

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

2020 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Thirtieth Legislature
Second Session
April 2021



Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

April 2021

**To the Honourable Nathan Cooper
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
of the Province 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 for 2020 for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

Sincerely,

[original signed]

Shannon Phillips, MLA
Lethbridge-West
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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I. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts 30th Legislature (First Session) – As of October 8, 2019

**Shannon Phillips, Lethbridge-West
Chair (NDP)**

**Richard Gottfried, Calgary-Fish Creek
Deputy Chair (UCP)**

Drew Barnes, MLA
Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)

Miranda Rosin, MLA
Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)

Lorne Dach, MLA
Edmonton-McClung (NDP)

Garth Rowsell, MLA
Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)

Richard Feehan, MLA
Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)

Jason Stephan, MLA
Red Deer-South (UCP)

Peter Guthrie, MLA
Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)

Devinder Toor, MLA
Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)

Sarah Hoffman, MLA
Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)

Searle Turton, MLA
Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)

Jeremy Nixon, MLA
Calgary-Klein (UCP)

Jordan Walker, MLA
Sherwood Park (UCP)

Marie Renaud, MLA
St. Albert (NDP)

**Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
30th Legislature (Second Session) – As of February 26, 2020**

**Shannon Phillips, Lethbridge-West
Chair (NDP)**

**Richard Gotfried, Calgary-Fish Creek
Deputy Chair (UCP)**

Drew Barnes, MLA
Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)

Miranda Rosin, MLA
Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)

Lorne Dach, MLA
Edmonton-McClung (NDP)

Garth Rowsell, MLA
Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)

Richard Feehan, MLA
Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)+

Jason Stephan, MLA
Red Deer-South (UCP)

Peter Guthrie, MLA
Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)

Devinder Toor, MLA
Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)

Sarah Hoffman, MLA
Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)

Searle Turton, MLA
Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)++

Roger Reid, MLA
Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)*

Jordan Walker, MLA
Sherwood Park (UCP)+++

Marie Renaud, MLA
St. Albert (NDP)

* This Member was appointed on February 26, 2020, to replace Jeremy Nixon, MLA, Calgary-Klein (UCP)

+ This Member was removed from the Committee on February 26, 2020, due to an amendment to the Standing Orders (Standing Order 52(1)(b)) resulting in a decrease in membership of the Committee).

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**Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
30th Legislature (Second Session) – As of October 20, 2020**

**Shannon Phillips, Lethbridge-West
Chair (NDP)**

**Richard Gotfried, Calgary-Fish Creek
Deputy Chair (UCP)**

Drew Barnes, MLA
Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)

Miranda Rosin, MLA
Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)

Lorne Dach, MLA
Edmonton-McClung (NDP)

Garth Rowsell, MLA
Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)

Peter Guthrie, MLA
Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)

Marlin Schmidt, MLA
Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)*

Roger Reid, MLA
Livingstone McLeod (UCP)

Jason Stephan, MLA
Red Deer-South (UCP)

Marie Renaud, MLA
St. Albert (NDP)

Devinder Toor, MLA
Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)

* This Member was appointed on October 20, 2020, to replace Sarah Hoffman, MLA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)

II. INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts comprises a Chair, who is a Member of the Official Opposition (New Democratic Party-NDP), and a Deputy Chair, who is a Member of the Government caucus (United Conservative Party-UCP). The composition of the remaining 10 members is approximately proportionate to the number of seats held by the NDP and UCP in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

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 the Auditor General's reports. Pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General stand permanently referred to the Committee.

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 2019-2020 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, 2020, contain ministers' accountability statements, the audited consolidated financial statements of the ministries, and a comparison of actual performance results as well as the desired results set out in the ministries' business plans.

The reports of the Auditor General include annual reports and special reports. Annual reports provide audit findings and include recommendations for the improvement of controls and processes within government and the issuance of audit opinions on the financial statements of ministries, agencies and boards, and commissions. Special reports of the Auditor General are prepared on any matter of importance or urgency that the Auditor General believes should not be deferred until the presentation of the annual report.

