



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Tuesday, December 2, 2025
9 a.m.

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The 31st Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Chair
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Deputy Chair

de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)*
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
van Dijken, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)**

* substitution for Marie Renaud

** substitution for Chantelle de Jonge

Office of the Auditor General Participants

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| W. Doug Wylie | Auditor General |
| Robert Driesen | Assistant Auditor General |
| Karen Zoltenko | Business Leader |

Support Staff

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|-----------------------|---|
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| Trafton Koenig | Law Clerk |
| Vani Govindarajan | Parliamentary Counsel |
| Philip Massolin | Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services |
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| Abdul Bhurgri | Research Officer |
| Rachel McGraw | Research Officer |
| Warren Huffman | Committee Clerk |
| Jody Rempel | Committee Clerk |
| Aaron Roth | Committee Clerk |
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9 a.m.

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. As we begin this morning, I would like to invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves. We will begin to my right.

Mr. Lundy: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lundy, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mrs. Sawyer: Good morning, everyone. Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Wiebe: Ron Wiebe, MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Ms Zoltenko: Karen Zoltenko, business leader from the office of the Auditor General.

Mr. Driesen: Good morning. Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Member Eremenko: Good morning. Janet Eremenko, MLA for Calgary-Currie.

Member Ellingson: Morning. Court Ellingson, MLA, Calgary-Foothills.

Ms Govindarajan: Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you, and we will now go to those joining us online. Please introduce yourself as I call your name.

MLA Jackie Lovely.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, MLA, Camrose constituency.

The Chair: Thank you. I will note for the record the following substitutions: Mr. Wiebe for Ms de Jonge and Mr. Ellingson for Ms Renaud.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by video-conference are encouraged to turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a speaker list are asked to e-mail or send a message to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. I think, Member Lovely, you can also use the raise-hand function. Please

set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Comments should flow through the chair at all times.

Approval of the agenda. Members, are there any changes in relation to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for this December 2, 2025, meeting? So moved. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour? All in favour online? Any opposed? The motion is carried.

Approval of minutes. We have minutes from the November 25, 2025, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on November 25, 2025? Thank you. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Subcommittee on the committee's business report is the next item. The subcommittee on committee business met on November 12, 2025, to discuss making recommendations related to the committee's spring 2026 meeting schedule, the committee's trial of conducting audit-focused meetings, and some best practices that the former deputy chair and I raised during our oral report on the 2025 Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference. The subcommittee's report was posted on the committee's internal site for the members' review, and I would note that the committee is not required to consider the subcommittee's recommendations; however, they provide a good starting point for the discussion.

As is the normal practice, the committee may want to decide on a meeting schedule during the spring session to provide ample time for committee members, the ministries, the office of the Auditor General, the Auditor General, and the LAO to prepare for meetings. PAC typically has between seven and nine meetings during the spring session, taking into account a two-week break during main estimates consideration.

The subcommittee has recommended that the committee meet with the following seven ministries during the 2026 spring session to review their most recent annual reports and related reports of the recommendations of the Auditor General in the following order: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities, the Ministry of Education and Childcare, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services, the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas, and the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services. The Ministry of Justice was on our list of ministries to meet with during the 2025 fall session. However, it was not scheduled because when the 2025 fall schedule was set, the meeting date would have fallen after the sessional calendar ended. Following the committee's normal practice, the Ministry of Justice should be scheduled as the first ministry we meet during the 2026 spring session.

I will now open the floor to questions, comments, or motions related to the schedule of the meeting for spring 2026. If members are in favour of the subcommittee's recommended list, we have a motion prepared. If members have other recommendations or motions, they are free to do so at this point.

Mr. Schmidt: Just some clarification, Mr. Chair, on process. It looks like we're on agenda item number 4, the subcommittee on committee business report. Do we not just, like, take the subcommittee's report as read and then move on to the other agenda items?

The Chair: No, and I think I was moving on to number 5 as well. I didn't mention that expressly, but I moved on to number 5.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. If that's the case, Mr. Chair, then I do have a motion to move regarding the committee schedule.

The Chair: Go ahead, Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: I move the following,

that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the following ministries to appear before the committee to respond to questions regarding each ministry's most recent annual report, responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period, and reports of the Auditor General relevant to the responsibilities of the ministry, and invite the ministries and entities relevant to the following reports of the Auditor General to appear before the committee for audit-focused meetings on those reports: one, Justice; two, audit-focused meeting to review the Auditor General's An Examination of Community Laboratory Services (Contract with DynaLife) report; three, primary and preventative care; four, Hospital and Surgical Health Services; five, Assisted Living and Social Services; six, Education and Childcare; seven, Energy and Minerals; eight, Public Safety and Emergency Services; nine, Affordability and Utilities; and ten, audit-focused meeting to review the Auditor General's upcoming audit report on the Alberta Health Services procurement practices.

