

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

27

Main points	500
Introduction	501
Overview of Committee's role and responsibilities	501
The members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.....	503
Committee accomplishments.....	503
Status of recommendations of the Committee	504
Summary.....	504
Status of previous Committee recommendations	505

Main points

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee) is a key agent of change for improving the Government's management of public resources. It helps the Assembly hold the Government accountable for its management of public resources.

The Committee reviews the activities, performance, and reports of government ministries, agencies, and certain Crown corporations. During its review, the Committee may inquire about past performance, current concerns, and future objectives. The Committee's discussions include broader issues including strategic plans, key risks to achieving goals and objectives, and performance measurement.

At the time of this report, the Committee's most recent report setting out recommendations is the Committee's Third Report to the 26th Legislature. The Committee presented this report to the Assembly on September 6, 2011.

The Committee's reports during the previous five years contained 638 recommendations including over 230 new recommendations in 2011. The Government has fully implemented 60% of the Committee's recommendations. Of the recommendations that are not yet fully implemented, 50% are partially implemented.

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the role and responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee or PAC). It briefly describes what the Committee does, how it is structured, and how it works.

We discuss the importance of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations and highlight some of its recent accomplishments. Also, in the exhibits, we set out the status of the Committee's outstanding recommendations that are not discussed elsewhere in this report. The remaining outstanding recommendations are included in the relevant chapters throughout our report. Reviewing these outstanding recommendations provides the Committee with an opportunity to ask Government officials how they are progressing towards meeting the Committee's expectations.

Overview of Committee's role and responsibilities

At the beginning of each Legislature, the Legislative Assembly (Assembly) appoints members to the Committee. The Committee helps the Assembly hold the Government accountable for its management of public resources. We view this Committee as the audit committee for the Assembly and thus, for the public.

The management of public resources begins and ends in the Assembly. The Government manages Saskatchewan's public resources through a complex structure of over 270 agencies including ministries, boards, and Crown corporations (see Appendix 2 to this report for a list of these agencies). It seeks approval for the use of these resources through laws and the Assembly's approval of the Estimates.

Each year, the Government prepares the Public Accounts. The Public Accounts consist of two reports. The first report contains the Summary Financial Statements of the Government, the financial statements of the General Revenue Fund (GRF), a Financial Statement Discussion and Analysis section, and other financial information. The second report contains details on revenues and expenditures of certain agencies that receive money from the GRF, details on capital asset acquisitions of those agencies, a listing of suppliers who received \$50,000 or more for

goods and services supplied to the GRF, key financial information of some pension plans and trust funds administered by the Government, a listing of taxes and fees, and information on road-use fuel tax accountability. The reports are available at www.finance.gov.sk.ca/.

The Assembly refers the Public Accounts and the reports of our Office to the Committee.¹ The Committee uses these reports to review the Government's management of public resources.

The Committee discusses and recommends actions on issues that Committee members and our Office raise. To meet its responsibilities, the Committee examines and evaluates the activities of government agencies (e.g., ministries, Crown corporations) included in the Public Accounts. It also reviews the issues raised in our reports based on our work at these agencies.

The Committee is not fundamentally concerned with matters of policy. Rather, it questions the economy and effectiveness of the administration of government programs.

Government officials attend the Committee meetings to answer questions about the administration of their agencies. Our Office attends the meetings to help the Committee in its reviews. The Committee formally reports its findings and recommendations to the Assembly in written reports.

The Committee's discussions and recommendations to the Assembly promote a more open and accountable government and better management of government operations. By questioning, requesting information, and making recommendations in its reports to the Assembly, the Committee acts as an agent of change for the management practices of government. The Committee's work is crucial in a well-managed parliamentary system of government. It provides a vital link in the chain of accountability over public resources and contributes to the public's confidence in our system of government.

The Committee's meetings are televised and open to the public. Information about the composition of the Committee as well as records of

¹ Certain chapters within our reports are referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

the Committee's meetings (i.e., Hansard verbatims, minutes, videos, and reports) are available to the public on the Committee's website www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/.