III. 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 and 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.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

In the winter of 2020, prior to the commencement of the 2020 spring sitting, the Committee met three times. During the 2020 spring sitting of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature the Committee met nine times. The Committee also met on October 2, 2020, when the Assembly was not in session. The Committee held six meetings during the 2020 fall sitting, including one educational session with the Auditor General on November 10, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated changes to committee practices. Legislative Assembly of Alberta standing and special committees have long permitted teleconference participation but, pursuant to the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the Committee allowed videoconference participation at its first meeting following declaration of the pandemic. Alberta's Standing Committee on Public Accounts was one of the first in Canada to hold such hybrid meetings. Pursuant to Section 6 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the Committee approved the use of videoconferencing at its April 27, 2020, meeting with the following motion:

MOVED by Mr. Gotfried that for the duration of the Second Session of the 30th Legislature the Standing Committee on Public Accounts permit Members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in Committee meetings via videoconference subject to the proviso that the Committee may require Members' personal attendance at a particular meeting upon passage of a motion to that effect.

An amendment to Standing Order 52(1)(b) on February 26, 2020, saw the Committee's membership reduced from 15 Members to 12.

The Subcommittee on Committee Business met eight times 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 for the Committee.

Committee Research Services and the Office of the Auditor General continued to provide oral and written research briefings for caucus research staff. Committee members also started participating in oral briefings. With the participation of Members in oral research briefings, the Committee discontinued its practice of conducting closed-session pre-meeting briefings for Members immediately prior to the commencement of a scheduled Committee meeting.

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, as well as the transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website at www.assembly.ab.ca and through the Legislature Library.

V. MEETING SCHEDULE OF THE COMMITTEE

Meeting Date Appearance/Topic

30th Legislature 2020, First Session

February 11 (morning)	Health and Alberta Health Services <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
February 11 (afternoon)	Education, Calgary Board of Education, and Edmonton Public School Board <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
February 12	Treasury Board and Finance, ATB Financial, Alberta Investment Management Corporation, Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>

30th Legislature 2020, Second Session

April 27	Committee business meeting
May 5	Agriculture and Forestry <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
May 12	Seniors and Housing, Calgary Housing Company, and Capital Region Housing <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
May 26	Advanced Education, University of Calgary <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
June 2	Infrastructure <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
June 9	Transportation <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
June 23	Treasury Board and Finance and ATB Financial <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
June 30	Children's Services <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>

July 7	Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, Alberta Enterprise Corporation, and Alberta Innovates <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Appearance/Topic</u>
July 14	Labour and Immigration <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
October 2	Committee business meeting
October 27	Municipal Affairs <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
November 10	Auditor General educational session
November 17	Executive Council <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
November 24	Auditor General <i>[Report of the Auditor General-November 2020]</i>
December 1	Indigenous Relations <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>
December 8	Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women <i>[Outstanding Recommendations from the OAG; Ministry Annual Report 2019-20]</i>

VI. CANADIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES (CCPAC) AND CANADIAN COUNCIL OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITORS (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 participated in the CCPAC / CCOLA conference, hosted via videoconference, from Victoria, British Columbia, on September 10, 2020 (8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.).

i. Attendance

Shannon Phillips, MLA	Chair
Richard Gotfried, MLA	Deputy Chair
Phillip Massolin	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk

ii. Conference Sessions

The conference program is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

VII. WESTMINSTER WORKSHOP ON PUBLIC FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

Workshop hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share experiences, examine existing processes, and inspire new approaches to the work of Public Accounts Committees.

Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and committee support staff were invited to participate, via videoconference, in the Westminster Workshop on Public Financial Oversight hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, on October 19 to 23, 2020.

i. Nominated Participants

Shannon Phillips, MLA	Chair
Richard Gotfried, MLA	Deputy Chair
Marlin Schmidt, MLA	Committee Member
Lorne Dach, MLA	Committee Member
Jason Stephan, MLA	Committee Member
Phillip Massolin	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk

ii. Workshop Sessions

The workshop program is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

APPENDIX 1: CANADIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES AND CANADIAN COUNCIL OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITORS, 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE BUSINESS PROGRAM



Program

8:00 to 8:45 am

Zoom Connectivity Check-in

8:45 to 9 am

Opening Ceremony

- Traditional Territory and Land Acknowledgement
- Welcome/Blessing from Elder, Dancers and/or Drummers

9 am to 9:15 am

Introductory Remarks

- Shirley Bond, MLA, Chair, British Columbia, Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts Committee
- Michael Pickup, Auditor General of British Columbia

9:15 to 10 am

Parliamentary Oversight of COVID-19 Program Administration

- Guest Speaker: Meg Hillier, MP and Chair, UK House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

10 to 10:15 am

Health Break

10:15 am to 12 pm

Roundtable: Role of Public Accounts Committees and Auditors General on COVID-19 Program Administration

- Joint presentations by PAC and Auditor General for each jurisdiction (10 minutes per joint presentation followed by general discussion open to all participants)

12:00 to 12:15 pm

Roundtable Wrap-up

- Comments on approaches and good practices

Programme

8 h 00 à 8 h 45

Vérification de la connectivité Zoom

8 h 45 à 9 h 00

Cérémonie d'ouverture

- Reconnaissance des territoires traditionnels
- Mot de bienvenue/bénédiction d'un aîné, danseurs et/ou tambours (à confirmer)

9 h 00 à 9 h 15

Mot d'ouverture

- Shirley Bond, députée et présidente du Comité permanent des comptes publics de la Colombie-Britannique
- Michael Pickup, vérificateur général de la Colombie-Britannique

9 h 15 à 10 h 00

La surveillance parlementaire de l'administration des programmes visant la COVID-19

- Conférencière invitée : Meg Hillier, députée et présidente du Comité des comptes publics de la Chambre des communes du Royaume-Uni

10 h 00 à 10 h 15

Pause santé

10 h 15 à 12 h 00

Table ronde : Le rôle des comités des comptes publics et des vérificateurs généraux par rapport à l'administration des programmes visant la COVID-19

- Présentations conjointes du CCP et du vérificateur général de chaque juridiction (10 minutes par présentation conjointe; une discussion générale aura lieu par la suite)

12 h 00 à 12 h 15

Synthèse de la table ronde

- Commentaires sur les approches et les bonnes pratiques

12:15 to 12:30 pm

Health Break

12:30 to 1 pm

CCPAC Annual General Meeting and Closing Remarks

- Announcement of Alberta as host of 2021 conference and invitation video
- Election of CCPAC Board of Directors and Executive Director
- Closing remarks

1 pm

End of Program and Adjournment

12 h 15 à 12 h 30

Pause santé

12:30 to 1 pm | 12 h 30 à 13 h 00

Réunion générale annuelle du CCCCCP et mot de la fin

- Annonce de l'Alberta comme hôte de la conférence 2021 et invitation vidéo
- Élection du conseil d'administration et du directeur exécutif du CCCCCP
- Mot de la fin