And then do I get an opportunity to motivate this?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. This proposed schedule preserves, more or less, the spring meeting schedule that the subcommittee recommends, but it importantly reinstates the practice of holding audit-focused meetings, specifically to review the Auditor General's recent report on DynaLife as well as to make time in the schedule for reviewing the upcoming Auditor General's report on Alberta Health Services procurement practices.

I want to congratulate Member Rowswell and the chair of the committee for starting this practice of audit-focused meetings. I think our experience with the surface water report and the public housing report was helpful in terms of pressing the departments to do better, and I think it's really important to the people of Alberta that we review the Auditor General's examination of the community laboratory services' contract with DynaLife report, particularly because the Auditor General identified a number of unusual challenges that I think this committee would be well suited to address.

You know, the Auditor General identified that the government claimed legal and cabinet privilege over a wide range of documents without providing any justification or explanation as to why they did that. They had a team of lawyers go over 10,000 documents line by line before they were provided to the Auditor General, which is something that is highly unusual, and they also limited access to documentation with large sections of thousands of documents redacted.

9:10

All of that meant that the Auditor General couldn't fully complete the report into the DynaLife contract. As a result, we don't know how much Alberta taxpayers are on the hook for getting out of that contract. We don't know the full extent about the decision-making process that ended up with at least this \$100 million bill to Albertans. There are a lot of questions that remain unanswered, even though the Auditor General had a chance to review this report, and I think that it's important for the Public Accounts Committee to continue to hold these audit-focused meetings.

Furthermore, we know that the Auditor General is working on the Alberta Health Services procurement practices report, and that has been the focus of a lot of investigations of this government.

Now, the government has clearly said that they want to, you know, be open and transparent. In fact, the Premier, in a recent news interview, said that her biggest regret as Premier has been failing to adequately scrutinize AHS's procurement practices. She said, quote, by leaving things in the hands solely of an agency that had no oversight, there are some things that went wrong.

Here we have an opportunity for all of us to carry out the Premier's wishes and look into AHS procurement practices once the Auditor General's report has been released. I'm certain that members would be in favour of doing what the Premier wants and examining this closely. Those are the reasons for proposing this schedule that I've brought forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak? Member Lundy.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it would make some sense to move forward. I'll be speaking against this amendment. I think we should move forward with our list as agreed to at the subcommittee meeting. I might add that a couple of the ministries on the proposed list have yet to produce an annual report, which we would expect . . .

The Chair: Just to be clear, that's the only motion now on the floor.

Mr. Lundy: Sure. Yeah.

The Chair: If you want to amend it . . .

Mr. Lundy: Yeah, I can speak just to this . . .

The Chair: It's not an amendment to the subcommittee report. Members are free to choose their own motions on the schedule, but that's the only motion on the floor.

Mr. Lundy: Yes. So I can speak against this motion. Is that what you are saying?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't, then, to your comments, necessarily go into a lot of detail other than to say that I think we should reject this amendment, to your point, if we are going to be entertaining other motions on what our schedule should look like.

Thank you.

The Chair: This is not an amendment. This is the main motion that is on the floor, so if you are speaking against this motion, please go ahead.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you for the correction. I'm speaking against this motion, not this amendment.

As I was commenting on, this motion would include two ministries that have yet to produce an annual report and are unlikely to do so by the spring schedule, so it would be difficult to review that. I would also note that in our agenda today we have a discussion coming about audit-focused meetings. I would speak against this motion for that reason, as our committee has yet to make a determination on that. For those two reasons I would encourage our committee members to oppose this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Member Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to speak in support of the motion. I'm confused. I believe all the annual reports

for fiscal year 2024-25 are posted. I'm not clear on Member Lundy's concerns that we don't have the information available for all of the ministries.

What I think is really critical here and where I believe consensus had initially been reached is around, you know, floating a bit of a trial balloon on bringing forward audit-focused meetings. There were supposed to be three. They stopped at two, and I think that there was clear agreement that there was great benefit to being able to talk about those audit-focused meetings and actually delve deeper into the audit reports that came from the Auditor General.

Per Standing Order 53(1) "Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available." I think it is squarely within the mandate of this committee to delve deeper into those Auditor General reports, particularly the performance-related ones. It's as much about sound accounting practices and financial record keeping as it is about value for money spent. That's the mandate of this committee. I think we're all honoured to be here and demonstrate that there is, in fact, value for taxpayer dollars. It's where those Auditor General performance reviews are certainly so critical and where, again, there is the opportunity for us to not just accept the report and then put it up on the shelf; in fact, we are identifying, endorsing the recommendations, perhaps asking for the recommendations to go a little bit further, and then in the interview process with ministries and departmental staff to actually talk about: what is your plan to accomplish those recommendations?

