

Chapter 56

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Committee) is crucial for 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 discussions and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly (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. This is evident, in part, through the high extent of implementation of the Committee's recommendations. The Committee's reports during the previous five years contained 229 recommendations. The Government has fully implemented 77% of the Committee's recommendations. Of the recommendations that are not yet fully implemented, 87% are partially implemented.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the composition, role, and responsibilities of the Committee. It briefly describes what the Committee does, how it works, and how it reports to the Assembly.

It also sets out the extent to which the Government has implemented the Committee's past recommendations and the status of the Committee's review of our Reports.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Committee Composition

On March 4, 2013, *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*¹ changed to expand the Committee from seven members and a membership based on the ratio of party standings in the Assembly to eight members, including two members of the Opposition for the duration of the 27th Legislature. At the beginning of each Legislature, the Assembly appoints members to the Committee. The Chair of the Committee is a member of the Opposition and the Deputy Chair is a member of the Government. See **Exhibit 6.1** for the current composition of the Committee.

¹ www.legassembly.sk.ca/about/rules-and-procedures (20 October 2014).



3.2 Responsibilities Include Review of Public Accounts and Our Reports

The Committee is key to helping the Assembly hold the Government accountable for its management of public resources. *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* requires the Committee to review and report to the Assembly on the results of its review of the Public Accounts and of the Reports of the Provincial Auditor. The Assembly refers the Public Accounts and the Reports of our Office to the Committee.² The following provides a brief description of each:

- ▶ The Public Accounts consist of two volumes. The first volume contains the Summary Financial Statements of the Government and a Financial Statement Discussion and Analysis section. The second volume contains details on revenues and expenditures of the General Revenue Fund. This includes comparisons of appropriations to expenditures by vote and by program, and details of expense (e.g., payees who received \$50,000 or more for salaries and benefits, transfers, or goods and services). It also includes 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.³
- ▶ The Reports of the Provincial Auditor contain the results of our examinations of the Government and its various agencies. The Committee has asked us to monitor compliance with its recommendations and to report on their status. Chapters within our Reports provide an update on the status of the Committee's recommendations. Also, each year, our Office provides our *Business and Financial Plan* and an *Annual Report on Operations*.

Because of its role to scrutinize the Government's management of public resources and to review our Reports, we view this Committee as the audit committee for the Assembly and thus, for the public.

The Committee's meetings are televised and open to the public. In its deliberations, the Committee is not fundamentally concerned with matters of policy; rather, it questions the economy and effectiveness of the administration of government programs. 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.

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 discusses and recommends actions on issues that Committee members and our Office raise.

² Certain chapters within our Reports are referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

³ www.finance.gov.sk.ca (20 October 2014).

3.3 Reports of the Committee

The Committee formally reports its findings and recommendations to the Assembly in written reports. Typically, it does this at the end of each legislative session. Its reports, once tabled in the Assembly, are made available to the public on the Assembly's website.⁴ The Committee requires the Government to respond in writing to its reports. The Government's response is also made public on the Assembly's website.

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.

The Committee presented its last report called the *Third Report to the 26th Legislature (4th Session of the 26th Legislature)* on September 6, 2011.⁵ The Third 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, 2011.⁶

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, 2011,⁷ respectively. The Committee's reports during the previous five years contained 229 recommendations.

4.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with prior years, the implementation of the Committee's recommendations by the Government and its agencies remains strong. As of October 2014, the Government has fully implemented 77% (October 2013–78%) of the Committee's recommendations. The Government has partially implemented 87% (October 2013–81%) of the remaining recommendations.⁸

In **Exhibit 6.2**, 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.

⁴ www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-committees/public-accounts/ (20 October 2014).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Second Report summarizes the process undertaken for the Provincial Auditor Competition.

⁸ Calculations are based on the Committee's recommendations up to and including the *Third Report to the 26th Legislature* at September 6, 2011.



5.0 STATUS OF COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF OUR REPORTS

Since the fall of 2013, eight of our Reports which include the results of our examinations of the Government and its agencies have been referred to the Committee for its review.

Since that time, the Committee has met 11 times – at 10 of its meetings, it reviewed our Reports. Its review included chapters from our *2010 Report (Volume 2)*, *2011 Report (Volumes 1 and 2)*, *2012 Report (Volumes 1 and 2)*, *2013 Report (Volumes 1 and 2)*, *2014 Report (Volume 1)*, and our *Business and Financial Plan for the Year Ended March 31, 2015*.

