

Chapter 55

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

1.0 MAIN POINTS

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

The Committee is a key agent of change for improving the Government's management of public resources. It helps the Legislative 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 such as 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 539 recommendations. The Government has fully implemented 72% of the Committee's recommendations. Of the recommendations that are not yet fully implemented, 70% are partially implemented.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

We discuss the importance of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations and highlight some of its recent accomplishments. Also, in Section 6.0, 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.

3.0 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 1



of 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 can use 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 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/.

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

3.1 The Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

As of October 2012, the members of the Committee were:

- › Trent Wotherspoon, MLA, New Democratic Party, Chair
- › Scott Moe, MLA, Saskatchewan Party, Deputy Chair
- › Jennifer Campeau, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Herb Cox, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Glen Hart, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Warren Michelson, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Cory Tochor, MLA, Saskatchewan Party

The Committee consists of seven members and the membership is based on the ratio of party standings in the Assembly. The Chair of the Committee is a member of opposition and the Deputy Chair is a member of government. Prior to the 2011 election, there were two opposition members on the Committee; after the election one member of opposition is on the Committee.

3.2 Committee Accomplishments

Since the fall of 2011, the Committee met three times to review our reports on the results of our work at government agencies. These reports included our 2010 Report (Volume 2), 2011 Report (Volumes 1 and 2), and 2012 Report (Volume 1).

As of October 2012, the Committee has not completed its review of all chapters in our following reports:

- › 2010 Report – Volume 2 (one chapter outstanding)
- › 2011 Report – Volume 1 (two chapters outstanding)
- › 2011 Report – Volume 2 (eleven chapters outstanding)
- › 2012 Report – Volume 1 (fifteen chapters outstanding)

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.² 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 the Committee 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 responded to this report on December 20, 2011.²

The Committee's previous reports were the First and Second Reports to the 26th Legislature. They were presented to the Assembly on March 25, 2009 and March 7, 2011³, respectively.

² The Committee's Third Report to the 26th Legislature and the Government Response can be found at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-committees/public-accounts/ (18 Oct 2012).

³ The Second Report summarizes the process undertaken for the Provincial Auditor Competition.



4.0 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 539 recommendations. Some of these recommendations take a number of years to implement. As of October 2012, the Government has fully implemented 72% (October 2011–60%) of the Committee's recommendations. The Government has partially implemented 70% (October 2011–50%) of the remaining recommendations.⁴

5.0 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.

6.0 STATUS OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following exhibit provides an update on recommendations agreed to by the Committee that are not yet implemented and are not discussed earlier in this report.

Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation	Status
First Nations, Métis, and Northern Affairs (now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Government Relations) (2007 Report – Volume 3)		
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).	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2012) We plan to follow up in 2013 during the audit of the Ministry of Government Relations.
Government Services (now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Central Services)		
2009	9-3 that the Ministry of Government Services establish and use policies to monitor its fuel expenses made with its credit cards to ensure fuel purchases are for government purposes. (2008 Report – Volume 3)	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)

⁴ Calculations are based on the Committee's recommendations up to and including the Third Report to the 26th Legislature at September 6, 2011.

Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation	Status
2009	19-3 that the Ministry of Government Services have a complete business continuity plan. (2007 Report – Volume 3)	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
2011	10-3 that the Ministry of Government Services sign an adequate agreement on disaster recovery and security with the Information Technology Office. (2010 Report – Volume 2)	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
2011	10-4 that the Ministry of Government Services adequately monitor the security of its information technology systems and data. (2010 Report – Volume 2)	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
Government Services–Processes to Maintain Vehicle Fleet (2008 Report – Volume 1)		
2009	6-1 that the Ministry of Central Services establish processes to ensure its vehicle fleet meets the safety standards of <i>The Traffic Safety Act</i> .	Partially implemented (as of September 30, 2010) Follow-up planned for 2013.
2009	6-2 that the Ministry of Central Services keep reliable maintenance and repairs records for its vehicles.	Partially implemented (as of September 30, 2010) Follow-up planned for 2013.
2009	6-3 that the senior management of the Ministry of Central Services receive reports to verify that vehicles are maintained in a safe condition and in an economical manner.	Not implemented (as of September 30, 2010) Follow-up planned for 2013.
Government Services–Cross-Government Infrastructure (2003 Report – Volume 3)		
2005	12-3 that the Ministry of Government Services (formerly Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) should provide the public with additional information about the extent to which the use of its key infrastructure (i.e. facilities, vehicles, and aircraft) achieved its operational and financial plans, and explain significant differences between actual and planned results.	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012) The 2011-12 annual report of the Ministry provides the public with information about the extent to which the Ministry's key infrastructure achieved its operational and financial plans, and includes explanations of significant differences between actual and planned results.
Government Services–Processes to Maintain Buildings (2009 Report – Volume 1)		
2011	6-1 that the Ministry of Central Services establish and implement processes to ensure the information in its buildings is accurate, complete and available.	Partially implemented (as of March 31, 2011)
2011	6-2 that the Ministry of Central Services approve adequate maintenance plans for all the buildings the Ministry owns.	Partially implemented (as of March 31, 2011)
2011	6-3 that the Ministry of Central Services sign adequate agreements with its clients that describe each of the parties' responsibilities.	Partially implemented (as of March 31, 2011)
2011	6-4 that the Ministry of Central Services have processes so that maintenance is effectively carried out on all of its buildings.	Partially implemented (as of March 31, 2011)
2011	6-5 that the Ministry of Central Services provide senior management adequate reports to monitor the process to maintain its buildings.	Partially implemented (as of March 31, 2011)



Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation	Status
Justice		
2007	13-4 that the Ministry of Justice complete and implement its business continuity plan. (2005 Report – Volume 3)	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
2009	13-5 that the Ministry of Justice sign an adequate agreement on disaster recovery and security with the Information Technology Office. (2008 Report – Volume 3)	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
2009	13-7 that the Ministry of Justice adequately monitor the security of its information technology systems and data. (2008 Report – Volume 3)	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
N/A	That the Ministry of Justice follow its processes to prepare and approve bank reconciliations. (2011 Report – Volume 2)	Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
Public Service Commission		
2011	9-1 that the Public Service Commission amend its service level agreements (SLAs) with ministries to clearly assign responsibilities for key payroll activities (i.e., managing payroll, approving payroll payments, and investigating payroll differences). (2010 Report – Volume 1)	Partially Implemented (as of January 31, 2012)
2011	9-3 that the Public Service Commission consistently document its review of payroll reports and resolution of matters resulting from its review. (2010 Report – Volume 1)	Partially Implemented (as of January 31, 2012)
2011	18-1 that the Public Service Commission follow its established procedures for removing user access to its computer systems and data. (2010 Report – Volume 2)	Not Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)