Just trusting it on face value is incredibly challenging when we've heard already in the last ministry-related conversations that there are recommendations that have been outstanding for many years from the Auditor General. To be able to do a deep dive into the Auditor General performance-related reports and ask some of those pressing questions I think in a way that Albertans would expect from all of us to say, "What's the plan?" or "What is the holdup, and how is that actually going to be rectified?" We know in jurisdictions across the country that this is a practice of other committees. I think in many ways we're, in fact, the outlier for not doing that deeper dive into the Auditor General reports.

The AG's office operates on a significant multimillion-dollar budget every single year for us to ensure that their work is in fact informing departmental decision-making, budget-making decisions. I think this is exactly the place where we need to be talking about those reports a little bit more thoroughly.

I know the members opposite weren't pleased with the press release from the opposition caucus about public housing units and the deferred maintenance that is putting people at risk, frankly, but that is precisely the role of this committee. It's to do – that Auditor General report was out in the public, and it is precisely the opportunity of this committee to talk about them further and ensure that plans are actually put in place to implement the recommendations that the AG has put forward in a very objective and performance-related way to ensure that we're providing value for taxpayer dollar.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.
MLA van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Chair. For clarity I would suggest that we have a couple of ministries up there that have not produced an annual report and cannot speak to an annual report in the spring of '26, so I think it would be premature to ask them to come to the Public Accounts Committee when our role here is to go through annual reports with departments.

I also believe that we have a Leg. Offices Committee that oversees the work that the Auditor General is doing and is able to

ensure that that work continues in a way that is transparent to Albertans. To bring that work into the realm of the Public Accounts Committee I think is probably interfering with the work that the Leg. Offices Committee is doing with those officers of the Legislature.

The Chair: Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've heard many bad-faith arguments in my 10 years as an elected official, but this really takes the cake. To suggest that Leg. Offices is the committee that oversees the Auditor General's work is purposely misrepresenting what work the Leg. Offices Committee does and what work this committee does. Leg. Offices doesn't do anything to review the actual reports that the Auditor General releases. They just oversee the budget of the office of the Auditor General. That's it.

9:20

Furthermore, this red herring about departments that haven't yet produced annual reports is really hard to swallow because we have continually reviewed annual reports for ministries that don't exist, and I'm thinking in particular around child care. That one has bounced around ministries three or four times over the last few years, and we've always looked at the annual reports for child care, regardless of which ministry it happens to be in at the time. You know, for the members to walk in here and say, "Oh, it's not our job; this is some other committee's work" is not to be believed.

I do want to pose a question to the members opposite since Member Lundy raised this. He said: oh, further in the agenda we have a discussion around audit-focused meetings. Is it his intention, then, to bring forward a schedule for audit-focused meetings at that time, and if it is, then why can't members opposite support this motion?

The Chair: Any other discussion?

Mr. Schmidt: Not going to answer that question, hey?

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we can have that discussion on audit-focused meetings at the next part of our agenda. This part of our agenda is to set our schedule. I've already spoken against this motion for setting our schedule. I look forward to the discussion later on in our agenda.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Good.

Mr. Chair, I just want to make one final comment, and then I think we can wrap up this part of the agenda. You know, I don't think the members opposite ran for office to cover up corruption and mismanagement in the Premier's office and in the health ministry, but that's exactly what they're voting for if they vote down this motion. Shame on them, I guess, for carrying the Premier's water and covering up corruption and mismanagement and refusing to even get to the bottom of all of these issues. One last chance for them to change their mind and do the right thing here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Seeing no other comments, I'll put the question. All those members in favour of the motion moved by MLA Schmidt? All those opposed?

The motion is defeated

Mr. Schmidt: Can we have a recorded vote, please, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure.

We have a request for a recorded vote, and the clerk will conduct the recorded vote. All those in favour, please raise your hand, and the committee clerk will do the rest.

Mr. Huffman: Mr. Ellingson, Member Eremenko, hon. Mr. Schmidt.

The Chair: All those opposed, please raise your hand.

Mr. Huffman: Mr. Lundy, Mr. van Dijken, Mrs. Sawyer, Mr. Rowswell, Mr. Wiebe, and Ms. Lovely.

Mr. Chair, for the motion, six; against, three.

The Chair: Other way around.

Mr. Huffman: I apologize. Sorry. For the motion, three; against, six.