As of October 15, 2014, the Committee had not completed its review of all chapters in the following Reports:

- › *2012 Report – Volume 1* (1 out of 18 chapters outstanding)
- › *2012 Report – Volume 2* (11 out of 55 chapters outstanding)
- › *2013 Report – Volume 1* (13 out of 27 chapters outstanding)
- › *2013 Report – Volume 2* (10 out of 50 chapters outstanding)
- › *2014 Report – Volume 1* (19 out of 26 chapters outstanding)
- › *Special Report 2013 of the Provincial Auditor: The Need to Change – Modernizing Government Budgeting and Financial Reporting in Saskatchewan*

6.0 EXHIBITS

6.1 Composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

As of October 15, 2014, the members of the Committee were:

- › Danielle Chartier, MLA, New Democratic Party, Chair
- › Paul Merriman, MLA, Saskatchewan Party, Deputy Chair
- › Larry Doke, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Glen Hart, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Warren Michelson, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Rob Norris, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Randy Weekes, MLA, Saskatchewan Party
- › Trent Wotherspoon, MLA, New Democratic Party

6.2 Status of Previous Committee Recommendations

The following table provides an update on recommendations agreed to by the Committee that are not yet implemented and are not discussed elsewhere in this Report. Our intent is to follow up on outstanding recommendations in the future.

Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation*	Status
eHealth – Electronic Health Records (2009 Report – Volume 3)		
2011	10C-1 that the Ministry of Health's strategic plan include its strategy for the electronic health record system.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
2011	10C-2 that the Ministry of Health develop an operational plan to guide the development and implementation of the electronic health record system.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
2011	10C-3 that the Ministry of Health monitor its overall costs and timelines, compared to its plans, for development and implementation of the electronic health record system.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
2011	10C-4 that the Ministry of Health develop performance measures to allow it to assess and report its progress in achieving the electronic health record benefits.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
Heartland Regional Health Authority – Disposal of IT and Communication Equipment (2009 Report – Volume 3)		
2011	10D-1 that Heartland Regional Health Authority document its procedures to remove confidential information during disposal of information technology and communications equipment.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2012)
2011	10D-3 that Heartland Regional Health Authority regularly verify that its procedures to remove sensitive information from information technology and communications equipment are effective.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2012)
Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority – Maintaining Medical Equipment		
2011	11C-2 that the Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority maintain all equipment in accordance with the required standards.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2012)
2011	11C-6 that the Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority maintain a complete and current list of all medical equipment, its location, and its maintenance record.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2012)
2011	11C-7 that the Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority provide reports to the Board of Directors and senior management on the state of medical equipment at all of its healthcare facilities.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2012)
Ministry of Central Services – Fleet Maintenance (2008 Report – Volume 1)		
2009	6-1 that the Ministry of Government Services establish processes to ensure its vehicle fleet meets the safety standards of <i>The Traffic Safety Act</i> .	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2013)
2009	6-2 that the Ministry of Government Services keep reliable maintenance and repairs records for its vehicles.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2013)
2009	6-3 that the senior management of the Ministry of Government Services receive reports to verify that vehicles are maintained in a safe condition and in an economical manner.	Not Implemented (as of August 31, 2013)



Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation*	Status
Ministry of Central Services – Information Technology Division – Data Centre		
2009	12-2 that the Information Technology Office establish information technology security policies for its clients. <i>(2008 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of December 31, 2013)
2011	12-1 that the Information Technology Office provide relevant and timely security reports to its clients. <i>(2009 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of December 31, 2013)
Ministry of Education – Instruction Time <i>(2009 Report – Volume 3)</i>		
2011	4-4 that the Ministry of Education require school divisions to publicly report on their performance in meeting the Ministry’s instruction time requirements.	Not Implemented (as of January 31, 2014)
2011	4-5 that the Ministry of Education monitor for all core curriculum areas of study the extent to which school divisions meet the Ministry’s requirements for instruction time.	Not Implemented (as of January 31, 2014)
2011	4-6 that the Ministry of Education take corrective action where necessary to improve school division compliance with the Ministry’s requirements for instruction time.	Not Implemented (as of January 31, 2014)
Ministry of Environment – Regulating Air Emissions <i>(2003 Report – Volume 3)</i>		
2005	10-3 that the Department of Environment should establish processes to ensure permits to regulate air emissions are properly approved and expired permits are followed up promptly.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
2005	10-4 that the Department of Environment should set sound and consistent processes for monitoring compliance with permits to regulate air emissions and for handling air emission complaints.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2012)
Ministry of Environment – Regulating Reforestation <i>(2009 Report – Volume 3)</i>		
2011	6-4 that the Ministry of Environment establish processes for setting reforestation terms and conditions and for approving forest product permits.	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2014)
2011	6-5 that the Ministry of Environment establish processes to set reforestation fees at a level to cover reforestation costs.	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2014)
2011	6-7 that the Ministry of Environment establish processes to monitor operators’ compliance with reforestation requirements.	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2014)
Ministry of Finance – Information Technology Governance <i>(2009 Report – Volume 3)</i>		
2011	7-3 that the Ministry of Finance develop an information technology risk management plan based on an analysis of information technology risks.	Partially Implemented (as of March 14, 2013)
2011	7-4 that the Ministry of Finance implement a strategic information technology plan that aligns with its strategic business objectives.	Partially Implemented (as of March 14, 2013)

Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation*	Status
Ministry of Justice – Labour Costs Related to Absenteeism (2010 Report – Volume 1)		
2011	4-6 that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing monitor and control changes to work schedules to minimize labour costs in correctional centres (e.g., approval of shift trades, pay out of overtime).	Partially Implemented (as of December 31, 2012)
2011	4-7 that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing pay corrections workers for actual hours worked.	Partially Implemented (as of December 31, 2012)
Ministry of Justice – Rehabilitate Adult Inmates (2008 Report – Volume 1)		
2009	2-3 that the Ministry Corrections, Public Safety and Policing consistently comply with its policies to assess inmates' needs (primary and secondary) and plan relevant programs.	Not Implemented (as of August 31, 2011)
2009	2-5 that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing monitor the proportion of inmates accessing planned rehabilitation programs before the inmates are released into the community and enhance access to rehabilitation if required.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2011)
2009	2-6 that the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing monitor re-offending rates in relation to rehabilitation programs to better evaluate its rehabilitation of inmates.	Partially Implemented (as of August 31, 2011)
Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport – Provincial Parks Capital Asset Planning (2009 Report – Volume 3)		
2011	18-1 that the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport include in its capital asset plan for the provincial park system the projected future use levels for key capital assets (including assumptions and factors influencing trends) and a summary of capital asset risks for the projected use levels.	Partially Implemented (as of September 15, 2011)
2011	18-2 that the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport set out principles in its capital asset plan to guide how it operates and maintains key capital assets in the provincial park system.	Not Implemented (as of September 15, 2011)
2011	18-3 that the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport include estimated life-cycle costs in its long-term capital asset plan for the provincial park system.	Not Implemented (as of September 15, 2011)
Ministry of Social Services – Children in Care		
2005	3-1 that the Department of Community Resources and Employment should follow its policies to ensure that children in its care are protected and that payments to care providers are authorized. <i>(2003 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2013)
2009	18-4 that the Ministry of Social Services implement a system to know how many children are the Minister's responsibility, who they are, and where they live. <i>(2008 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2013)
2009	18-6 that the Ministry of Social Services make agreements with First Nations Child and Family Services agencies to require timely and relevant information to ensure proper care for children who are wards of the Minister. <i>(2008 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2013)



Committee Report Year	Outstanding Recommendation*	Status
2009	18-7 that the Ministry of Social Services adequately monitor the First Nations Child and Family Services agencies' compliance with the Ministry's standards for approval of out-of-home care providers. <i>(2008 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2013)
2009	18-9 that the Ministry of Social Services seek regular personal contact with children who are wards of the Minister and regularly review the First Nations Child and Family Services agencies' child protection files. <i>(2008 Report – Volume 3)</i>	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2013)
Public Employees' Benefits Agency – Information Technology Security <i>(2010 Report – Volume 2)</i>		
2011	8-6 that the Public Employees Benefits Agency periodically test the effectiveness of its information technology security.	Partially Implemented (as of January 31, 2014)
Public Service Commission – MIDAS HR/Payroll <i>(2010 Report – Volume 1)</i>		
2011	9-3 that the Public Service Commission consistently document its review of payroll reports and resolution of matters resulting from its review.	Partially Implemented (as of December 31, 2013)
Regional Health Authorities – Capital Equipment Plans <i>(2001 Fall Report – Volume 2)</i>		
2002	6D-1 that all health districts should prepare capital equipment plans that contain the key elements for capital equipment plans in the public sector.	Not Implemented (as of October 31, 2012)
Saskatchewan Housing Corporation – Long-Term Capital Plan <i>(2004 Report – Volume 1)</i>		
2005	15-1 that the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's capital plan should show: - The specific measures the Corporation would use to determine the appropriate size, mix, and condition of the housing portfolio (i.e., performance measures); - The starting point of each measure (i.e., baseline); and - What the Corporation expects to achieve with the housing portfolio and by when (i.e., targets).	Partially Implemented (as of March 31, 2012)
Water Security Agency – Dam Safety <i>(2005 Report – Volume 1)</i>		
2005	3-2 that the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority should have up-to-date tested emergency preparedness plans for each of its major dams (i.e., Rafferty, Alameda, Qu'Appelle River, and Gardiner).	Partially Implemented (as of December 2, 2013)
2005	3-3 that the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority should set processes that ensure its manuals always include complete procedures to operate, maintain, and monitor dam safety.	Partially Implemented (as of December 2, 2013)
Water Security Agency – Identifying Risks to the Water Supply <i>(2010 Report – Volume 2)</i>		
2011	19-7 that the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority consistently document identified causes of risks to the water supply.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2013)
2011	19-8 that the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority communicate to the public risks about the water supply including likelihood and impact of these risks.	Partially Implemented (as of September 30, 2013)

* The number preceding the outstanding recommendation reflects the chapter and recommendation number of our related report. In some cases, the Government has reorganized or renamed agencies since the recommendation was initially made. Those recommendations are grouped under the current agency responsible.