

# Standing Committee on Public Accounts

## Report on 2015 Activities

Twenty-Eighth Legislature  
(January to March 2015)

March 2016



**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 9820 – 107 Street

Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7

780.427.1350

[committees@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:committees@assembly.ab.ca)

[www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts)



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
ALBERTA

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

March, 2016

To the Honourable Robert Wanner  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
of the Province of Alberta

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has the honour of submitting the report relating to activities of the Committee during the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature, for the period January to March 2015.

*[original signed by the Chair]*

Mr. Derek Fildebrandt, MLA  
Strathmore-Brooks  
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts



**Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
28<sup>th</sup> Legislature, March 2015**

Shayne Saskiw, MLA  
Chair  
Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W)

Steve Young, MLA  
Deputy Chair  
Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Mike Allen, MLA  
Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)

Rob Anderson, MLA  
Airdrie (PC)

Joe Anglin, MLA  
Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (Ind)

Drew Barnes, MLA  
Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)

Deron Bilous, MLA  
Edmonton-Beverley-Clareview (ND)

Ian Donovan, MLA  
Little Bow (PC)

Kent Hehr, MLA  
Calgary-Buffalo (AL)

Fred Horne, MLA<sup>\*†‡</sup>  
Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)

Sandra Jansen, MLA  
Calgary-North West (PC)

Matt Jeneroux, MLA  
Edmonton-South West (PC)

Jason Luan, MLA  
Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)

Bridget B. Pastoor, MLA  
Lethbridge-East (PC)

Janice Sarich, MLA  
Edmonton-Decore (PC)

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\* Substitution by Wayne Cao, MLA on March 17, 2015 pursuant to S.O. 56(2.1 – 2.4)

† Substitution by Bruce Rowe, MLA on March 23, 2015 pursuant to S.O. 56(2.1 – 2.4)

‡ Substitution by Dr. Richard Starke, MLA on March 24, 2015 pursuant to S.O. 56(2.1-2.4)



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## I. INTRODUCTION

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

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts comprises a Chair, who is a Member of the Official Opposition (Wildrose) and a Deputy Chair, who is a member of the government caucus (Progressive Conservative in March 2015). The composition of the remaining 13 members is proportionate to the number of seats held by each party in the Assembly.

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 annual reports of the Government of Alberta contain an accountability statement and the consolidated financial statements of the province. The *Measuring Up* report provides a comparison of the actual performance results and the desired results as set out in the Government's business plan.

The annual reports for the ministries include 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.

## II. MANDATE AND SCOPE

Pursuant to Government Motion 23, passed on November 27, 2008, an expanded scope and mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts became permanent, including the following:

- 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 any other matter referred to it from time to time by the Legislature. Its mandate extends to all public entities funded by government, including agencies, boards and commissions.
- The Committee may call and question ministers, senior department officials or officials of agencies, boards and commissions of government and such others as may be necessary for the full pursuit of its duties.
- The Committee shall set its own agenda and may sit whether or not the House is in session.
- Necessary resources will be provided for staffing to ensure adequate support for the Committee's expanded mandate.
- All reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
- The Committee may report to the House, and the government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the Committee reports.

### **III. ACTIVITIES**

In 2015, the practice of deputy ministers and department officials appearing before the Committee without the minister in attendance continued for the most part. The Auditor General and his staff continued to attend and participate in all Committee meetings.

The 2013-2014 annual report of the Government of Alberta and the ministries' annual reports were released in June 2014. The release of the Auditor General's report for this time period was released in March 2015.

The Public Accounts Committee held three meetings during the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature in March 2015.

Further to the Committee's decision in 2014, the template sent to invitees outlining any outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General of Alberta, has been working well to provide insight into the status of outstanding recommendations and allow committee members to better focus their questions.

The Public Accounts Committee continued to receive research briefings from Research Services, which provides non-partisan research support to this and other committees of the Assembly. The briefings contained background information on the agency, board, commission, or Ministry appearing before the Committee but also focused on various program areas, the knowledge of which the Committee may find useful for its meetings with the Government of Alberta entities. The briefings satisfied Committee research requests or were reflective of Research Services' efforts to single out areas that warranted further investigation. Based on the information gathered, Research Services' briefings also suggested questions which Committee members may have wanted to ask of the Government officials who appeared before the Committee.

Prior to each Public Accounts meeting in the fall, the Auditor General and Research Services continued to provide an *in-camera* briefing concerning their respective reports and the entity appearing at the forthcoming meeting. In these briefings, both the Auditor General and Research Services highlighted notable areas of concern and inquiry and recommended particular lines of questioning to Committee members.

The Committee also continued to request that questions unable to be answered at the time by those appearing at the meeting should be followed up on in writing. Written responses were directed to be sent to the committee clerk for distribution to committee members.

#### **IV. SCHEDULE OF STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts during the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature in March, 2015 were held as follows:

<b><u>Meeting Date</u></b>	<b><u>Appearance/Topic</u></b>
March 17, 2015	Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
March 23, 2015	Office of the Auditor General
March 24, 2015	Alberta Infrastructure Alberta Treasury Board and Finance

The proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are open to the public. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of the audio of Committee meetings is streamed live on the Internet, and all meetings are recorded in *Alberta Hansard*. Copies of the transcripts may be accessed via the Committee's website at [www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts) or in the Legislature Library.