The Chair: Thank you.

This motion is defeated.

Are there any other motions at this time? Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'd like to move the subcommittee recommendation if you could bring it up.

The Chair: You want to move the motion that the subcommittee has recommended?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

The Chair: We do have that.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the following ministries to appear before the committee to respond to questions regarding each ministry's most recent report, responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period, and the report of the Auditor General relevant to the responsibilities of the ministry: the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Affordability and Utilities, Ministry of Education and Childcare, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services, Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas, and Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Rowswell: It's the subcommittee's recommendation, and I'd like to follow that.

The Chair: Any other discussion?

Seeing none, I will put the question before the committee. All those in favour of the motion moved by MLA Rowswell? All those opposed? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The next agenda item is audit-focused meetings. As members are aware, over the past year the committee has conducted the process of holding audit-focused meetings to review identified audit reports of the Auditor General. We may have used the word "trial," but I may not be using that anymore because section 53(1), as was referred to by Member Eremenko, says that all the Auditor General reports stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee, so it is up to the members if they want to include those reports in their schedule or not. As such, that's within the purview of the committee. Discussion around that began when the former deputy chair and I attended the 2024 CCPAC conference and witnessed that many jurisdictions in Canada do conduct a review of audit reports in addition to Public Accounts reports of the different ministries.

The committee held its first audit-focused report on April 29, focusing on the Surface Water Management audit, and the second meeting on the Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing report on October 14. A third audit-focused meeting was scheduled for November 18; however, the committee cancelled that meeting. At this point we do not have any audit-focused meetings on the schedule. The subcommittee couldn't reach consensus on a recommendation for the upcoming spring schedule. However, the subcommittee urges members to discuss how they want to proceed with audit-focused meetings, talk about things that work, that didn't work, whether they want to continue holding audit-focused meetings going forward and, if so, the format and process for such meetings.

Although we don't have any audit report on schedule, I personally believe that that's something that is in the standing orders, that these Auditor General reports stand permanently referred to this Public Accounts Committee. I believe that the committee should look into those reports. From my perspective, those audit-focused meetings were excellent examples of how effective PACs are intended to function, and I remain hopeful that the committee will build on that success going forward.

Before I turn it over to members, I would like to invite the deputy chair to provide some comments if he would like to do so.

Mr. Lundy: Oh, sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you mentioned, this was an issue that we thought was something that the committee would like to discuss at this meeting. I would confirm the chair's accounts of that and would look forward to some discussion on this process.

9:30

If I might provide a few quick comments on this, you know, I think it's important to understand that when we invite ministries and, of course, the Auditor General to all our PAC meetings and we meet with those ministries, any work that they have done, including audit-focused reports, certainly has an opportunity to be discussed with the associated ministry when they join us. We certainly, as a committee, have an opportunity to review those reports or any report that the Auditor General may have completed when we talk to the ministry officials. I think it's important to understand that that is under the purview of our committee. I know that we've had some good discussions based on what the Auditor General has brought forward at those meetings, so I look forward to hearing from committee members on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now open the floor for discussion. MLA Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have another motion that I'd like to bring forward.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Schmidt: I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts hold two audit-focused meetings during the 2026 spring sitting to review the Auditor General's report titled An Examination of Community Laboratory Services (Contract with DynaLIFE) and the audit report on Alberta Health Services procurement practices after the report has been released, and invite the relevant ministries and entities to whom the Auditor General has made recommendations to appear before the committee.

Again, I can't overstate the importance of getting to the bottom of the work that the Auditor General has done and the significant roadblocks that government put in front of the Auditor General's

office in investigating the DynaLife contract and I presume has also put in front of the Alberta Health Services procurement investigation although that remains to be seen. Yeah. I just hope that members have already had enough time to realize the error of their first decision, voting down a proposal that would have included these in the schedule, and vote in favour of this motion to do the right thing.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? Member Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Yeah. I'd like to speak in support of the motion as well. In the letter from the Auditor General concerning the DynaLife report, the AG says, "Our access to information was restricted by [Alberta Health Services] and this restriction was supported by the Department of Health" when there was just one and not four. These comments can't be ignored and the mechanism to investigate them, Mr. Chair, is right here in the Public Accounts Committee.

The Canadian Audit and Accounting Foundation reinforces that entities are not accountable to the legislative auditor. The auditor is doing their job to audit the finances and the performance of departments, and the department is not accountable to the auditor. The department is accountable to this committee. So when the auditor is raising such significant flags in the DynaLife report – another example: "government did not follow its own procurement frameworks – the very processes designed to safeguard public resources and ensure value for money." This is exactly the place where we can probe further with the departmental staff, with the ministries, the individuals responsible for, for example, procurement frameworks, and get to the bottom of what exactly the auditor was trying to uncover but was unable as a result of their obfuscation or, you know, shredding of documents. This is precisely the committee where that work needs to take place.

It's ironic that for the exact same reason that the members opposite voted down the last motion, saying that the annual reports aren't available for those ministries, and here they're saying that it's the annual reports and the regular ministry attendance at these meetings that will allow for us to delve deeper. The very fact that those ministries don't have annual reports currently available because they're so new means that we can't have a timely way to address the concerns that are being raised here. That is exactly why we need to be talking about the DynaLife report from the Auditor General, because there won't be another annual report specifically to this as a result of their shell game of moving departments and ministries around, or departments around different ministries, so we won't have an opportunity to actually get to the heart of this in a quick and expedited way, which I would expect Albertans would want and I would expect the members opposite would want, too. How long are we going to sit on these procurement framework issues until the right ministry puts out the right annual report so that they can come and sit at this committee? We have the information before us. We have the mandate before us to address it now. What are they so afraid of?

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, just give me a minute or so. Thank you.

I think given Standing Order 53(1): "Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available" – that's the standing order passed by the Legislature. It's not, as such, open to the committee to decide that they will not do that permanently or anything. What's open to the committee is whether they would

schedule one of those Auditor General reports coming in spring or not. That's what this motion is about.

Seeing no other discussion, I will just leave it to the committee to make that determination by voting for or against this motion. I will ask the question. All those in favour of this motion asking to hold two audit-focused meetings in the coming session, please say aye.

Member Eremenko: I'm sorry. I'm just not sure. I was just confirming procedural . . .

The Chair: The question has been called.

All those in favour of the motion moved by Member Schmidt? All those opposed. Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

Moving on. Agenda item 7, best practices from the 2025 CCPAC-CCOLA conference. In the oral report on this year's CCPAC conference, that the former deputy chair and I delivered to the committee, we identified four best practices that we hope the committee would consider implementing for our Alberta Public Accounts Committee.

The first recommendation was that some jurisdictions read out a short purpose statement at the beginning of each meeting that sets out the mandate and purpose of the Public Accounts Committee. The subcommittee has recommended that the committee consider introducing a purpose statement to be read out at the beginning of each meeting that highlights the committee's mandate, objective, and purpose.

Some things that we identified for the committee to consider are: the committee's mandate and purpose, that the committee's role is to examine the administration of government policy and not the merit of it, that the committee works in partnership with the Auditor General, and that the members work in a collaborative and nonpartisan way whenever possible.

If there is an interest in pursuing the idea of a purpose statement, the committee may choose to task the subcommittee with making a recommendation on the wording of the purpose statement, which could be presented to the committee for review and final approval.

I will open the floor for discussion. If the former deputy chair wants to make any comments to that.

Mr. Lundy: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that in your overview you mentioned that there was consensus on two of the four items and we were hoping for a discussion, perhaps, on the other two as well, so I look forward to that discussion.

Thank you.

9:40

The Chair: Anyone else?

I think I will go one by one on those recommendations. On this particular recommendation for a purpose statement, is it the committee's will that we proceed with this purpose statement, and the subcommittee can present a draft at some future meeting? Is that the consensus? Anybody opposed? I think, seeing none, that is the direction from the committee, that we draft a purpose statement. We can discuss it in subcommittee and present it before the committee for final approval in our next meeting.

The next best practice that the subcommittee considered was that some other Canadian PACs require ministries to provide a comprehensive implementation plan detailing how they intend to address the recommendations of the Auditor General. The subcommittee could not reach a consensus on a recommended path and indicated that we will discuss that as a whole in the committee. My understanding is that currently ministries in Alberta provide comprehensive implementation plans and recommendations of the

Auditor General to the Auditor General's office. By contrast, our committee receives from the ministry a less detailed status report on the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations.

At this point I would like to ask the Assistant Auditor General if he wants to weigh in on this regarding the formats and types of the content contained in the implementation plans that his office receives or he is aware that other PACs receive from the ministries. Mr. Driesen.

Mr. Driesen: Thank you, Chair. Yeah. I'll provide the committee here with just an overview of the process and what entities, that we issue recommendations to, provide to us, and then what we do with those over time.

An implementation plan really just lays out how the entity will change its processes to deal with the recommendations that we've issued. Those plans would include the processes that they plan on changing, aligned with the weaknesses that have been identified, who's going to be responsible for making those changes, and the timeline of when those will be completed. It will also lay out what sort of documentation will be produced, which will be able to demonstrate that these changes have been made and also what the entity has done to ensure that what they've implemented is operating effectively. It's not just so much what is maybe planned or designed to be changed; it's making sure that when that is implemented, it is actually working effectively; otherwise, you really haven't dealt with the recommendation.

We ask to get a copy of these implementation plans within six months of issuing a recommendation to the entity, and we want to receive those before the entity has started to execute their plan. What we do is review these plans, take a look at what the entity is intending to do to implement the recommendation, and see if there's anything in there that we can see is a bit of a fatal flaw that might cause an issue with those recommendations not being dealt with. We do that just to try and ensure that no time is wasted, money is wasted in trying to implement processes that are not going to be effective in the end dealing with recommendations. When that is completed, we do issue a formal letter back to the entity to say that we concur that the plan, if they execute it this way, should deal with the recommendation.

We've had some issues with not receiving those plans within that six-month timeline. Sometimes we don't receive them at all. We do follow up to try and get a good understanding. Sometimes when they are received late, we will still provide some feedback to the entity. But in some cases where they have already started to execute the plan, if we identify that there are some issues, that will require them to decide whether they're going to go back and try to rework where those issues have popped up.

After they have completed their implementation, they'll notify us that the recommendation has been implemented. Then we will go about planning when it makes some sense for us to go in and assess that implementation. Again, some considerations are: is there enough data that they can demonstrate to us that the recommendation has been implemented and that it is working effectively? Depending on the recommendation, the amount of data that needs to kind of accumulate over time might vary a little bit. If they're able to provide that information to us and can demonstrate that the recommendation is implemented, that's when we're in a position to then be able to say that and report back to the committee and to Albertans that those recommendations are in fact implemented.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other discussion? MLA Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: I have a motion to bring forward on this issue if I may, Mr. Chair. Just before I do, we're only dealing with the sub-committee's discussion about requesting ministry implementation plans at this point, right?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Schmidt: Then I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts request each ministry appearing before the committee to provide its implementation plan for all outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General made to the ministry.

It was revealing to me and to my colleagues here on this side of the table to look at the implementation plans that the departments developed for the surface water recommendations from the Auditor General and the public housing recommendations that were brought forward by the Auditor General and, particularly with respect to the public housing piece, how long the department is kicking the can down the road.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt you. That's the motion.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes.

The Chair: How about you read that into the record? I think you just read the first part, not the second.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, it's up to the chair. Mr. Chair, I was under the understanding that we were going through these conference recommendations one by one. When we drafted this, this was assuming that we would be dealing with them all at the same time.

The Chair: So you want it separate?

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, that's right. I'm just bringing forward the motion with part A.

The Chair: Member Schmidt, is that okay? Does that capture your . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, that captures the intent.

As I was saying, I think it was quite clear from reviewing the ministry's implementation plan regarding the public housing reporting information that the department is clearly kicking the can down the road and not interested in actually implementing the auditor's recommendations. When we reviewed that, we provided value to the people of Alberta by holding the department to account for the promises that it made to the Auditor General.

This is the only way that the people of Alberta see these implementation plans publicly. Otherwise, these are just documents that are held within the ministry and held by the Auditor General. By asking for these implementation plans, the people of Alberta can see what the government has promised to do with respect to implementing the Auditor General's recommendations and see whether or not our committee is holding those departments to account for those promises. I think that these have tremendous value for accountability, and I think that it would be wise for the committee to ask for these implementation plans for every recommendation from the Auditor General from every ministry.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other comments? MLA Lundy.

9:50

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Auditor General's office for their comments earlier and sort of highlighting how the implementation process works and the value that they bring to this process. I would, you know, just maybe preface my

comments by saying that the role of our committee is to provide oversight. We're not an operational management committee. I think we found that when we get the opportunity to go over what the Auditor General brings to us through this committee, we always, of course, make sure that we're looking at what they're talking about and their information that they provided in relation to how the ministry is progressing on their Auditor General's recommendations. I think that's a process that would make sense to continue as is.

I would ask to not support this motion. I feel it would set PAC on a track where we're looking at some day-to-day operational functions, which is steering away from PAC's role as a high-level financial accountability framework. So I would suggest voting against this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.
Anybody else?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, again, we're seeing bad-faith arguments made by the members opposite. This is not a day-to-day operational review of the goings-on in the ministry. This is an opportunity for us as the Public Accounts Committee to hold departments to account for the promises that they made to implement the Auditor General's recommendations. That is our job. I don't know what members opposite think the job of this committee is – maybe it's just to come in and drink coffee for two hours on a Tuesday morning – but it seems to me very clear this morning that they don't think that the committee's job is to hold departments to account for the work that they're doing. By voting against this motion, members opposite are shirking their responsibilities to the people of Alberta yet again.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Member Eremenko: I've been spending a lot of time on the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation site. Quick Reference: Performance Audit Primer. The purpose of the Public Accounts Committee is about ensuring "economy, efficiency, and effectiveness." To suggest that this is exclusively about just following financials is not true to the mandate of this committee, nor is it true to the good work that's happening out of the office of the Auditor General, where a good third, I believe, of their work is done specifically on performance audits. It is specifically to look at the actual effectiveness of the implementation of policy. I'm happy to pass the link for the foundation to the members opposite if they'd like to do a little bit of research about what it is that we are doing here in this committee. To suggest that to ensure the adequate, timely implementation of the recommendations from the Auditor General is not within the purview of this committee is simply false.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion moved by Member Schmidt? All those opposed to the motion? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

Moving along, the third takeaway we had from the conference related to regular follow-up with the ministries after the meeting has concluded. Often PACs in other jurisdictions regularly follow up with the ministries on the progress they have made in implementing the Auditor General's recommendations. If the ministry doesn't appear to be making any adequate progress on the implementation of recommendations, it may be requested to appear before the committee again to respond to the implementation delays. The subcommittee again couldn't reach a consensus on a recommendation

regarding this practice and suggested that perhaps we should leave it for the members to discuss this issue.

I would now like to open the floor for discussion. Any comments? Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. I have a motion. I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts follow up with the ministry every six months on the status of the implementation of the outstanding recommendations until the recommendations have been implemented.

I get the sense from just the way this meeting is going that I'm tilting at another windmill here. It's quite clear that the members opposite – I don't know what they get out of these meetings. If they're not here to do the work, to hold the departments to account, like, why even bother showing up? There are plenty of other things that I'm sure they would rather be doing.

This is an opportunity for at least this committee to get progress reports on how the departments are doing, and I go back to the public housing implementation plan. Regular follow-up might actually move the needle when it comes to getting that department to do the work that it's promised that it's doing, because those six month follow-ups will at least be a reminder to the department that they promised to achieve some objectives by some certain times. I certainly hope that all members at least do some work and vote in favour of this motion.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any other comments?

Member Eremenko: The third report that we should have been talking about per the schedule that the subcommittee had agreed to was the DynaLife report from the office of the Auditor General. It just points to me that, you know, if we could quickly kind of nip this in the bud, then we wouldn't be sitting on this pile of waste and increased wait times and diagnostic errors and compromised patients as a result of a poor procurement decision, \$125 million down the tube as a result of AHS and the ministers and departments of health's decisions around privatizing community lab services.

If we had in fact talked about that report when it was scheduled to be discussed, until the members opposite decided to cancel that third meeting, then it seems to me – just imagine for a moment what that conversation could look like if we actually had a concrete, constructive conversation that unpacked and understood the implementation plan to ensure that that never happened again, and that we then also had the mechanisms, the agreed upon mechanisms, to follow up and ensure that those changes were actually being made, very much like the two reports that did move forward for discussion. Unfortunately, the DynaLife report was cancelled for discussion at this table.

I just think, given the incredible risks and the liabilities that that endeavour presented to Albertans, this is exactly the space where we could rectify that situation and make sure it never happens again. All the more reason why we should have these regular touch-bases and ensure that we are actually making progress where departments say they're doing it.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any others?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion moved by MLA Schmidt? All those opposed? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

The final item raised was to increase the number of PAC members who attend the annual CCPAC conference, allowing more members to hear from their peers about the different processes and best practices of PACs across Canada. The subcommittee has

recommended that the committee consider expanding our attendance at the conference by offering the opportunity to attend to one additional committee member from each caucus.

Before I turn it over to the members, I would note that any decisions with respect to CCPAC participation can wait until we meet during the spring sitting as the conference is not yet scheduled. However, I do note that at the conference many jurisdictions have sent additional members, and I think MLA Rowsell would attest to that. Hearing directly from other PACs, hearing directly from different Auditors General, hearing directly from CAAF, the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation, certainly helped me personally understand the role of PAC better, the practices which are working in different jurisdictions. So I would suggest that we do send more members from each side to these conferences to benefit from this conference.

With that, I will open the floor for discussion. Any comments?

