Webinar - JPAAC Presents: Justice of the Peace Ontario What Makes a Strong Candidate?

Hosted by:

Nicholas Charitsis, JPAAC Chair

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Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee (JPAAC)
Pre-recorded Microsoft Teams Event

Scan the QR Code or submit questions to www.slido.com, code #JPAAC2026

Land Acknowledgement

Today we are gathered for this webinar with individuals anticipated to join us from all across the province of Ontario. Ontario has the largest Indigenous population of any other province in Canada. There are approximately 134 First Nations in Ontario and growing Inuit and Metis populations. Ontario is covered by 46 treaties and other agreements.

Acknowledging the land and traditional territory is a practice of Indigenous people, and can be helpful in learning about the land and area that we are on. Canada's history did not begin with the arrival of the settlers or the creation of Canada or Ontario. It recognizes that the history of the First Peoples in this continent began much earlier.

Many of us are tuning in from the City of Toronto, known traditionally as Tkaronto, on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples.

We are thankful to be able to work and live in these territories. We are thankful to the Indigenous peoples who have cared for these territories since time immemorial.

Housekeeping: Before We Start

- Webinar is prerecorded.
- To better understand the role of the JPAAC, the application process and the justice of the peace position, you should also watch the 2024 and 2025 Webinars, “Is this Your Calling?” and “Are You Right for the Role?”
- Webinar recordings, transcripts and slide decks (English & French) are available on the JPAAC website.
- Closed captioning is available in English and French.
- Submit questions to www.slido.com with code #JPAAC2026, or scan the QR Code:

Agenda

- Introductions
  - Nick Charitsis, JPAAC Chair
  - Terri-Lynn Collings, JPAAC Vice-Chair
- JPAAC's Mandate and Manner of Operating
- Who We Are
- What Makes a Strong Candidate?

Introductions

Nicholas Charitsis,
JPAAC Chair

- Appointed as JPAAC member and designated as Lead for the Central East Region in March 2022.
- Appointed as JPAAC Chair in May 2024.
- Called to the Ontario Bar in 2004.
- Graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School and earned Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 1999 from the Schulich School of Business at York University.
- Has worked as a per diem Assistant Crown Attorney and has practiced criminal defense at his own firm, Charitsis Law, since 2006.

Terri-Lynn Collings,
JPAAC Vice-Chair

- Appointed as a JPAAC member in 2019 and designated as Lead for Central West Region in March 2020.
- Appointed as JPAAC Vice-Chair in August 2025.
- Retired in 2017 following a 30-year career with Hamilton Police Service.
- Has volunteered in her community on various committees including Hamilton Out of the Cold, Ancaster Food Drive, and many programs organized through the Hamilton Police Service.

JPAAC's Mandate

The Committee is responsible for:

a) establishing criteria for assessing candidates,
b) advertising for applications for vacant justice of the peace positions,
c) evaluating and classifying candidates for appointment as justices of the peace,
d) reporting on the classifications to the Attorney General, and
e) providing advice to the Attorney General respecting the process.

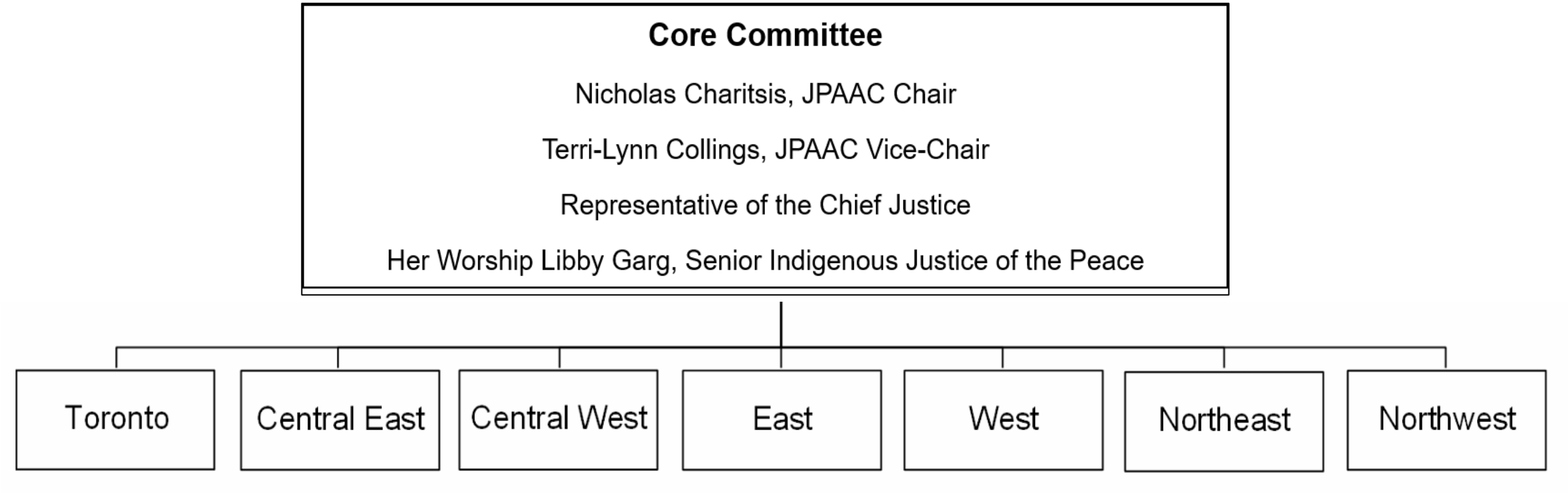
Justices of the peace are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Attorney General.