The members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

As of October 2011, the members of the Committee were:

- ◆ Trent Wotherspoon, Chair
- ◆ Glen Hart, Deputy Chair
- ◆ Pat Atkinson
- ◆ Dan D'Autremont
- ◆ Warren Michelson
- ◆ Lyle Stewart
- ◆ Rod Gantefoer

Committee accomplishments

Since the fall of 2010, the Committee met 9 times. During this time, the Committee continued its review of our reports on the results of our work at government agencies. These reports included our 2009 Report (Volume 3) and 2010 Report (Volumes 1 and 2).

The Committee has not yet completed its review of our following reports:

- ◆ 2010 Report – Volume 2 (three chapters outstanding)
- ◆ 2011 Report – Volume 1

At the time of this report, the Committee's most recent report setting out recommendations is the Committee's Third Report to the 26th Legislature. The Committee presented this Report to the Assembly on September 6, 2011. The report contains over 230 recommendations. It was moved by the Deputy Chair of PAC and agreed to by the Legislative Assembly "that the draft Third Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be adopted and that the final report be approved by the Steering Committee and filed with the Clerk pursuant to Rule 135(6)". The Government has 120 days to provide a response to the Report.

Status of recommendations of the Committee

The Committee has asked us to monitor compliance with its recommendations and to report on their status. This chapter along with other chapters in our report provide an update on the status of the Committee's outstanding recommendations that the Government has not yet fully implemented.

The Committee's reports during the previous five years contained 638 recommendations. Some of these recommendations take a number of years to implement. As of October 2011, the Government has fully implemented 60% (October 2010–71%) of the Committee's recommendations. The Government has partially implemented 50% (October 2010–74%) of the remaining recommendations.²

Summary

The Committee continues to discuss broader issues including strategic planning, key risks to achieving goals and objectives, and performance measurement. Through these discussions, the Committee fosters a more open and accountable government and better management of government operations.

Our Office will continue to help the Committee carry out its important responsibilities. To encourage the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, our Office will continue to monitor the status of the Committee's recommendations.

² Calculations are based on the Committee's recommendations up to and including the Third Report to the 26th Legislature at September 6, 2011. For 2011, a decrease in the results of fully and partially implemented recommendations is due to the Committee's new recommendations from its 2011 Report being included in the calculation. This report contained over 230 recommendations and the Government has not yet had time to address the recommendations.

Status of previous Committee recommendations

Exhibit 1 provides an update on recommendations agreed to by PAC that are not yet implemented and are not discussed earlier in this chapter.

Exhibit 1

PAC REPORT YEAR ³	OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations		
2009	10-2 that the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations' human resource plan more clearly outline gaps in current resources (e.g., number and types of positions) and provide details on plans to implement strategies to meet human resource needs (including timeframes, responsibilities and financial resources). (2007 Report – Volume 3)	Partially implemented (as at March 31, 2011). We plan to follow up in 2012.
Workers' Compensation Board – New Claims Management System (2010 Report – Volume 2)		
2011	22-1 that the Workers' Compensation Board provide senior management and the Board reports that include the forecasted costs to complete the Eclipse Claims Replacement Project as well as the estimated completion date of the project.	Implemented (as at May 31, 2011).

Exhibit 2 lists the recommendations that were made by PAC and included in the Committee's Third Report to the 26th Legislature.

Exhibit 2

PAC REPORT YEAR	OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
2011	CR1 that the committee adhere to the \$50,000 threshold, in regard to payee disclosure reporting, that was set under the previous administration.	Implemented. The threshold for payee disclosure in Saskatchewan remains at \$50,000.

³ "PAC Report Year" refers to the year that PAC first made the recommendations in its report to Legislative Assembly.

Chapter 27 – Standing Committee on Public Accounts

PAC REPORT YEAR	OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
2011	<p>CR2 that Kelsey Trail Health Authority and the Ministry of Health report to PAC on September 30, 2011 the progress achieved on the Auditor’s recommendations in the 2010 Report Volume 2 Chapter 11C.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority provided the required information to PAC on October 3, 2011.</p> <p>We plan to do a follow up of the recommendations in 2012.</p>
2011	<p>CR3 that when the Provincial Auditor next reports that they take a look at all of the necessary protections that ITO has in place to ensure the citizens of Saskatchewan that their third party contractor cannot share information with the parent company where the parent company is subject to the Patriot Act.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>See Chapter 20--Protecting Saskatchewan data—the <i>USA Patriot Act</i> for status.</p>