10:00

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think this makes sense. I think we would appreciate the opportunity to expand the participation at this conference and look forward to seeing the agenda when the meeting is finalized.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Mr. Schmidt: Of course, when a taxpayer-paid flight to Halifax is in the offing, the members are all over it. It's been clear from the day that these guys were elected that all they're interested in is lining their own pockets. They voted for pay increases. They voted for residence increases. They're voting for parliamentary secretary salary increases. Now they want a taxpayer flight when they've done nothing for the last hour but undermine the work that the Public Accounts Committee is going to do. They're going to charge the taxpayers to go to Halifax and learn more about what Public Accounts does. Do some work here before we send you to Halifax on the taxpayers' dime. This is absolutely outrageous. These members should hang their heads in shame. You know, I hope that when they go to Halifax, they hang a sign around their neck that says, "The taxpayers paid for me, and I'm going to go back to Alberta and not do any work."

Mr. Lundy: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Member.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to raise a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). The member opposite, particularly under 23(i), made numerous false or unavowed motives against our members. I would point out in his argument that both government caucus and opposition caucus are participating in this conference. I would assume that their member or members who fly would be on the same flight accommodation as the government side unless they want to advise otherwise. So for him to make comments that, frankly, are abusive under 23(j), to grandstand a little bit, I don't think is helpful for this committee. As much as I always enjoy the member opposite's sunny disposition, I'm not sure it's helpful in our discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, this is not a point of order. I am clearly just recapping for the members opposite what happened at this meeting and then identifying the hypocrisy of voting in favour of a free flight to Halifax for one of their members.

The Chair: We haven't voted on it yet. But you can make . . .

Mr. Schmidt: No, I know.

But to take a lecture on what's helpful for this committee from members who have voted at every turn to undermine the work of this committee is absolutely outrageous. Regardless, this is not a point of order, and I request that we just move on to a vote.

The Chair: I think there were differences on other motions, too. We kept it very orderly. This one I believe we could do the same and keep our differences more respectful. I would caution members to use language a bit more carefully. The motion or recommendation before the committee is whether or not they would recommend that additional caucus members from each side could attend these conferences. I won't find a point of order, but I will caution the member to use more careful language going forward.

Any other comments?

Member Eremenko: This is the fourth recommendation in the last item on the agenda related to the CCPAC conference. I believe all of these were put forward because of best practice. But at no other stage in this conversation today have the members opposite been interested at all in endorsing or supporting best practice except when it comes to travelling across the country.

I invite Albertans to read the *Hansard* transcripts if you're looking for a way to fall asleep at night, perhaps, and look and see just how active the participants, the six members opposite, have been in the conversation today and how supportive they have been in actually trying to follow best practice. Best practice currently states that we do talk about audit-focused meetings, that we do in fact call upon implementation plans and progress updates on fulfilling the recommendations from the Auditor General. It's rich that this is the only best practice that the members opposite are currently interested in supporting.

In fact, we had agreed that we would have three audit-focused meetings this fall, and then they backed out of the third despite having made earlier commitments because they were – I don't know. I'd love to hear from any of the members opposite about why they've chosen to back out of that commitment.

If anything, I would ask for some consistency. If they can't support best practice for Public Accounts committees across the country, then perhaps they can fall in line on this one and also not support best practice of sending additional members to Public Accounts. There are excellent online resources to clarify what the purpose of this committee is. I don't think they need to travel across the country on the taxpayers' dime to figure out what that is.

Member Ellingson: I'll just also, Mr. Chair, invite the members opposite when they're out meeting with their constituents to justify a free flight across the country when their government is racking up a \$6.4 billion deficit.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other comments?

Thank you. I think that's all for today. I'm not asking for a motion on this item because when we will decide . . .

Mr. Lundy: Apologies for . . .

The Chair: Just a second. Let me complete.

We will decide in the spring to send people, members, to this conference. At that time a motion will be before the committee to decide even for the chair and deputy chair. That has been the practice, that the committee approves the travel. That's how we participate. A motion will be brought forward to the committee at the appropriate time.

Go ahead, MLA Lundy.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you for that clarity, Mr. Chair. I was about to comment. If it was the will of the committee, if there was a motion to not send an additional member, I would certainly likely be in support of that motion. For the record, to the chair's comments, when we see that motion, we'll certainly listen to arguments at the time and be very likely to vote to not allow an additional member.

The Chair: We don't do motions to not do anything, but as I said, that participation for members of the committee will be in the form of a motion at an appropriate time for the upcoming conference.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: With that, moving on to other business. The Ministry of Indigenous Relations has provided a written response to questions asked at our meeting with them on October 28, 2025. The response was posted on the committee's internal website, and as per usual practice it will be made available on the Assembly website.

Are there any other additional items for discussion?

Seeing none, the date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

At this time I will call for a motion to adjourn. Will a member move that the December 2, 2025, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be adjourned? So moved by MLA Lovely. All those in favour? Any opposed? The meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:09 a.m.]

