

Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Report on 2009 Activities

March 2010



COMMITTEES
OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

801 Legislature Annex
9718 – 107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E4
780.644.8621

committees@assembly.ab.ca

www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts

March, 2010

To the Honourable Ken Kowalski
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 to submit this Report relating to its 2009 activities for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

Hugh MacDonald, MLA
Edmonton-Gold Bar
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts

MEMBERS OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
27th Legislature, Second Session, 2009

Hugh MacDonald, MLA
Chair
Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)

Dave Quest, MLA
Deputy Chair
Strathcona (PC)

Carl Benito, MLA
Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)

Naresh Bhardwaj, MLA
Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)

Harry Chase, MLA
Calgary-Varsity (AL)

Cal Dallas, MLA
Red Deer-South (PC)

Jonathan Denis, MLA
Calgary-Egmont (PC)

Wayne Drysdale, MLA
Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)

Kyle Fawcett, MLA
Calgary-North Hill (PC)

Broyce Jacobs, MLA
Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)

Jeff Johnson, MLA
Athabasca-Redwater (PC)

Darshan Kang, MLA
Calgary-McCall (AL)

Brian Mason, MLA
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)

Verlyn Olson, MLA
Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)

Peter Sandhu, MLA
Edmonton-Manning (PC)

Tony Vandermeer, MLA
Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)

Teresa Woo-Paw, MLA
Calgary-Mackay (PC)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Committee Activities.....	2
III. Schedule of Standing Committee Meetings	4
IV. Conference Attendance.....	6

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 expenditures in government departments and to review the Auditor General's semi annual and other reports.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts comprises a Chair who is a Member of the Official Opposition and a Deputy Chair who is a member of the government caucus. The composition of the remaining 15 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 *Government Accountability Act*. The public accounts consist of the annual report of the Government of Alberta and the annual reports of each of its ministries.

The **2007-2008 and 2008-2009 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 for the years ended March 31, 2008, and March 31, 2009**, 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.

II. COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

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.**

The practice of deputy ministers and department officials appearing before the Committee without the minister in attendance has continued.

The Auditor General and his staff continued to attend and participate in all Committee meetings and played an active role in Committee briefing sessions.

During the spring 2009 sitting of the Alberta Legislature the Public Accounts Committee held 13 meetings with ministries on the 2007-2008 public accounts and the *Annual Report of the Auditor General of Alberta October 2008*, and the *Report of the Auditor General April 2009* when appropriate.

The 2008-2009 annual report of the Government of Alberta was released in June 2009.

The ministries' annual reports for 2008-2009 were released in September 2009. The release of the semi annual report of the Auditor General followed in October 2009.

The Committee held out-of-session meetings in October with the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, the Agricultural Financial Services Corporation and the Workers' Compensation Board (Alberta). A joint meeting with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness was also held.

During the fall 2009 sitting of the Alberta Legislature the Public Accounts Committee held three regular meetings on the 2008-2009 public accounts and *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta April 2009* and *Report of the Auditor General of Alberta October 2009*.

III. SCHEDULE OF STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in 2009 were held as follows:

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Appearance/Topic</u>
February 11, 2009	Agriculture and Rural Development
February 18, 2009	Employment and Immigration
March 4, 2009	Infrastructure And Transportation
March 11, 2009	Housing and Urban Affairs And Municipal Affairs
March 18, 2009	Environment
April 8, 2009	Seniors and Community Supports
April 15, 2009	Education
April 22, 2009	Health and Wellness
April 29, 2009	Service Alberta
May 6, 2009	Office of the Auditor General
May 13, 2009	Energy
May 27, 2009	Treasury Board
June 3, 2009	Advanced Education and Technology
October 6, 2009	Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission And Agricultural Financial Services Corporation
October 7, 2009	Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta
October 26, 2009	Alberta Health Services And Health and Wellness
November 4, 2009	Finance and Enterprise
November 18, 2009	Office of the Auditor General
November 25, 2009	Solicitor General and Public Security

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 seen on the Committee's website at: www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/publicaccounts or in the Legislature Library.

IV. CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

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

In September 2009 the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Office of the Auditor General jointly hosted and organized the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) and Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors (CCOLA) Conference. This conference was last held in Alberta in 1997. The conference was attended by 93 Canadian federal, territorial and provincial delegates, the Auditor General of Bermuda, seven national and international observers and 26 guests.

The conference agenda featured a wide variety of business sessions and for the first time in conference history a formal session for committee clerks and researchers was offered.

The following Members and staff of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta attended the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees (CCPAC) Conference in Edmonton, Alberta, from September 13 to 16, 2009, as delegates:

From the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

Hugh MacDonald, MLA, Chair

Dave Quest, MLA, Deputy Chair

Philip Massolin, Committee Research Co-ordinator

Jody Rempel, Committee Clerk

From the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices:

Ty Lund, MLA, Deputy Chair

As representatives of the host jurisdiction many members of the Alberta Standing Committee on Public Accounts also participated in conference events.

Mr. Fred Dunn, FCA, Alberta Auditor General, and Mr. Doug Wylie, CMA, Assistant Auditor General from Alberta, attended as CCOLA delegates.

The CCPAC Conference topics were as follows:

Topic: Managing in Economic Recessions

Panellists: Hugh MacDonald, MLA, Chair, Alberta Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Hon. Shawn Murphy, MP, Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Norm Sterling, MPP, Chair, Ontario Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Carol Bellringer, FCA, Auditor General of Manitoba
Fred Dunn, FCA, ICD.D, Auditor General of Alberta
Michael Ferguson, CA, Auditor General of New Brunswick
Facilitator: Ron Thompson, Chair, CCAF-FCVI Inc.

Topic: Environmental Auditing

Panellists: John W. Betts, MLA, Chair, New Brunswick Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Jean Cinq-Mars, Sustainable Development Commissioner, Auditor General of Québec
Scott Vaughan, Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development,
Office of the Auditor General of Canada
Facilitator: Sheila Fraser, FCA, Auditor General of Canada

Topic: Online Reporting and Accountability

Presenter: Hon. Lloyd Snelgrove, President of Treasury Board, Government of Alberta
Facilitator: Dave Quest, MLA, Deputy Chair, Alberta Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Topic: How AGs and PACs Can Work Together

Panellists: Sheila Fraser, FCA, Auditor General of Canada
Hon. Shawn Murphy, MP, Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Sylvain Simard, MNA, Chair, Québec Standing Committee on Public Administration
Renaud Lachance, Auditor General of Québec
Facilitator: Ron Thompson, Chair, CCAF-FCVI Inc.

Topic: Attributes of Effective PACs

Introduction: Michael Eastman, Executive Director, CCAF-FCVI Inc.

Presenters: Len Derkach, Chair, Manitoba, Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Geoff Dubrow, Principal Associate, CCAF-FCVI Inc.

Topic: Keynote Address: Accountability in the Modern World

Presenter: John Williams, former Chair, House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

Facilitator: Hugh MacDonald, MLA, Chair, Alberta Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Business Session: CCPAC Update

Presenter: Dr. Josie Schofield, Committee Research Analyst, British Columbia

Breakout Session for Committee Clerks and Committee Researchers: Providing Research Support for PACs

Panelists: Alex Baldwin, Committee Researcher, Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
Darlene Henry, Committee Clerk, Nova Scotia House of Assembly
Susan Viets, Research Officer, Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Facilitator: Dr. Philip Massolin, Committee Research Coordinator, Legislative Assembly of Alberta