JPAAC's Manner of Operating

- The functions and manner of JPAAC's operating are set out in the *Justices of the Peace Act*.
- Key functions include:
  - reading applications,
  - selecting candidates for interviews,
  - conducting interviews, and
  - performing reference checks and discreet inquiries.
- When conducting the review and evaluation process in accordance with the criteria established, JPAAC:
  a) assesses candidates' work experience, leadership, community awareness, knowledge of the role, personal characteristics, and
  b) recognizes the desirability of reflecting the diversity of Ontario's population in appointments of justices of the peace.
- Classifying candidates as "Highly Recommended", "Recommended" or "Not Recommended" and providing a list of the classified candidates to the Attorney General, with brief supporting reasons for the candidates classified as "Highly Recommended" or "Recommended".

Who We Are

JPAAC consists of up to 39 members composed of the Core Committee and 7 Regional Committees:



Each of the 7 Regional Committees is composed of up to 5 members:

- 3 lay members and 1 Law Society of Ontario licensee (lawyer or paralegal),
  - appointed by the Attorney General,
- The Regional Senior Justice of the Peace.

What Makes a Strong Candidate?

- Before You Apply
- The Application
- Court Observations
- Community Involvement
- Indigenous Cultural Competency
- The Interview
- Personal Development for Candidate Success

Before You Apply

- **Be informed of the position:**
  - Review the Selection Criteria and the Frequently Asked Questions.
  - Note that legal education is not required.
  - Life-time, full-time appointment, to the age of 65 – can continue serving full-time or as a per-diem justice of the peace until age 75 as an independent judicial officer.
  - $198,039/year + pension and benefits as of July 2026.
  - No base court location transfers for a minimum of 5 years and even then, only if a base court has a vacancy and the transfer meets the court's operational needs.
- **Engage in Self-study:**
  - Review the roles and responsibilities: Judges and Justices of the Peace - Ontario Court of Justice.
  - Learn about our justice system using reputable sources and public-facing websites like Legal Aid Ontario and Ministry of the Attorney General and review the Justices of the Peace Act; develop familiarity with courtroom language.
- **Review your social media presence:** Public content may be considered when assessing suitability for the role.
- **Address outstanding matters:** Consider resolving any litigation, claims, or other issues that could negatively reflect on your candidacy for justice of the peace appointment.

The Application

- **Stay within the word limit:** Committee members review hundreds of applications. Be concise, focus on quality over quantity, and make every word count.
- **Follow all instructions:** Demonstrate attention to detail by carefully adhering to application requirements, including completing all sections.
- **Ensure authenticity:** Do not rely on AI to draft your responses.
- **French Application Forms:** You can submit your application in French, note that it will be translated in English for members that are not bilingual. French language application forms are available on JPAAC's website.

The Application (Cont'd)

- **Designated Indigenous Positions:**
  - Preference is given to applicants who identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit and demonstrate a meaningful connection to an Indigenous community.
  - Candidates must provide documentation supporting their self-identification, which may include:
    - Government-recognized documentation,
    - Alternative evidence of kinship or community connection, or
    - Where documentation is unavailable, applicants may submit a personal statement (up to 400 words) describing their Indigenous identity, community affiliation, lived experience, and journey of reconnection.
  - The Committee recognizes that impacts of colonization, displacement, and other historical factors, may affect an individual's ability to maintain community connections or obtaining formal documentation.

The Application (Cont'd)

- **Vacancy Courthouse locations: number** your base court vacancy preferences (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).
- **Work Experience:** Clearly demonstrate **at least 10 years of full-time experience** to meet the statutory requirement—do not assume the committee will infer it from your application.
- **Complex Decisions:**
  - Use a recent and relevant example with meaningful impact.
  - Focus on your individual decision, not a team, board, or committee decision. Explain the factors considered, decision-making process, and outcome.
- **Court Observations:** Include only observations completed within the **last 15 months**.
  - Go beyond describing proceedings—highlight what you learned about the justice of the peace role and decision-making process.
  - Observe different justices of the peace across multiple days to demonstrate breadth of learning and commitment to the role.
  - Emphasize the quality and insights of observations over the number of observations completed.

The Application (Cont'd)

- **Education:** Include post-secondary transcripts, credentials, or equivalency documentation.
- **References:**
  - Provide **four references**; do not leave any fields blank. Include:
    - **Two references** with direct knowledge of your work experience.
    - **Two references** familiar with your community service involvement.
  - Be strategic when selecting your references. Ensure they understand the role of a justice of the peace and can provide informed feedback. References may also complete some court observations to be informed.
  - Choose references who can speak to different aspects of your experience and provide current contact information.
- **Attestation:** Ensure the attestation is completed; an incomplete attestation may result in your application not being considered.

Court Observations

- **Justices of the peace preside over:**
  - Criminal Court: bail hearings, case management, intake - search warrants, production orders, peace-bond applications, and Form 2 (*Order for Examination under the Mental Health Act*).
  - Provincial Offences Court: trials, resolutions and case management court (e.g., *Highway Traffic Act, Liquor License Act, Environmental Protection Act, Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act*).
- **Requirement:**
  - Observe justices of the peace presiding in court in person. For more information on how to observe justices of the peace, please see: Access to Court Proceedings. You need to observe criminal bail court, criminal case management court, provincial offences early resolution court and provincial offences trial court for each vacancy/region to which you are applying.
    - Continue making court observations after submitting your application to have a better understanding of the role.

Court Observations (Cont'd)

- **Ongoing court observations help to:**
  - bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and judicial practice;
  - become familiar with courtroom etiquette, case flow, evidentiary issues, and procedural requirements;
  - understand how experienced judicial officers demonstrate active listening, decision-making, questioning techniques, and delivery of a judgment; understand that decisions may not always be widely accepted, but are grounded in law and supported by sound reasoning, in a fast-paced environment; and
  - develop awareness of the importance of judicial fairness and access to justice as they will be exposed to cases involving self-represented litigants, vulnerable individuals, and diverse communities.

Community Involvement

- **Demonstrate meaningful community engagement and service:**
  - Showcase a strong understanding of and connection to the diverse communities you wish to serve. A strong candidate has a proven commitment to helping others and making positive contributions to society and actively participates in initiatives that strengthen community well-being and public trust.
  - Describe the attributes and social issues of that community, and how those issues might present in court. Be specific to your region and community in which you are applying as it would affect the role of justice of the peace and how it would manifest itself in the courts.

- **Exhibit leadership and high achievement in both professional and community settings**
  - Have a track record of ethical decision-making, integrity, accountability, and respect for others.

Community Involvement (Cont'd)

- **Understand the realities of serving the public across a broad geographic region**
    - Have a willingness to travel extensively for training, court assignments, conferences, and regional meetings. This demonstrates commitment to serving communities wherever the need exists.
- **Show flexibility and dedication to public service**
    - Recognize that justices of the peace work in person from assigned courthouses and may be required to serve at different locations based on operational needs.
- **Value accessibility and responsiveness to community needs**
    - Understand that effective judicial service requires direct engagement with the public and adaptability in serving diverse populations throughout the region and the province.

