

Chapter 40

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is crucial for a well-managed parliamentary system of government. It provides a vital link in the accountability chain of public resources and contributes to supporting the public's confidence in the Government.

The Committee's discussions and recommendations to the Legislative Assembly promote a more open and accountable government, as well as better management of government operations. By reviewing chapters in our Reports, questioning government officials, 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 implementation of the Committee's recommendations by the Government and its agencies remains fairly strong. As of September 2021, the Government fully implemented 74% of Committee recommendations made during the previous five years, and it partially implemented 64% of the remaining recommendations.

The Committee is falling behind in its review of our Reports' chapters. At September 30, 2021, the Committee has not yet reviewed 148 chapters (2020: 114 chapters; 2019: 69 chapters; 2018: 82 chapters).

Timely review of our Reports' chapters demonstrates the Committee undertakes appropriate scrutiny and holds agencies accountable.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview and brief description of the Committee's composition, role, and responsibilities, as well as how it reports to the Legislative Assembly. It highlights the Committee's activities since our last chapter to the Assembly about the Committee in our *2020 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 47.

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

3.0 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES' OVERVIEW

3.1 Committee Composition

At the beginning of each Legislature, the Legislative Assembly appoints members to the Committee comprised of a member of the official Opposition as Committee Chair and a Government member as Deputy Chair.



On December 8, 2020, the Legislative Assembly adopted a provisional order to expand the membership of the Committee from seven members to eight, including two members of the official Opposition for the duration of the 29th Legislature. **Figure 1** sets out the Committee's members as of September 30, 2021.

Figure 1—Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts at September 30, 2021

Members' Name		
Trent Wotherspoon, Chair Colleen Young, Deputy Chair	Marv Friesen Todd Goudy Delbert Kirsch	Hugh Nerlien Dana Skoropad Aleana Young

Source: www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-committees/public-accounts/ (5 October 2021).

3.2 Responsibilities Include Reviewing Public Accounts and Our Reports

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

The Committee acts as a non-partisan oversight body that helps the Assembly hold the Government accountable for its management of public resources. *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* require the Committee to review and report to the Assembly on the results of its review of both Public Accounts and Provincial Auditor's Reports.

The Assembly refers the Public Accounts and the Reports of our Office to the Committee.¹ 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 volume includes comparisons of appropriations to expenditures by vote and by program, and details of expenses (e.g., payees who received \$50,000 or more for salaries and benefits, transfers, or goods and services). It also includes other information, including key financial information of some pension plans and trust funds administered by the Government, on remission of taxes and fees, and on road-use fuel tax accountability.²
- The Reports of the Provincial Auditor contain the results of our examinations of the Government and its various agencies. Chapters within our Reports identify whether the Committee agreed with our recommendations, or made its own recommendations.

The Committee asked us to monitor compliance with its recommendations and report on their status. Chapters within our Reports provide an update on the status of recommendation implementation.

¹ By law, chapters related to Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan and its related agencies (e.g., Saskatchewan Power Corporation, Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation) within our Reports are referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

² www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/finance#programs-and-services (5 October 2021).

Government officials attend Committee meetings to answer questions about their agencies' administration. In advance of the meetings, agencies provide the Committee with status updates that set out actions taken or planned to address recommendations.³ Our Office attends the meetings to help the Committee in its reviews. The Committee discusses and recommends actions on issues raised by Committee members and our Office.

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 (agencies). 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 measurements.

3.3 Reports of the Committee

The Committee's reports include its findings and recommendations resulting from the Committee's review of our Reports.

Typically, the Committee reports to the Assembly at the end of each legislative session. Its reports, once tabled in the Assembly, are publicly available on the Committee's website.⁴

The Committee requires the Government to respond in writing to its reports. Their response is also publicly available on the Committee's website.

The Committee's website also provides information on its composition, as well as Committee meeting records (i.e., Hansard verbatim, minutes, videos, reports).

