

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS



# 2018 Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Twenty-Ninth Legislature  
Fourth Session

December 2018



**Standing Committee on Public  
Accounts**

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ALBERTA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

December 2018

To the Honourable Robert E. Wanner  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I have the honour of submitting this report relating to the Committee's activities in 2018 for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

Sincerely,

*[original signed by the Chair]*

Scott J. Cyr, MLA  
Bonnyville-Cold Lake  
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts



**Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
29th Legislature – 2018**

**Scott J. Cyr, MLA, Chair  
Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)**

**Lorne Dach, MLA, Deputy Chair  
Edmonton-McClung (NDP)**

**Members:**

Drew Barnes, MLA  
Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)

Robyn Luff, MLA<sup>1</sup>  
Calgary-East (Ind)

Jonathon Carson, MLA  
Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)

Hon. Brian Malkinson, MLA<sup>2</sup>  
Calgary-Currie (NDP)

Greg Clark, MLA<sup>3</sup>  
Calgary-Elbow (AP)

Barb Miller, MLA  
Red Deer-South (NDP)

Derek Gerhard Fildebrandt, MLA<sup>4</sup>  
Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)

Christian E. Nielsen, MLA  
Edmonton-Decore (NDP)

Richard Gotfried, MLA  
Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)

Prasad Panda, MLA  
Calgary-Foothills (UCP)

Grant R. Hunter, MLA  
Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)

Brandy Payne, MLA<sup>5</sup>  
Calgary-Acadia (NDP)

Anam Kazim, MLA<sup>6</sup>  
Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)

Marie F. Renaud, MLA  
St. Albert (NDP)

Jessica Littlewood, MLA  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)

Dr. A. Robert Turner, MLA  
Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)

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<sup>1</sup> Committee member until November 26, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Committee member until November 26, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Appointed April 19, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Committee member until April 19, 2018

<sup>5</sup> Appointed November 26, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Appointed November 26, 2018

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts comprises a Chair, who is a Member of the Official Opposition (United Conservative Party - UCP) and a Deputy Chair, who is a Member of the Government caucus (New Democratic Party - NDP). The composition of the remaining 13 members at the close of 2018 includes one Member from the Third Party Opposition (Alberta Party – AP), with the balance of the membership approximately proportionate to the number of seats held by the NDP and UCP in the Assembly.

The mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is to review the public accounts of the Province of Alberta and ministry annual reports through the process of asking questions with respect to the expenditures of Government departments and reviewing the Auditor General's reports.

The public accounts of Alberta are prepared in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Fiscal Management Act*. The public accounts consist of the annual report of the Government of Alberta and the annual reports of each of its ministries.

The 2017-2018 annual report of the Government of Alberta contains accountability statements and the consolidated financial statements of the province. *Measuring Up*, which measures and reports on performance, compares actual performance results with the desired results set out in the Government's business plan.

The annual reports for the ministries for the year ended March 31, 2018, contain ministers' accountability statements, the audited consolidated financial statements of the ministries and a comparison of actual performance results and the desired results set out in the ministries' business plans. These reports are provided to Committee members and to caucus research staff once the reports are tabled on a date following the reporting deadline of June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## II. MANDATE AND SCOPE

**The mandate of the Public Accounts Committee includes reviewing and reporting on the public accounts of Alberta, all reports of the Auditor General of Alberta and other matters which may be referred to the Committee by the Assembly. Its mandate extends to all public entities funded by Government, including agencies, boards and commissions. All reports of the Auditor General stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee.**

The Committee calls on senior department officials and/or officials of agencies, boards, and commissions and such others as may be necessary to fulfill its mandate.

The Committee sets its own agendas and may sit whether or not the Assembly is in session. The Committee may report to the Assembly on a particular matter or generally with respect to its body of work, and the Government shall respond to a substantive report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the Committee reports.



### III. ACTIVITIES

The Committee's 2018 schedule included eight meetings during the 2018 spring session and six meetings during the 2018 fall session for the period ended December 4, 2018. The Committee met in June 2018 to consider its schedule for the 2018 fall session and met with the Auditor General and his staff in November 2018 to receive a briefing on the November 2018 report released by that office.

The Committee working group, comprising the Committee Chair, Deputy Chair, Member from the Third Party Opposition, Research and Committee Services, and the Office of the Auditor General, met during this reporting period to discuss and recommend schedules for meetings with ministries, including agencies, boards and commissions reporting to the ministries, and to highlight any potential issues of interest to the Committee.

Committee Research Services and the Office of the Auditor General continued to provide oral and written research briefings for caucus research staff two weeks prior to scheduled meetings. The Committee continued its practice of receiving these research briefings during closed pre-meeting briefings.

The proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are open to the public. Audio and video coverage of Committee meetings is streamed live on the Internet, broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. The audio and video-stream, and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca) and through the Legislature Library.

#### IV. SCHEDULE OF STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Meeting Date 2018	Appearance/Topic
March 13	<b>Culture and Tourism</b> <i>[Alberta Film Production Grant Program]</i> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
March 20	<b>Environment and Parks; Science Advisory Panel; Alberta Professional Outfitters Society</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
May 1	<b>Indigenous Relations</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
May 8	<b>Energy</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
May 15	<b>Economic Development and Trade</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
May 29	<b>Health; Alberta Health Services</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
June 5	<b>Agriculture and Forestry; Farmers' Advocate</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2016-17]</i>
June 6	<b>Committee business meeting</b>
October 30	<b>Infrastructure</b> <i>[Capital Planning-Auditor General Report October 2017; Ministry Annual Report 2017-18]</i>
November 6	<b>Energy; Alberta Electric System Operator; Alberta Utilities Commission; Market Surveillance Administrator; Alberta Balancing Pool</b>
November 20	<b>Health; Alberta Health Services</b> <i>[Mental Health and Addictions Supports]</i>
November 21	<b>Office of the Auditor General</b> <i>[Briefing on November 2018 Report]</i>
November 27	<b>Children's Services</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2017-18]</i>
December 4	<b>Treasury Board and Finance</b> <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2017-18]</i>

## V. CCPAC/CCOLA CONFERENCE

### Joint conference of Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) and Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors (CCOLA)

This report is submitted on behalf of the following Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and committee support staff who attended the CCPAC/CCOLA conference in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, from September 23 to 25, 2018.

#### i. Attendance

Scott Cyr, MLA	Chair
Lorne Dach, MLA	Deputy Chair
Nancy Robert	Research Officer, Research and Committee Services
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk

#### ii. Conference Sessions

- **HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE MODERN DIGITAL LANDSCAPE TO BETTER COMMUNICATE THE WORK AND VALUE OF AUDITORS GENERAL AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES (PACs)**

**Speaker:** Mike Kujawski – Managing Partner and Senior Consultant  
Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing

**Panel:** Hon. Shawn Murphy – Former MP and Chair, House of Commons PAC  
Michael Pickup – Auditor General of Nova Scotia  
Don Desserud – Professor of Political Science, University of Prince Edward Island

*Mr. Kujawski provided a high-level overview of how the digital landscape is impacting communications and changes to marketing endeavours in the public sector and was joined by panellists who discussed strategic approaches to communications by PACs and Auditors General.*

- **QUALIFIED AUDIT OPINIONS**

**Speaker/Moderator:** Michael Ferguson – Auditor General of Canada

**Panel:** Carol Bellringer – Auditor General of British Columbia  
John Yap – Member, British Columbia PAC

*Mr. Ferguson explained qualified audit opinions, and panellists discussed their importance to Public Accounts Committees and to citizens.*

### ▪ INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY – AUDIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Moderator:** John Reed – President and CEO, Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation (CAAF)

**Panel:** Richard Brisebois – Former Audit Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada  
Mitzi Dean – Deputy Chair, British Columbia PAC  
Eric Leonty – Assistant Auditor General, Alberta  
Brad Trivers – Chair, Prince Edward Island PAC

*Session panellists discussed changes in information technology and their perspectives on the impact with respect to IT audits and oversight by PACs.*

### ▪ OVERVIEW - SURVEY OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES/DISCUSSION

**Speakers:** John Reed – President and CEO, CAAF  
Dr. Lesley Burns – Director of Oversight, CAAF

*Mr. Reed and Dr. Burns summarized the results from the recent survey of all Canadian PAC Members and committee support staff undertaken by the CAAF. During the discussion that followed a number of best practices were underscored including the importance of PACs operating in a nonpartisan fashion, ensuring that questioning is not related to government policies, having dedicated institutional resources, and meeting on a regular basis.*

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Reflections on 14 Years on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

**Speaker:** David Christopherson, Vice-Chair, House of Commons PAC

### ▪ SESSION FOR NEW PAC MEMBERS, CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS

**Moderator:** Kate Ryan-Lloyd, Executive Director, CCPAC

**Panel:** Trent Wotherspoon – Chair, Saskatchewan PAC  
Shirley Bond – Chair, British Columbia PAC  
Kathy Burianyak – Committee Clerk, Saskatchewan PAC  
Dillan Theckedath – Analyst, Library of Parliament

*Panellists addressed their respective roles as PAC Members and legislators or staff supporting PACs and discussed the orientation of new Members, the role of the Auditor General and best practices for the effective operation of PACs.*

- **DEVELOPMENTS IN CANADIAN PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES**

**Panel:** Lisa Roberts – Member, Nova Scotia PAC  
Maxime Perreault – Committee Clerk, Quebec Committee on Public Administration

*The panellists led a discussion on processes of Public Accounts Committees within Canadian jurisdictions.*

- **OPEN ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION: PAC Members**

*PAC Members met in small groups and shared experiences, lessons learned and challenges faced while sustaining good practices.*

- **OPEN DISCUSSION: PAC Clerks and Researchers**

*Committee Clerks and researchers discussed their roles and recent developments within their respective jurisdictions.*

**Closing remarks and invitation from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to attend the CCPAC/CCOLA Conference in Niagara-on-the-Lake from August 18 to 20, 2019.**

