming, and current affairs programs and services, including *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, regional updates on TVO.org, the #onpoli podcast and newsletter, as well as other podcasts and documentaries.

TVO's [Ontario Hubs](#) are a province-wide network of journalists who explore issues from local perspectives. The Hubs are delivered in partnership with local colleges and universities. TVO's Indigenous Hub, for example, covers Indigenous stories and issues across the province, with much of this coverage provided in Indigenous languages.

TVO sells its educational products internationally to over 100 countries. From 1979 to 1985, TVO was the largest foreign supplier of programming to the US educational market. [TVO ILC](#) provides students in Ontario and around the world an opportunity to earn a high school diploma online. TVO ILC is a revenue-generation tool for TVO in international markets.²

In 1987, TVO launched *La Chaîne française*, a French-language public television network (which became a separate entity called TFO in 2007).

CURRENT OPERATIONS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TVO participated in the Ministry's web-based Learn at Home initiative by expanding access to a suite of educational resources including

- launching the [TVO ILC Open House](#), offering Ontarians free 24/7 access to 144 Grades 9-12 online English or French courses;³
- expanding [TVO Mathify](#) (free one-to-one online tutoring) to include Grade 6 students and extending its hours of operation;
- adding a new broadcast feature called the "[Power Hour of Learning](#)" which features Ontario-certified teachers speaking directly to students about the day's key curriculum topics; and
- launching a number of new [TVOkids YouTube](#) channels devoted to key subjects like math, science and technology, arts, health, and social studies.⁴

² TVO, [2019-20 Annual Report](#), p. 37.

³ TVO News, "[Open House offers free 24/7 access to all TVO ILC grade 9 to 12 courses](#)," April 17, 2020.

⁴ TVO, [2019-20 Annual Report](#).

Other TVO digital learning products include:

- [TVO mPower](#) (a mathematics instruction resource);
- [TVO in the Classroom](#) (helps teachers design engaging and up-to-date lessons with quality TVO videos, articles, and games); and
- [TVO Learn](#) (a free resource to help children learn the Grade 1-12 Ontario curriculum at home).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As part of the [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020](#) (passed June 21, 2020) amendments were made to both the [Ontario Educational Communications Authority Act](#) and the [Ontario French-language Communications Authority Act, 2008](#). According to a government news release, the amendments broaden the mandates of TVO and TFO to allow them “to provide centralized administration, coordination and support for teacher-led online learning in the English-language and French-language publicly-funded education systems.”⁵ (The amendments will not be in effect until passed.)

The overall objective of these expanded mandates for TVO and TFO is to allow students to access “high-quality, teacher-taught online courses” from wherever they live in the province. In developing online education, TVO and TFO will be expected to work closely in partnership with the Ministry, school boards, and other education sector partners “while respecting collective agreements as well as minority-language and denominational rights.”⁶

However, the Minister has said that these changes will not be made until there has been consultation with education sector partners, including school boards and school board consortia, teachers’ unions, Catholic stakeholders, French-language stakeholders, and Indigenous partners.⁷

Minister’s mandate letter

The Minister’s [Mandate Letter](#) to TVO noted the November 21, 2019 announcement that students would be required to take two online credits to graduate from secondary school, starting with the cohort of students entering Grade 9 in September 2020. According to the Minister, “the purpose of this graduation requirement is to prepare students with the digital literacy and other transferrable skills they will need to succeed in the digital and data economy.”

The Minister explained:

The education system will need to change as this requirement is implemented. As of 2018-19, about 60,000 students took online courses through their local school board. By 2023-24, when the first cohort of students subject to the online learning graduation

⁵ Office of the Premier, “[Ontario Starting Down the Path to Growth, Renewal and Economic Recovery](#),” news release, July 8, 2020.

⁶ Minister of Education, [Mandate Letter](#) to the Chair of TVO, July 8, 2020.

⁷ Mandate Letter.

requirement begins to graduate, the system will need to accommodate up to 250,000 students in online courses annually.

TVO and TFO will be directed to work together to develop a business case to be submitted to the Ministry detailing how the two agencies will collaborate to implement their new roles beginning in the 2021-22 school year, including

- the roles and responsibilities of TVO, TFO, school boards and other partners;
- how TFO and TVO propose to maximize the use of existing resources in the sector and minimize additional costs, including any potential revenue generation strategies;
- governance structures that ensure minority-language and denominational rights are respected;
- opportunities for TVO and TFO to collaborate on the development of high-quality online course content that is engaging, interactive, and accessible for students with special education needs;
- how TVO and TFO propose to jointly leverage and coordinate shared resources (for example, IT infrastructure), while respecting the working language of each agency;
- staffing impacts/requirements and multi-year financial requirements; and
- outcomes and performance measures.

Stakeholder Concerns

In March 2021, the CBC reported that the Ministry of Education was considering a post-pandemic option of enabling children to enrol in full-time remote learning, including “fully independent online learning” for high school students that would be run by TVO and “would require the school board to pay a fee.” The Ministry told the CBC it was continuing “to consult and engage with stakeholders” on this option.⁸

Concerns about this plan have been raised by stakeholders including the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, teachers’ unions and the Ontario-based non-profit public education think tank People for Education which said “now is not the time to introduce a fundamental change to Ontario’s education system. ... A pause is needed and we need to understand ... the impact the pandemic had on students.”⁹

⁸ CBC News, “[Ontario considering making online school a permanent option](#),” March 26, 2021.

⁹ People for Education, “[Major changes coming to online learning in Ontario](#),” March 28, 2021, and “[PFE raises major concerns re rushed plan to hand over online learning to TVO/TFO](#),” news release, March 31, 2021; Karon Liu, “[Online learning plan worries educators, critics](#),” *Toronto Star*, April 11, 2021.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Most of TVO's funding comes from the Ministry of Education, with smaller contributions from revenue-generating activities as well as charitable donations (TVO is a registered charity as well as a public service agency). According to TVO's audited financial statements, the total amount of operating grant funding received from the Government of Ontario in 2019/20 was \$38.3 million, with project funding of \$3.26 million and earned revenue of \$11.44 million. Total revenues were \$63.15 million and total expenses were \$60.31 million for 2019/20.¹⁰

THE WITNESS

According to information provided by the Office of the Premier, the witness, of Ottawa, is an interim Co-Chief Executive Officer and Vice-President of Corporate Affairs and Director of Regulatory Affairs for Music Canada. He is a former Director of Policy for the Office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What motivated the witness to apply for this position?

What particular skills and experience does the witness bring to the work of TVO?

In the witness's view, what are the challenges facing TVO in the immediate future?

¹⁰ TVO, [Audited Financial Statements 2019/20](#), p. 5.