13 h 00



Fin du programme et ajournement des travaux

APPENDIX 2: WESTMINSTER WORKSHOP ON PUBLIC FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT BUSINESS PROGRAM

Westminster Workshop on Public Financial Oversight 19 - 23 October 2020

Draft Programme – Please note some session and timings may be subject to change




PROGRAMME 2: AMERICAS, CARIBBEAN, WEST AFRICA & EUROPE DAY 1 – Thursday 22 October <u><i>*Please note all times are shown as UK time*</i></u>	
1400 – 1430 	Welcome and Introductions from CPA UK This session will outline the aims and objectives of the Workshop and give delegates the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the virtual platform, the other participants and the CPA UK team.
1430 – 1510 	What Makes an Effective Public Accounts Committee? An expert panel will engage in key discussions on the fundamentals of what makes an effective Public Accounts Committee. Topics of time management, a strong secretariat, achieving consensus, effective questioning and effective stakeholder relationships will be explored, before widening to a Q&A with delegates. Session Format: Expert Plenary
1510 – 1520	<i>Comfort Break – Optional Networking</i>
1520 – 1605 	Holding Government to Account Engaging with the government to get a response to an inquiry is a central part of the role of any committee. Through interactive discussions, delegates will discuss the challenges faced by Public Accounts Committees to engage with governments, and good practice for holding the government to account in responding to committee recommendations. Session Format: Interactive Expert Plenary
1605 – 1615	Break


1615 - 1700	 Reports and Recommendations <p>This session will explore the importance of writing effective reports and recommendations to help the PAC achieve impact. It will consider how to write a report which encapsulates the findings of the PAC's enquiry and how to write recommendations to reflect those findings using the SMART method.</p> <p>Session format: Interactive Workshop</p>
1700 - 1705	<i>Short Break</i>
1705 - 1750	 Measuring Effectiveness of PACs <p>What does 'effectiveness' look like for different PACs across the Commonwealth? How can committees plan to include follow up? Which areas need further investigation? What monitoring strategies can be used? Through interactive discussions, delegates will explore effectiveness and monitoring strategies within their own committees and exchange good practice.</p> <p>Session Format: Expert Plenary</p>
1750 - 1800	Close of Day 1
1800 - 1900	<i>Networking on the Online Platform</i>
End of Day 1	

PROGRAMME 2 : AMERICAS, CARIBBEAN, WEST AFRICA & EUROPE

DAY 2 – Friday 23 October

Please note all times are shown as UK time

1345 – 1430	 <p>Welcome & Recap of Day 1</p> <p>This opening session will give an overview of day 1 of the programme and a look forward to day 2.</p>
1430 – 1520	 <p>Enablers & Blockers</p> <p>This session will look forward to how PACs can collaborate to share expertise and respond to challenges. Building on discussions held during the CAPAC regional workshops, delegates will explore the key enablers & blockers in their PAC work, collaborating with other PACs to develop approaches to shared challenges. Using mapping exercises, delegates will plan out how approaches could be taken and how the success of changes could be measured.</p> <p>Session Format: Interactive Workshop</p>
1520 – 1530	<i>Comfort Break</i>
1530 – 1700	 <p>PACs in a Virtual World: Keeping the Receipts and Exercising Scrutiny during Emergencies</p> <p>Since the outbreak of COVID-19, PACs have been forced to work in new and unfamiliar ways. Virtual committee hearings and meetings have become the norm for some whilst other committees have had to stop proceedings or adopt hybrid solutions. This session will look at the mechanics of how PACs have been able to adapt to virtual working and the challenges of doing so.</p> <p>The session will also consider how PACs have approached and can approach the challenges of scrutiny during virtual committee hearings during emergencies and how to ensure that scrutiny of Government is appropriate and sensitive while effective.</p> <p>Format Session: Interactive Workshop</p>

1700 - 1715	Break	
1715 - 1815	 <p>Challenges & Opportunities in smaller jurisdictions</p> <p>The session will provide a forum for smaller jurisdictions to discuss the challenges and opportunities relating to public financial oversight in their contexts and to look at how PACs can work collaboratively to overcome shared challenges.</p> <p>Session Format: Interactive Workshop</p>	<p>PACs and the Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p>What role do PAC's have in ensuring SDGs are met? How can PACs contribute to upholding SDGs and what role can they play in the future? This session will consider these questions through a panel discussion</p> <p>Session Format: Expert Plenary</p>
1815 - 1830	Close of Day 2 & Workshop	
1830 - 1930	<i>Networking on the Online Platform</i>	