Indigenous Cultural Competency

- Candidates should be aware that the Senior Indigenous Justice of the Peace reviews every application and participates in all interviews.
- Develop knowledge of issues facing Indigenous communities in your applied region(s).
- Demonstrate a genuine commitment to reconciliation.
- Engage in continuous learning and self-reflection.
- Have an understanding of systemic barriers affecting Indigenous peoples.
- Have respect for Indigenous cultures, rights, and legal traditions.
- Note that thoughtful preparation in this area demonstrates awareness, and readiness to serve all members of the public, including Indigenous peoples, with fairness.
- Provide specific examples of your direct interaction and/or experience with Indigenous peoples, communities, and/or organizations (rather than simply reciting statistics).
- Explain how this knowledge will support you if presiding as a justice of the peace.
    - Demonstrate your ability to apply this knowledge fairly and impartially in judicial decision-making.

The Interview - Preparation

- **Know the role -** Understand the statutory duties of a Justice of the Peace, including:
  - bail decisions,
  - criminal case management, and
  - provincial offences matters.
- **Demonstrate desired judicial qualities** such as:
  - integrity, impartiality, sound judgment, and respect for all court participants,
  - the ability to make timely decisions on complex issues, and
  - professionalism under pressure.
- **Use real examples** that demonstrate:
  - ethical decision-making,
  - independence and fairness,
  - cultural awareness and inclusivity, and
  - managing difficult situations calmly.

The Interview – Preparation (Cont'd)

- **JPAAC will provide necessary authorization forms for security & disclosure checks prior to the interview date**
  - Authorization is required for JPAAC to obtain relevant professional and regulatory information on disclosed complaints, charges, or claims.
    - This applies to regulated professions such as law, policing, nursing, teaching, social work, accounting, and military service.
    - Strict process is in place to maintain confidentiality.
- **Prepare a biography submission (150 Words)** which includes:
  - work experience,
  - volunteer/community involvement,
  - education, and
  - relevant qualifications and achievements.

The Interview – The Process

- **Interview Format**
  - Prior to entering the interview room, the interview Chair will provide you with instructions on what to expect, committee process, and interview process.
  - Interviews are conducted in-person before a JPAAC panel.
  - Panel size may vary depending on the number of regions applied to (single region: up to 8 members; multiple regions: may be considerably larger).
  - Interviews are formal and fast-paced (approximately 45 minutes).
  - Date, time, and location of interview will be provided by JPAAC.
- **What to Expect**
  - Questions will focus on assessing candidates against all selection criteria.
  - There will be scenario-based questions that require quick, well-reasoned decision-making and well-organized thought process – ensure to convey a final decision.
  - The committee will assess judgment, temperament, communication, and ability to handle stress.

The Interview – The Process (Cont'd)

- **Interview Tips**
  - Take notes during the interview especially for scenario-based questions.
  - Demonstrate your long-term journey to prepare to serve as a justice of the peace.
  - Be prepared to discuss access to justice, fairness, inclusivity, and public confidence in the justice system.
  - Be concise and clearly explain your reasoning – listen to the question, be succinct and allow all panel members the opportunity to ask you questions.
  - No time is provided at the end of the interview for questions.
  - Arrive dressed appropriately, prepared, confident, and composed.

Personal Characteristics for Candidate's Success

- **Exhibit integrity, fairness, and sound judgment**
  - Make principled, impartial decisions based on facts. Make the right decision even if it is unpopular.
  - Uphold high ethical standards in both professional and personal conduct.
  - Demonstrate examples of being empathetic.

- **Exhibit compassion, professionalism, and strong interpersonal skills**
  - Treat everyone with dignity, respect, and empathy.
  - Communicate effectively in challenging and emotionally charged situations.
  - Balance compassion with impartiality and fairness.

Personal Characteristics for Candidate's Success (Cont'd)

- **Demonstrate dedication to public service**
  - Place service, responsibility, and accountability to the community and public interest at the forefront.
  - Be willing to work flexible hours, including weekends, statutory holidays, and overnight assignments when required.
  - Recognize the responsibility and accountability that come with judicial office if appointed.

- **Show resilience, adaptability, and a strong work ethic**
  - Be a life-long learner.
  - Manage demanding workloads, long days, and high-pressure situations.
  - Be ready to adapt to last-minute schedule and court assignment changes.
  - Illustrate how you have overcome adversity.
  - Demonstrate commitment and perseverance throughout the rigorous appointment process, including applying for multiple processes.
    - Recognize what you learned from previous processes and how to apply it to your current candidacy.

Thank you

JPAAC.Info@ontario.ca

www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/jpaac