During the period from October 1, 2019 to September 29, 2020, the Committee made one report to the Assembly.⁵ On May 12, 2021, the Committee presented the *First Report of the Twenty-Ninth Legislature*. This report outlined the Provincial Auditor selection process.⁶

4.0 STATUS OF COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF OUR REPORTS

The Committee is falling behind in its review of chapters in our Reports.

Between October 2020 and September 2021, the Committee met twice to review 38 chapters from seven of our Reports.⁷ These Reports included the results of our examinations of the Government and its agencies, including recommendations for improvement. At another meeting in December 2020, the Committee considered our

³ Status updates are tabled with the Committee and available at www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-committees/public-accounts/ (7 October 2021).

⁴ www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-committees/public-accounts/ (7 October 2021).

⁵ On June 29, 2020, the Committee tabled the *Fourth Report of the Twenty-Eighth Legislature* to the Assembly, resulting from its review of our Reports.

⁶ On February 16, 2021, the Provincial Auditor submitted a letter of resignation to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Her resignation took effect June 30, 2021.

⁷ The Committee reviewed the following Reports: 2017 Volume 1, 2018 (Volumes 1 and 2), 2019 (Volumes 1 and 2), and 2020 (Volumes 1 and 2).



Annual Report on Operations for the Year Ended March 31, 2020 and our *Business and Financial Plan* for the Year Ended March 31, 2022.

As shown in **Figure 2**, the Committee continued to meet less frequently to review our Reports resulting in an increase in more outstanding chapters. As of September 30, 2021, the Committee had not yet reviewed 148 chapters.

Figure 2—Frequency of Committee Meetings with Corresponding Number of Chapters Not Yet Reviewed for the 12-Month Periods Ending September 30

12-Month Period Ending September 30	Number of PAC Meetings	Number of Meetings that PAC Considered Our Reports	Number of Chapters Not Yet Reviewed by PAC
2021 ^A	5	2	148
2020	4	1	114
2019	8	7	69
2018	4	2	82
2017	11	9	55

Source: Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan (October 2021).

^A Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee cancelled a meeting in March 2021 where it intended to review our Reports.

As of September 30, 2021, the Committee had not yet completed its review of chapters from our following Reports:

- One of 30 chapters from our *2018 Report – Volume 1*
- Twelve of 46 chapters from our *2018 Report – Volume 2*
- Thirteen of 42 chapters from our *2019 Report – Volume 1*
- Twenty-seven of 46 chapters from our *2019 Report – Volume 2*
- Twenty-five of 30 chapters from our *2020 Report – Volume 1*
- Thirty-nine of 45 chapters from our *2020 Report – Volume 2*
- All thirty-one chapters from our *2021 Report – Volume 1*

A significant number of the outstanding chapters relate to health sector agencies (e.g., Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Health, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency).

The Committee considers, on average, 22 chapters during a full-day meeting. Therefore, the Committee will need to meet approximately seven full days in order for it to be up-to-date in its review of our past Reports.

Timely review of chapters and recommendations in our Reports demonstrates the Committee undertakes appropriate scrutiny and holds agencies accountable.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overall Implementation Rate of Committee Recommendations

Consistent with prior years, the implementation of the Committee's recommendations by the Government and its agencies remains fairly strong.

As of September 2021, the Government fully implemented 74% (September 2020: 82%) of the Committee's 403 recommendations. The Government partially implemented 64% (September 2020: 53%) of the remaining recommendations.

5.2 Status of Previous Committee Recommendations

The following table sets out, by agency, the number of Committee recommendations not yet implemented and not included elsewhere in this Report, and the last Report in which our Office gave an update on the status of recommendations.

Our Office follows up on the status of these recommendations until they are implemented or no longer relevant.

Agency	Chapter Title (Initial PAS Report) ^A	Last PAS Report and Chapter	Number of Committee Recommendations Not Yet Implemented
Government of Saskatchewan:			
	Modernizing Government Budgeting and Financial Reporting (2013 Special Report)	2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 45	3
Ministries:			
Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety	Community Rehabilitation of Adult Offenders (2011 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 3)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 25	2
	Providing Primary Medical Care in Adult Secure-Custody Correctional Centres (2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 3)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 27	7
Education	Capital Asset Planning for Schools (2013 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12	1
Energy and Resources	Managing Oil and Gas Wells (2012 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 31)	2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 17	2
Environment	Regulating Landfills (2013 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 29)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 16	2
	Preventing the Entry and Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in Saskatchewan (2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 7)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 29	2
Finance	Monitoring the Fuel Tax Exemption Program (2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8)	2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 24	4
Government Relations	Safe Drinking Water in Northern Settlements (2012 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 15	4
Health	Preventing Diabetes-Related Health Complications (2012 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 32)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 32	3
	Providing Special Needs Equipment for Persons with Disabilities (2016 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 27)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 17	2



Agency	Chapter Title (Initial PAS Report) ^A	Last PAS Report and Chapter	Number of Committee Recommendations Not Yet Implemented
	Detecting Inappropriate Physician Payments (2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 6)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 17	2
Immigration and Career Training	Coordinating English-Language Programs (2015 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 19	2
Justice and Attorney General	Supporting Provincial Court of Saskatchewan to Manage Court Workloads (2014 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 10)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 33	2
Justice and Attorney General and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety	Leading the Community Safety and Well-Being Initiative (2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 10)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 20	2
SaskBuilds and Procurement	Securing the Data Centre (2006 Report – Volume 3, Chapter 6)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 26	1
Social Services	Minimizing Absenteeism (2015 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 39)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 43	2
	Investigating Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect (2018 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 26)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 42	4
Crown Agencies—Saskatchewan Health Authority:			
Saskatchewan Health Authority	Triaging Emergency Department Patients in Saskatoon Hospitals (2013 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 30)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 23	1
	Medication Management in Long-Term Care in Kindersley and Surrounding Area (2014 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 35)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 27	2
	Safe and Timely Discharge of Patients from Regina Hospitals (2015 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 14)	2019 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 41	2
	Delivering Accessible and Responsive Ground Ambulance Services in Southwest Saskatchewan (2016 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 25)	2019 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 39	6
	Efficient Use of MRIs in Regina (2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 10)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 25	4
	Overseeing Contracted Special-Care Homes in Saskatoon and Surrounding Area (2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 29	5
	Minimizing Employee Absenteeism (2017 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 25)	2020 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 28	4
	Providing Timely Access to Mental Health and Addictions Services in Prince Albert and Surrounding Area (2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 8)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 22	5
Crown Agencies—School Divisions:			
Prairie Spirit School Division No. 206	Maintaining Facilities (2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12)	2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 33	6
Regina Roman Catholic Separate Division No. 81	English as an Additional Language Programming (2016 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 29)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 35	1
Saskatoon School Division No. 13	Supporting Students with Intensive Needs (2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 11)	2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 11	11
Sun West School Division No. 207	Annual Integrated Audit (2017 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 2)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 2	1

Agency	Chapter Title (Initial PAS Report) ^A	Last PAS Report and Chapter	Number of Committee Recommendations Not Yet Implemented
St. Paul's School Roman Catholic Separate Division No. 20	Promoting Good Student Health and Physical Fitness (2015 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 40)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 30	1
Crown Agencies—Various:			
Saskatchewan Cancer Agency	Delivering the Screening Program for Breast Cancer (2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 14)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 37	1
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority	Regulating Commercial Permittees' On-table Sale of Liquor (2017 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 11)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 25	2
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency	Coordinating Provincial Emergency Preparedness (2015 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 40	1
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board	Coordinating Injured Workers' Return to Work (2016 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 31)	2019 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 43	6
Water Security Agency	Dam Safety (2005 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 3)	2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 44	2
	Regulating Drainage (2018 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 12)	2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 31	9
Western Development Museum	Permanently Removing Historical Artifacts (2016 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 30)	2020 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 45	1

Source: Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan (October 2021).

^APAS – Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan

