



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

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4:48 p.m.

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[Mr. Fildebrandt in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon. I will call this meeting to order, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As some of you know, I'm Derek Fildebrandt, the new MLA for Strathmore-Brooks and chair of the committee. I'd like to welcome you all to our very first meeting.

We'll start by going around the table my favourite way, from the right to the left. As I said, I'm Derek. I'm really honoured to be here. I'm new.

Do we call people by names or constituencies in committees? Names. Okay. Mr. Bhullar, you might be the only returning – no, we also have Mr. Barnes. Mr. Barnes and Mr. Bhullar, I believe, are the only returning members. I'm new. I guess we all have a lot to learn. We might take some cues from the more experienced members. But I'm very excited to get going.

Ms Gray: Hi, everyone. I'm Christina Gray, and I am the newly elected MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, and I will be the deputy chair for this committee.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Loyola: Rod Loyola, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Westhead: Cameron Westhead, Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Dach: Lorne Dach, Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Ms Payne: Hello. I'm Brandy Payne, Calgary-Acadia.

Mr. Malkinson: Brian Malkinson, Calgary-Currie.

Ms Miller: Barb Miller, Red Deer-South.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mr. Saher: Good evening, everyone. Merwan Saher, Auditor General.

Mr. Bhullar: Good evening. Manmeet Bhullar, Calgary-Greenway.

Ms Sales: Tracey Sales, communications consultant with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Dean: Good evening. Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services.

Dr. Massolin: Hello. Phillip Massolin, manager of research services.

Mr. Tyrell: I'm Chris Tyrell, committee clerk.

The Chair: If the people online want to introduce themselves.

Mr. Gotfried: Richard Gotfried, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: All right. Special notice to Mr. Saher, the Auditor General of Alberta. I'm not sure how big a fan club Auditors General normally have, but I am a member of it. I've followed his work very closely over recent years. I'm very grateful for his service to Alberta and public accountability. I'm very, very happy to have you here.

Okay. We'll begin. The microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff at the back. Actually, I'll even preface everything like the

Speaker of the House. I'm going to plead for people's understanding. I've never chaired a formal committee before. I have a very informal style of doing things, and I will attempt to try to keep things as informal as they can be at a formal committee so that we can function without calling points of order on one another if we can. We'll see how long that lasts before we have to undo it all.

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This meeting is going to be largely an orientation for all of us, learning the ropes, how things work. I guess Mr. Bhullar has a good reason to want to step out since he's been through a lot of these things. Some of it is procedural and just getting some formalities out of the way.

I guess we'll begin with the agenda. We would need someone to move for the approval of this meeting's agenda. Ms Payne moves for the approval of the agenda. Does this one have a second? Okay.

Mr. Westhead: I don't have a copy.

The Chair: Can we get Mr. Westhead a copy? Anyone else need a copy of the agenda? I believe everyone did get it by e-mail. Okay.

Are we ready to vote on the motion to approve the agenda? All in favour? Opposed? Airdrie is not here. Carried. Sorry, Airdrie.

Dr. Turner: Derek, I wonder if we could have the folks that are in the back row identify themselves and their affiliations.

The Chair: Yes. I think that'd be great. We have some staff here. Do you guys want to introduce yourselves?

Dr. Amato: Okay. Sure. I'm Sarah Amato, research services.

Ms Robert: Nancy Robert, research officer.

Mr. Gene: Vandon Gene, communications assistant.

Mr. Gardner: My name is Keith Gardner. I'm with the ND caucus.

Mr. Li: Ben Li with PC caucus.

Mr. McKay: Ben McKay with the Wildrose caucus.

The Chair: Our audio folks in the back: do you want to introduce yourselves?

Mr. Brewer: Roger Brewer with *Hansard*.

Ms Labonte: Michele Labonte with *Hansard*.

Ms Schwegel: I'm Janet Schwegel, the managing editor of *Hansard*.

The Chair: You're keeping us safe?

Mr. deVarenes: Mike deVarenes, LASS, security.

4:55

The Chair: Great. Okay. We all want to go home, so we'll try to move as quickly as we can here. One of the formal items we need to knock off before getting into the scheduled proceedings is around teleconferencing. First, we'll deal with item 3(g). Section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act states that

a Member may participate in a meeting of a committee of the Assembly by means of telephone or other communication

facilities that permit all Members participating in the meeting to hear each other if all the members of the committee consent, and a Member participating in a meeting by those means is deemed for all purposes to be present at that meeting.

We have the option of passing a motion now to allow all of us to participate by teleconferencing in the future. A motion to approve teleconference attendance for the duration of the Legislature would not prevent the committee from determining that personal attendance at specific meetings is required. In those cases a motion would be moved at the end of a particular meeting requesting the personal attendance of all members at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Bhullar: I just want to move the motion.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah.

Especially going into the summer, I think this would be particularly useful now. It's been advised from the Clerk and others that we would probably want to do this.

We have a motion from Mr. Bhullar. Moved by Mr. Bhullar that for the life of the 29th Legislature the Standing Committee on Public Accounts permits committee members to participate by teleconference subject to the proviso that the committee may require members' attendance at a particular meeting upon passage of a motion at a previous meeting to that effect. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? All opposed? Okay. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Bhullar: I just wanted to point out that this is a historic motion because I think it's the first motion or amendment or piece of work that the government members have voted to support from a PC member in this particular sitting. Thank you very much.

Dr. Turner: May be the last, too.

Mr. Bhullar: And it may be the last. So thank you very much for that very profound honour.

The Chair: I recommend that Mr. Bhullar does not share nuggets of knowledge like that if he wants them passed in the future.

Okay. Item 3, organization of committee meetings. We'll start by briefly reviewing the mandate of a Standing Committee on Public Accounts as outlined in 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.
- (2) The Government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the Committee reports.

The committee typically meets once a week from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Tuesdays during session but has the power to schedule out-of-session meetings.

Reports considered at meetings in addition to annual reports of the department or entities invited to a specific meeting – and, Chris, since you're the expert, feel free to chime in and cut me off or supplement anything I'm saying if there's anything of use. The following reports provide background to all meetings: any recent reports of the Auditor General of Alberta; annual reports of the government of Alberta, including consolidated financial statements of the government of Alberta; annual Measuring Up progress report on the government of Alberta; business plan annual report.

The 2014-15 annual report for all government ministries should become available this summer. Each member of the committee will receive a box containing a complete set of reports. Copies of all the most recent reports of the Auditor General of Alberta are available

at oag.ab.ca, and our committee clerk, Chris, may have a few extra available for those who would like a copy of any particular report.

The purpose of this committee is to hold the government accountable for its spending of taxpayers' money and for its stewardship over public assets in the manner approved by the Legislature. The committee typically examines department expenditures from the previous fiscal year using the most current ministry Auditor General reports. The committee also has the ability to invite most entities receiving significant money from the government such as agencies, municipal school districts, universities, municipalities, and others. Keeping with best practices across the country, it has also been the committee's practice to keep departments accountable with regard to expenditures, not broad government policy. It's best to try to tie questions to the reports we are reviewing rather than ask for the opinions of officials on government policy.

In the last Legislature this committee used specific time blocks assigned by caucus. This led to multiple questions being asked for follow-ups in writing without allowing the department to provide a response at the meeting. The committee will function best if we ask questions and receive answers here on the record. Therefore, I'd like to try to be a bit more flexible this session. I would ask members who have a question to signal to myself or our committee clerk, Chris. We will maintain a speakers list and alternate back and forth between opposition and government members as evenly as possible. If everyone could try to keep their questions to no more than two minutes each, it would allow us to get in as many questions as possible to departments appearing before us. If a member has a supplemental question linked to the original one that they asked, they may ask for a follow-up, and within reason I will allow it.

We will try this method for our first few meetings in the fall and see how it goes. We can always look at other processes for this going forward. Now, this is at the discretion of the chair, but I would open this up to comment and feedback from all of you, particularly Mr. Bhullar, who has experience with committees, and Mr. Barnes, who is not here, but has actually been on Public Accounts before, with regard to how we could try to do this on that basis.

Mr. Dach: I just have a question with respect to your comment about alternating as evenly as possible between government and opposition members. I'm wondering if we might see wisdom in following the same pattern as the House follows, where we might prorate amounts, have the questions alternate. That seems to be a reasonable suggestion.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Renaud?

Ms Renaud: I'm just wondering if we...

The Chair: By the way, if I'm mispronouncing anyone's name, please scold me. I have a very bad name to pronounce.

Ms Renaud: I was wondering if we could maybe hear from the clerk or the other officers what their suggestions are about the most effective way to manage questions and answers.

The Chair: Okay. Would anyone like to speak to that?

Ms Dean: I think it's as proposed by the chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Westhead.

Mr. Westhead: I like the idea of setting up a sort of situation to follow and then revisiting that down the road, but I wonder if we could sort of set a date when we would actually come back and look at that again.

The Chair: Yeah. That's very reasonable. It's at the discretion of the chair, but we're going to try to make this as collegial as possible, make sure that everybody is happy about it and that nobody feels that the speaking order is unfair in any way. If the committee clerk could make a note for us to review this at, perhaps, our third meeting. Would that make sense? We'll do two meetings under this proposal, and we can see how everyone is liking this at our third. Would that be reasonable to everyone?

Mr. Dach: Should we be voting on that?

The Chair: No. It's at the discretion of the chair, but I'll definitely do this in consultation with everyone. We want this to work as smoothly and fairly as possible. I think that it being informal, we'll try to rotate between government and opposition. You know, if Mr. Bhullar has got great questions and – we'll try not to make this like question period. If you ask a question and you actually got the answer you wanted – say they said: yes, we're going to give you your Bassano hospital – you'd still use your supplementals in question period. We're not going to do that and just allow . . . [An electronic device sounded] Oh, you weren't lying.

Welcome, Grant, to the meeting.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you.

The Chair: Rather than having time blocks and people feeling the necessity to tag up just for hot air – you know, let's not do that. Also, if someone has a great line of questions, let's just allow it to go. We'll revisit this in three meetings.

Okay. More technical stuff. Standing Order 56(2.1) outlines the process for substitution of committee members.

A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written notification signed by the original Member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Our committee clerk has provided this to all of you and can provide it to your LAs upon request, and the template is available at the OurHouse website under My Committees.

When substitutions occur it is the responsibility of the original committee member to ensure that the substitute has been provided with all of the necessary meeting material. Members of the Legislative Assembly who are not committee members or official substitutes may attend and participate in meetings, but they may not vote or move motions. So we're past (g).

5:05

Item (h). For support for the committee we have Mr. Chris Tyrell, our committee clerk; Dr. Philip Massolin, manager of LAO research services; Ms Tracey Sales, communications consultant with LAO communication services; Ms Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services. They are all here to provide support to the committee through the LAO.

The committee working group . . . [interjection] Oh, I missed a point. Thank you very much. Gee, look at us co-operating.

Yeah, if each of you wants to describe what you do, your role with the committee and the support you're here to provide.

Mr. Tyrell: Well, as the chair mentioned and as you can see, I'm Chris Tyrell, the committee clerk assigned to this committee. My role is to act as the additional point of contact for the committee.

Among other duties I draft the agenda and minutes for committee approval, track committee expenditures, maintain current and historical committee records, and I'm also available to answer questions from members and the public, provide procedural advice to all members of the committee before, during, and after meetings. So if you have any questions, I'm the person to come to.

The Chair: Chris Tyrell has been extraordinarily helpful to me in trying to learn the ropes of it, and I think he'll be equally helpful to all of you.

Mr. Dach: Are questions permitted at this time?

The Chair: I don't see why not.

Mr. Dach: You mentioned that you're responsible for drafting the agenda. Are agenda items generated by you or submitted to you?

Mr. Tyrell: I draft the agenda in consultation with the chair. There's also always a section at the end for other business, so if there was something you wanted to bring forward, that's probably the best place to bring that up.

The Chair: The agenda has to be approved by the committee anyway, so if people have items they would like included, let me know, let Mr. Tyrell know, and we'll try to get that in there so we don't always have to put it under new business.

Ms Dean: I'm available to the committee in my capacity as Parliamentary Counsel should the need arise for the committee to get a legal opinion.

Ms Gray: Thank you.

The Chair: That was to the point.
Did anyone else want to speak?

Dr. Massolin: I will speak, yeah, and I won't be as brief as Shannon, much to your chagrin.

My role is to head up research support, research services for this committee, and you'll see me at other committees if you're on them as well. What research services does – and I'm reiterating what I said to you probably during the orientation – is that we provide nonpartisan research support to committees of the Assembly, and that means research support for the entire committee, not for individual members of the Assembly or members of the committee. So it's a committee-vetted process.

For this committee we've been providing research support for a number of years. What we've done is basically follow two approaches. We've answered specific questions that the committee may have had. For instance, way back in 2007 we answered a question based on the global funding formula: what it was, tried to explain that, did a report on that, and presented that to the committee.

So we answer specific research questions and respond to research requests from the committee, and I must say that that's our preferred way of doing this because obviously we want to meet your needs as closely as possible.

The other thing we do is that in lieu of those specific requests, we can produce reports on a weekly basis. Basically that is a background on the ministry and also an isolation of certain issues that may have come up in connection with the Auditor General's report or separate issues that may have come up in relation to the annual report. Also, in those reports we isolate or propose questions. You don't have to use these questions, but they're

available to you in case you want to take them up and ask them at the committee meetings.

One other thing I should mention is that there is a premeeting briefing that takes place prior to the 8:30 meeting on Tuesdays from 8 to 8:30. There is a briefing that we participate in in conjunction with the Auditor General and his office. What we do there is go over the materials we prepared for the committee meeting as well, and we're available to answer questions.

I don't know if there are any questions for me.

The Chair: Chris just mentioned that there is a sample report in the package handed out. It's quite useful to look at.

Ms Sales: I'm pleased to provide communication support to the committee. In the past this has consisted primarily of distributing meeting notices. We do this through traditional media as well as social media. We also co-ordinate media relations during all of the committee meetings.

The Chair: Okay. We'll discuss the committee working group. During the last Legislature the committee created an informal working group which met to discuss issues and prepare recommendations for the committee on a variety of topics such as whom to invite before the committee and how to proceed with reports, changes to committee processes, et cetera. The working group would be composed of myself as the chair; Ms Gray, the deputy chair; and one member from the third party. Who will be representing the Progressive Conservatives?

Mr. Bhullar: Myself.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

The idea behind the working group is to make better use of the committee's limited time. The recommendations would come before the committee as a whole, having already been discussed to an extent by all caucuses and independent members on the committee. The committee would have final say on all decisions, but this would help speed things along so that we don't spend all our time arguing.

LAO support staff and the Auditor General would make themselves available to attend working group meetings as needed.

Are there any comments, suggestions, or questions at this time? Yes, Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: A quick question just to confirm that this working group would have as part of its responsibility making recommendation as to what actual boards, commissions to review.

The Chair: Yeah, that will be, obviously, one of the first things we're going to have to do, determine which ABCs or departments we'll be looking at.

Do you want to speak to this, Mr. Tyrell?

Mr. Tyrell: I just wanted to mention that, yes, that would be one of the functions of the working group, to make recommendations to the committee, but the final decision does sit with the committee.

Mr. Dach: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other comments or questions at this time?

All right. We have another bit of business. We would need a motion that

the chair, deputy chair, and one member of the third party form an ongoing informal working group that would meet to discuss

issues and prepare recommendations to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Would anyone move that?

Mr. Loyola: Mr. Chair, I'll move that.

The Chair: Moved by Mr. Loyola. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously.

All right. Media notices. In 2013 the committee authorized the LAO communications to issue media notices via both conventional channels and social media. You should all have a copy of the sample media notice in front of you.

Ms Sales, do you want to speak to this?

Ms Sales: Sure. Yes, the template should be in your package. I'll just be brief. Simply speaking, they represent very well what's been sent out in the past. Generally we update who will be invited by the committee and when they will be meeting with the committee. Otherwise, the information on how to access information on the committee as well as the committee mandate remains consistent.

Regarding social media, we do try to incorporate any hash tags or specific handles that the invited groups would use. Otherwise, we use the #ableg hash tag. As far as the objective, basically, it's to drive the media as well as interested publics to the website for more information on the committee. We find that these have been very successful in the past.

5:15

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dach: Just another inquiry: is the intent also to have individual committee members contacted by members of the public?

Ms Sales: No, it is not.

The Chair: The media notice here lists as the contact Ms Sales, and she would be listed as the primary point of contact, but if the media wanted to get a hold of any of the members of the committee, I imagine they would contact the deputy chair, Ms Gray.

Ms Sales: Traditionally the chair would usually be the spokesperson for a committee. If I was to receive media requests, I would forward them to the chair.

The Chair: Okay. In the interests of openness and transparency on a committee dedicated to such things, I think it would be prudent for us to put forward a motion to that effect. The motion passed in the past would be that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the communications plan according to directions provided at the June 25, 2015, committee meeting.

Is there a motion to that effect?

Ms Payne: Sure.

The Chair: Moved by Ms Payne. Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously.

As noted earlier, we have with us here today the Auditor General of Alberta, Mr. Merwan Saher, who has done absolutely indispensable service to Alberta and Alberta taxpayers in the past. He and his staff will be present with us at all of our meetings to offer his support. I'm told that you've actually never missed a meeting. He'll offer their support and answer questions. So I will invite Mr. Saher to talk about his office's role and his relation to our committee.

Mr. Saher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a great pleasure to be with you this evening as you organize yourselves for the really important work of this committee. Over the time that I've been associated with the committee, I've heard members describe their service on the committee with real enthusiasm and, going back some years, as, well, the opposite end of the spectrum, even describing it as being relegated to the gulag. I can assure you that it's not that. You know, arguably, it's my favourite committee. The reason why it's my favourite committee is because the Auditor General's office and this committee have to work in tandem.

If you'll permit me, I'll just talk a little bit about that. In fact, there are three things I'd like to talk to you about tonight. Firstly, the relationship of the Public Accounts Committee to the office of the Auditor General. Then I'd like to talk to you very briefly about an organization called the CCAF. I'd like to just give you some knowledge of what that organization is because I think you're going to be hearing a fair amount about it. Thirdly, I would like to explain to you why, in my opinion, you should not have ministers appearing before your committee.

As far as the relationship of the Public Accounts Committee and my office, it is because we work in tandem, and we're working in tandem to improve the public administration of the province. Your inputs are what are called the public accounts of the province and public reports from my office. In a way, that language, "public accounts," is arguably confusing. I'll just hold them up so that you'll get a visual here; I'm sorry for the members who are on the telephone line.

As noted, very soon you'll receive a box of 19 ministry annual reports. This is just one I picked up on my way down here. They look like this. This happens to be the Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour annual report, and the one you'll get will say 2014-15, and it'll be one of 19. At the same time you'll get the government of Alberta's annual report, which contains the consolidated financial statements and another important document, which is the government's reporting on its performance, and that's called Measuring Up.

Really, these documents are collectively the public accounts, but they're really more than accounts. Yes, there are financial statements in here. Going back to when public accounts committees were formed, that's really all there was, financial statements. Now the inputs are different. I just thought I'd try to clarify; if you're thinking public accounts, does it just mean that we're going to be looking at financial statements? The answer, in my opinion, is very much no. They are just a part of the government's performance reporting, which is an input to the committee. The other input is the reports from my office.

So those are your raw materials. Obviously, from my point of view as the head of the office that produces those public reports, if it's one of your inputs, it's very important that we have a productive relationship with you.

A few points that I'd like to stress. The Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor do not criticize policy but, rather, review how it is implemented. That point was made by the chair when he was making introductory comments on the functioning of the committee. I can't stress how important that is. You know, in simple language, people who talk about this say that the very best public accounts committees are the ones where the members park their politics at the door and come into the committee and focus on public administration. How are government managers carrying out their task of executing policy? The place for you as parliamentarians, as members of the Legislature, to question policy is in the House.

As the audit committee of the Legislature, the Public Accounts Committee can apply pressure on departments and agencies, and this is where this connection with my work is very close. By endorsing the legislative auditor's findings and making recommendations, the departments and agencies bring – sorry. That doesn't really seem to make any sense. Let me just leave it as: in some way endorsing the findings of this office. That's not a request that just because it comes from the office, you should endorse it. It's the process of engaging in conversation with the departmental officials and agency officials to whom we have made recommendations.

It's hearing and asking them: "What about this recommendation from the audit office? Do you accept it? If you do accept it, how will you go about implementing it? If you plan to implement it, how long do you think it might take to implement it? What would be the problems in implementing it?" You're really flushing out whether the government agency or department really does accept it. That's from my point of view, because we will have reported to you in some way that we understand that it is accepted, but you have an opportunity to explore the nitty-gritty, if I can put it that way, of that statement of acceptance. Your support in terms of recommendations that you believe are good recommendations from my office and a commitment from a department to implement your support to that process are what make a huge difference.

One of the things that I tell people is that it's relatively easy – and I just say relatively in the sense of what I'm going to compare it with – for my office to make a recommendation. The first recommendation we make is the product of good audit work, looking at facts and deducing what we think might be a way to improve something. But that's really only the first part of our work. We're not finished, in our opinion, until we have been able to go back and do what we call a follow-up audit to ensure that if the recommendation was accepted, it has actually been put into place, that the systems and processes have changed to effect the intent of the recommendation.

5:25

The making of the recommendation is the first stage. We in the audit office truly value your assistance in that process of ensuring that the recommendation is implemented, because until it's implemented, then Albertans have not had the benefit of the costs of my office in producing the recommendation.

In summary, what you will be doing is calling witnesses to account for their administration and what action they are taking to improve their use of public resources. PACs function more effectively when members develop constructive working relationships with each other and with the witnesses that appear before them and when members focus on improving the administration of government policy and programs. That's what the role of my office is, to use our resources in helping the public service of Alberta improve its use of resources, its administration of the resources entrusted to it. That's where we are working in tandem. Your standing orders are, in a sense, directed to have you achieve exactly what my office is trying to achieve. We have a relationship that's very closely knit. Good public accounts committees in some way find a way to work with their Auditor office, and it's incumbent on us as an audit office to find ways to work productively with you.

If I could now just turn to a few comments on an organization called the CCAF, and I'll get to why this is important. The CCAF is an organization that was founded in 1980 to encourage and co-ordinate the development of comprehensive auditing. Comprehensive auditing was the language of 1980. Until 1980 legislative

auditors really spent most of their time auditing financial statements. Back in 1980 the world of legislative auditing changed, when legislative auditors across Canada and across the world got mandates to do what we in my office call systems auditing but what in the rest of the world today is called performance auditing or value-for-money auditing. So there was a great change in the expectations of legislative audit offices.

At the same time, this organization came into being to help legislative auditors across the world but primarily in Canada to find the tools and best practices to carry out that work of value-for-money auditing. It's a very knowledgeable organization. It's recognized today for its leadership, expertise, and innovation in support of performance audit and oversight of government operations, and its products and services are widely respected and referenced and applied by auditors, legislators, and other public officials in Canada and abroad.

Now, why am I spending time telling you this? It's because I want to encourage you – and maybe this would be a task of the working committee. I would come to the working committee on invitation. I strongly recommend to you that before the Public Accounts Committee starts its work in earnest in the fall, if it's possible before that, you in some way find some method to have the CCAF put on one or other of its workshops for you. The workshops that they put on: there's one on orientation. That is orienting public accounts committees to the work of public accounts committees. They have a workshop on effective questioning. They have a workshop on performance and impact and also on recommendations and follow-up. So there are four distinct products, courses, training programs that they have. Their way of operating is to use the legislative auditor of a jurisdiction to act as a sort of intermediary, to suggest to a committee, depending on its maturity, which of these products would be most useful. Given that, you know, we are a new Public Accounts Committee, it would be my recommendation that you would consider inviting the CCAF to perhaps do their orientation briefing to you and also on effective questioning.

Mr. Dach: One quick question.

Mr. Saher: Yes.

Mr. Dach: What does the acronym stand for?

Mr. Saher: In 1980 it stood for the Canadian comprehensive auditing foundation, but it now is an organization that just uses the acronym. It's just the CCAF, but its origins were in comprehensive auditing.

I mentioned the effective questioning. You've had some discussion tonight about how to do this. Should you rotate between the government caucus and opposition caucuses? How should you do this? I will indicate to you – and you should experience it yourself. It's your decision. But what the last PAC did, which was to allocate these blocks of time, allowed a group of members of a caucus to ask questions. Depending on the answers you get, you know, it was often that one of the committee members would say: "I'm not going to ask something I thought I would ask. It's been answered." Or it would allow another member in the committee, regardless of affiliation, to say: "That was a really interesting question that was just asked. I want to continue that line of questioning." These are the things that you're going to have to, in my opinion, experience and work out what's very best for you. It's whatever allows for, in your minds, the most effective use of your time.

Finally, then, the third item I wanted to talk about is why you should not have ministers appearing as witnesses. In my long association with Alberta's Public Accounts Committee I've

witnessed first-hand periods of time where the primary witness, when you called a department or you called an agency, would be a minister, the minister of that ministry, and if you were calling an agency, even in that situation the primary witness would be the minister. In many cases he or she, of course, would be supported by his or her deputy and, for example, the board chair of an organization and the chief executive officer of that organization. My experience to date and all of the literature that's written on the subject essentially concludes that for the best practices of PACs in all jurisdictions, given that the minister creates policy and the deputy minister carries it out, it is best that the PAC and Auditor interact with the deputy and not the minister.

I can engage in a side conversation with Mr. Bhullar after this meeting. Mr. Bhullar has appeared before the committee as a minister, and he will obviously have his views. He's entitled to his views. But as an observer, generally speaking, even in the situation where Mr. Bhullar appeared as the minister, it's my opinion that meetings are more productive and useful in terms of your mandate if you are directing your inquiries directly to those that administer public policy, the administrators.

So I think, with that, I'll leave it that way. There was one thing I also wanted to do. Dr. Massolin has indicated to you that he serves the committee by providing briefing papers. We as an audit office will also provide you with a short briefing paper prior to any meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. Dr. Massolin and I, together with my colleagues, take a half-hour in what's called an in camera pre-meeting to brief you as best we can on the subject matter that you will be discussing in the meeting that starts at 8:30.

5:35

I believe that in your package you have specimens of briefing papers, and also in your briefing materials is a document called the Standing Committee on Public Accounts Status Report on Outstanding Recommendations from the Auditor General of Alberta. Before each meeting is scheduled, the clerk of the committee will request from the organization appearing before you a listing of any recommendations that are outstanding from my office together with that organization's assessment of where they sit at a point in time. Are they ready for the Auditor office to come in and do a follow-up audit, or if that's not the case, how soon do they think the audit office would be invited in? That's another important input to your proceedings, information on the outstanding recommendations just prior to your meeting with officials.

With that, I finished the comments that I intended to make. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saher.

We'll try practising our question format now. If you want to ask a question, just grab my attention or Mr. Tyrell's attention. We're keeping a list and drawing a line down the middle. We've got the opposition side, the government side. We'll just see if we can use this as a way to practise now.

I believe Mr. Bhullar was the first to catch my attention with a question.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. You know, I agree that it's actually a much better conversation when it's a thorough, robust discussion about the implementation of policy. I think one of the challenges in the previous Public Accounts was that when ministers did not appear, members sometimes attempted to ask policy and almost political questions of public servants, and they put them in some very uncomfortable positions. I don't know if everybody would agree with me on that or not, but I think it's been – you know, the committee's best work hasn't really been showcased, to be quite honest. This is the most powerful committee that the Legislative

Assembly has, because this is the committee that has the power of oversight over the expenditures. It's a very powerful mandate. It is an incredibly important one.

I think that in the past what's happened is that this committee was often a committee that was looked upon to score political points. The media would come in here. People would want to score political points against bureaucrats, hard-working department officials, and I don't think that was fair. I think we can do a great job, make a lot of progress, and really have some very, very meaningful outcomes come out of this if we adopt sort of a new culture of Public Accounts.

I like the chair's suggestion so far. Quite frankly, I think that until we have a meeting or two, we won't really get into our groove of asking questions and so on, but I think we should also go far and wide. We should dig into a lot of organizations and entities that perhaps have not appeared before Public Accounts. Since I've been here, I can think of some organizations that have not appeared before Public Accounts.

So I think this is exciting. I'm really happy to be on this committee. But I think the success of this committee will be the attitude and the way that all of us choose to work in here. I can tell you that in the past it's been nothing but political shots, in my opinion.

The Chair: I'd be shocked to see political shots from a roomful of politicians.

Mr. Bhullar: All right. I mean, I say that from the perspective of the Auditor's comments about having deputies here and not ministers. That's why I think ministers then felt compelled to come. You know, not all ministers did, very few did, but I for one felt compelled to attend myself because I felt that I didn't want my deputy ministers or even other officials to be the subject matter of funny comments on Twitter, right? It's not fair for them. Public servants didn't sign up for some of that stuff. That's the difference.

The Chair: Well, thank you for your comments. Again, as Mr. Bhullar has said, we're going to get into the roll of things, and we'll see how we do, but I think it would be wise of us – [An electronic device sounded] Thanks for joining us, Drew – not to put bureaucrats or public servants into a political position. They will often get some questions that are uncomfortable. That'll be inevitable. But I suppose we're all going to be on a pretty steep learning curve.

I believe Dr. Turner was next on the speakers list. Again, we're just going to be flexible here, but I think what we might try to do is keep a timer of two minutes. If Dr. Turner is giving a brilliant soliloquy, we'll let him continue speaking.

Dr. Turner: Little chance of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Saher. I am looking forward to participating in this committee, largely because of the great work that you've done in the past, and I really appreciate what you've been able to do.

I have two questions. I agree that the ministers' attending would not be very useful, but there are several levels of bureaucrats. There are the deputy ministers and the ADMs, and you can extend out those descriptions down to five or six levels. For instance, in the one that you provided here, I would think it would be an assistant deputy minister for the AEMERA audit that you would want to have here rather than the deputy minister. What is your suggestion on that?

Mr. Saher: I believe that in all cases it's the deputy minister, and it's the deputy minister's choice who accompanies to support.

Depending on, you know, a sense of what the issue is that the committee wants to pursue, the deputy would choose the correct departmental officials to bring with him or her. I think the right primary witness is invariably the deputy minister. Even when an agency is appearing, as the oversight of every agency is held by a minister, in those cases I believe it's also appropriate for the deputy minister to be, you know, at the table. In a way, you would have two prime witnesses. If it's a board-governed institution, I would recommend to you that you have the chair of that board plus the chief executive officer of the board plus the deputy minister. I think that's the right group of people to whom you should direct your questioning.

Dr. Turner: My second question relates more to your suggestion that we not look at policy, that that would be deemed political, but that we look at performance, basically. There are lots of different aspects about performance that one could examine in a committee like this. For instance, expense reports could be a type of one. I personally don't think that's something that we should be discussing very much in a Public Accounts Committee.

Just going back to the AEMERA example, we could look at the performance of AEMERA in terms of environmental protection and ask them what they've accomplished, but we could also question whether or not having it funded entirely by industry is a good policy, and that becomes almost political because, I think, people on our side of the left-right divide are going to say that that's not a good idea whereas our colleagues on the other side might have a different opinion.

5:45

Mr. Saher: Well, I mean, I think you've hit the nail on the head of how difficult, in a way, that line is. I think, as best as I could answer you with how I understood that question, that would be a question that a deputy or those in AEMERA would say: that's a policy question that I'm not going to answer. And I think that, going back to the previous member's comments, those that appear know when they should say: "I can't answer that. I won't answer it. It's a policy question." Of course, the committee members may debate that, but it's not hard to differentiate.

This is where – Mr. Chair, you know, it's a fact that the effectiveness of a Public Accounts Committee is directly proportional to the skill of the chair. Sorry to . . .

The Chair: No pressure.

Mr. Saher: Sorry to make that comment, but it is because it will be the chair who makes a decision: "Sorry. That question is ruled out of order. It's policy." When things are borderline, you know, it's your privilege, your prerogative, I think, and your responsibility to make a judgment.

I think that in a way, in my opinion, the word "policy" is simply a statement of desired results. When people tell me, "Mr. Saher, you're getting too close to policy," you know, I try and engage in a conversation. "Do you mean I'm getting too close to having a discussion about what the entity is seeking to achieve, what the desired result is?" I think that if the questioning is about how well they are doing in terms of achieving desired results and then how the system is organized to achieve those desired results and if the way in which the system is funded is critical to achieving the desired results, then I would argue that that's the sort of questioning that's useful and helpful. In a way, it's almost in the skill with which the question is conceived and addressed to the witness.

Dr. Turner: Thank you.

The Chair: Perhaps I'm not doing it justice, but is this a way of saying that you measure how fast we're running, not if we should be running? Is that the difference between measuring outcomes and not policy prescriptions?

Mr. Saher: Well, you see, one of the inputs – I mean, you will all learn very quickly. When you get this box before the 30th of June – it might arrive a little bit after the 30th of June – every ministry annual report has in it, at the back, the financial statements. In the front you'll find what is the ministry's results analysis, and that's the ministry's attempt to tell you the story of what it set out to do and how it achieved it. At the ministry level there are performance measures, so these are the measures that the organization is using to assess whether or not it is achieving what it set out to achieve. So there is a wealth of knowledge in that, which is really an excellent starting point for lines of questions.

For example – you know, I'm just making this up – “I observed that this was your target. You haven't achieved this target, and I don't understand why. Explain to me what the problem is. Is it that the target's wrong? Is it what you're achieving? Are you learning from the fact that you haven't achieved that target?” My office in July of last year, 2014, actually had a report on the quality of the results analysis, and we made recommendations.

This question of performance measurement: good public administration supplies to those who supply the funds an assessment of how good the performance is by way of measures. So there is lots of raw material here that I think will enable you as a committee to engage in conversation with your witnesses. At one level is: “Do you think you're measuring the right things? Do you have a complete suite of measures?” I mean, going back to your question about funding, you know, is funding affecting ability to achieve a particular goal as measured?

I'm sorry. Did I answer your question?

The Chair: Well, I'm sure we'll continue to learn as we go along, but I think so.

Next, on the speakers list. To keep it moving, are we able to close the speakers list on this topic, or do others want on the list? Okay. We're going to close the speakers list on this unless something urgent comes up.

Mr. Malkinson: Just a quick question. Have you ever run into situations where you would potentially want a minister in front of the committee, or has it been the case, generally speaking, that a deputy minister, in all cases, would come before us?

Mr. Saher: I was putting forward a general proposition. Yes, there will be cases where the committee will feel that the person that they need to and want to talk to is a minister in particular circumstances. So it's not an absolute rule. To be honest, I can't think of any. I don't have an example that I can give you today where it was clearly obvious to me that it had to be a minister here.

Mr. Malkinson: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Payne: This isn't a question so much as a request. Given that many of us are newly elected MLAs – and we've referred to our steep learning curve – but also that these committees are accessible to the public, I'm wondering if we as a committee can agree that the first time we refer to an organization that is commonly referred to as an acronym, if we could say the entire name so that members are more readily able to follow along. So maybe, instead of saying AEMERA, to say: Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency, or AEMERA. Not to pick on anyone in particular, but I think it would just help the committee move along.

The Chair: I think that's an excellent suggestion. Anytime anyone has ever started a new job and everyone in the office is, you know, acronym dropping, you just feel like they're speaking Greek. I think that would be an excellent idea since all of us are rookies except for two members of the committee and, certainly, for people appearing before us.

Mr. Dach: That way we get to know that they know the real name.

The Chair: Yeah. Anyone has the right to interject when anyone is speaking, I believe, and just say acronym call, no matter who is speaking. It will be like a point of order.

Mr. Saher: Mr. Chairman, if I could just make a point. When that organization came into being, I was absolutely thrilled that there was an organization by the name of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Agency. I mean, to me as an auditor, you know, that was extraordinarily clear. Interestingly enough, the organization has now evolved into referring to itself, and it's become the acronym. It's just one of those things in life. The acronym eventually will roll off the tongue. I think the request is actually a very powerful and insightful request, of forcing people to go back to what it is, not its short form.

But I will just mention that with the question about what the CCAF stands for, they actually have concluded that they just want to be known as the CCAF.

Mr. Dach: You're saying the medium became the message?

The Chair: I believe this is a bureaucratic version of KFC.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Chairman, can you ask the people who have called in to please mute their phones because I'm getting a lot of feedback on this end.

The Chair: Sorry. Is this Mr. Hunter speaking?

Mr. Hunter: Correct.

The Chair: Okay. Just for anybody who's speaking on the conference line, if you could just identify yourself first. And, yeah, if everyone on the line could just mute yourselves. I think star 6 is the mute. Or if you could do so manually. I think everybody who is calling in is probably driving right now.

An Hon. Member: They shouldn't be.

The Chair: As long as they're on hands free. It's hard to audit while you drive.

All right. Any other speakers or questions to Mr. Saher?

Ms Renaud: I just had a couple of things. The documents that we'll be getting in the box: are they the same that are available online to anyone in each department?

Mr. Saher: Yes. They are available online.

Ms Renaud: The other thing is about the training that you talked about. Is that something that we could do fairly soon, the orientation and also the questioning?

5:55

Mr. Saher: My recommendation is that the working committee study that, and . . .

The Chair: It is the next item on the agenda for us to deal with directly here.

Okay. With that, we will move on to item 5 on the agenda. As I said, nearly all of us are new here, both to the committee and to the Legislature. Before we start making decisions about who should appear before our committee, we should try, as Mr. Saher has suggested, to get more up to date on our duties and how we do them.

Looking back through *Hansard* scripts for the committee, Mr. Tyrell has discovered in the past that we've invited – well, the CCAF has come here. Mr. Saher has already talked about them. I don't think I need to speak about it much more. It's been recommended by Mr. Saher that we call them here for an orientation and training workshop. Mr. Tyrell has recommended so.

I'm as green as all of you. So is there any discussion about this, about holding a workshop to really train us to know what we're doing?

Mr. Loyola: Mr. Chair, I would just move that we hold that workshop.

The Chair: Okay. Any other discussion, other than a motion?

Mr. Dach: I'm wondering about timing, if we're going to discuss that.

The Chair: I think we would look at doing so in September. Myself, I cancelled my honeymoon so that I could run in the election, so I'm taking that in August. I think we would look at September, and we would co-ordinate that through the working group of all three parties to ensure that we could find a time that works for everyone. But we would begin before you guys bring a budget after the federal election.

Ms Payne: I thought we were leaving politics at the door.

The Chair: I can't help it. I'm just so eager.

We have a motion. Moved by Mr. Loyola that the committee clerk be authorized to contact the CCAF regarding the scheduling of a training workshop for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the date of which is to be determined by the working group.
Any discussion?

Mr. Cyr: Is this very costly?

Mr. Tyrell: It doesn't cost us anything.

Mr. Cyr: Nothing at all? Okay.

The Chair: I believe just the cost of lunch and coffee and for us to drive here.

Mr. Cyr: No, no. I mean for us to bring these people in to train us. It's not like half a million or anything?

The Chair: Those are exactly the kinds of questions we should be asking about these things.

Mr. Saher: The office of the Auditor General along with other Auditors General across Canada are a primary source of funding of the CCAF, and this is one of the services that the CCAF provides, so there is no cost to the committee. To answer, I'm not sure whether the committee would be asked to pay the travel costs. I don't know. The costs of the training are gratis, but don't be under the illusion that they're free. For the office of the Auditor General that's part of its budget. So, you know, Albertans are paying for it but not as a direct charge to your committee.

The Chair: We are paying for it indirectly through the office of the Auditor General and other Auditors General throughout the country.

Mr. Saher: That's correct.

The Chair: Thank you. And it is your recommendation that we do so?

Mr. Saher: That you, yes, use the skills of the CCAF to help you in being the most effective Public Accounts Committee in Canada.

Ms Gray: I like that goal.

The Chair: Other discussion?

Mr. Loyola: Mr. Chair, just a point of clarification. My last name is not pronounced lie-ola. It's lo-yola.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry. One more time?

Mr. Loyola: Lo-yola.

The Chair: Loyola.

Mr. Loyola: There you go.

The Chair: Okay. I will forgive all of you who butcher Fildebrandt as well.

Please feel free to correct me, anyone whom I get it wrong with. I will get it wrong from time to time.

Okay. Other discussion? Moved by Mr. . . .

Some Hon. Members: Loyola.

The Chair: Lo-yola.

Mr. Loyola: Phonetic. Lo-yola.

The Chair: All right. All in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously.

The CCPAC and CCOLA. Let's acronym check. The Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference takes place this year from August 23 to 25 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The 2015-16 budget for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which has already been approved by the Members' Services Committee, provides funds for limited travel by committee delegates to attend. Is this conference specifically built in, or is it conferences in general?

Mr. Tyrell: Yeah, it's for this conference. The amount changes from year to year, depending on where it's being held.

The Chair: Okay. In years past the chair, deputy chair, committee clerk, and one LAO researcher have attended the conference. I actually don't even know if my own schedule allows me to as I'll be away for much of August.

As an editorial comment I don't think many people would accuse anyone of going on a junket to Winnipeg in August during one's vacation to discuss accounting.

Dr. Turner: It's very nice.

The Chair: No disrespect to Winnipeg.

So we have a decision to make with regard to the conference. Maybe Mr. Saher could speak to – would we be in over our heads attending the conference before the workshop is actually held?

Mr. Saher: No, absolutely not. I encourage you to find some formula in which you will work out how you'll identify the two members of the committee who will go. I think you should all be putting your names in. You'll be rubbing shoulders with other Public Accounts Committee members across Canada. That first day – I'm assuming that August 23 is the Monday – is devoted to sessions that explore comparative practices, best practices, and everyone would learn. You don't have to have been versed in public accounts. You just don't want to volunteer to speak other than to ask questions. But you get the benefit of very experienced parliamentarians across Canada who, you know, will share best practices.

The other group there is CCOLA. That stands for the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors. So that first day is to bring together legislative auditors in Canada from all of the jurisdictions with Public Accounts Committee members. The day is devoted to making public accounts committees more effective. Certainly, don't be shy to put your name forward. It would be a great opportunity.

The Chair: Mr. Tyrell, do you have anything to add to this?

Mr. Tyrell: Yes. Well, I would echo Mr. Saher's comments. You should actually all have copies of the itinerary for this year's conference. It should be the last document in your package. It does outline some of the available sessions. Yeah. It's a good opportunity to meet Public Accounts members from across Canada. There are usually at least one or two foreign Public Accounts members who attend the conference as well. It's an opportunity to discuss best practices. It's facilitated largely by the CCAF, which we talked about earlier. As you can see on there, there are business sessions on effective questioning. There's a how-to workshop on issuing recommendations. There are various guest speakers. And I know for a fact that past attendees have returned from the conference and shared what they've learned with the committee, and everyone has found it beneficial.

6:05

The Chair: All right. Thank you for that. Let's open this up for discussion. I guess I will continue to keep a speakers list.

Mr. Loyola.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just move that we send the regular contingency and that in the case where you cannot attend, perhaps your colleague from the Wildrose or a member from the PCs could attend.

The Chair: Okay. So moved.

Discussion. Do we wish to have just myself and the deputy chair attend or include the third party as well? Now, the third party, Mr. Gotfried, is on the line, but perhaps a quick . . . Okay. We'll add Dr. Turner to the speakers list, or are you just pulling out a pen?

Dr. Turner: Speakers list, yeah.

The Chair: Okay. On the speakers list.

Perhaps we'll discuss if we want to send anyone at all – I think there is probably consensus in the room that we probably do want to send someone to the conference – but also if we want to include the third party or not. I'll open this up for discussion.

Mr. Gotfried: I'd have to speak with my colleague Mr. Bhullar. I know that I will not be available from the 23rd to the 25th of August. I know he was trying to dial in as well.

Mr. Bhullar: I'm here.

Mr. Gotfried: I wouldn't be able to say one way or the other. Obviously, it's at the discretion of the committee.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Bhullar, did you want to be added to the speakers list?

Mr. Bhullar: Yes, sir.

The Chair: Okay. We'll add Mr. Bhullar.
Dr. Turner.

Dr. Turner: My recommendation would be – and I could make this a motion if you think it's useful – that for the 2015 meeting of this group the chair and the deputy chair be the designated attendees for this committee and that each of them, if they are unable to attend, can recommend a substitute. I really think that the third party should perhaps wait for another year.

The Chair: Okay. There is currently a motion on the floor although I think it was to limit it to the chair and the deputy chair at this time. We are debating on that but also the contingency of perhaps including someone from the third party.

We'll add Ms Payne to the speakers list.

Mr. Bhullar, you have the floor.

Mr. Bhullar: Yes, Mr. Chair. Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Bhullar: As for me, Mr. Chair, I am not available to attend, but I would seek clarification as to why the previous member would just subjectively say that the third party should not be able to attend. I mean, myself and our other member Mr. Gotfried are both unable to attend, but I'm just curious as to why that member would make that point.

The Chair: We will try not to get into a back-and-forth here, but I will give Dr. Turner an opportunity to respond if he so chooses.

Dr. Turner: I think it's primarily to control expenses. I think my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake might agree that sending two individuals, particularly individuals that need to be brought up to speed, so to say, is preferable to sending members of this committee that have had previous experience.

The Chair: Next on the speakers list is Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you. I was just wondering if committee members who happened to be in Winnipeg at that time anyway in August would be free to attend the conference if they're not delegated by this committee to attend. If they happen to already be in Winnipeg at that time, could they attend?

The Chair: Oh. So to clarify: if members were to get there on their own, travel and accommodations on their own.

Is there a registration fee for the conference at all?

Ms Dean: We have had that situation arise before, and the committee could pay for the registration fee if the other costs are covered.

The Chair: Myself, I think that would be reasonable. If someone is willing to pay for their own accommodations and travel to attend and would like to spend their vacation discussing accounting, I don't think I would be the one to stop them from doing so, but that's up to the committee.

Ms Payne: I'm just wondering if there's value, given that our chair has said that he does not believe it will work with his own existing schedule, that as a committee we should maybe select an alternate delegate, in case it is the case that Mr. Fildebrandt isn't able to attend, so that we are able to have full representation of this committee at the conference.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Payne. For myself, my own dates are fluid. I may or may not be able to. It'll be very close. The committee can correct me if I am incorrect at this time, but I think that the consensus would be that the chair or a designate of his party and the deputy chair or a designate of her party would attend in addition to the committee clerk and a committee researcher for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and that any members wishing to attend at their own discretion would have their registration fees only covered. Would that be accurately reflecting the consensus of the committee?

Mr. Cyr: Are we setting precedents here, that this is a go-forward decision, or is this for this one? I want to clarify here.

The Chair: For this conference.

Mr. Cyr: For this one conference we're using that definition that you just laid out?

The Chair: For the 2015 CCPAC/CCOLA Conference. Did my statement accurately reflect the consensus of the committee? All right.

What is the registration fee?

Mr. Tyrell: I think it's \$375 and \$150 for a partner.

Ms Gray: In case your spouse wants to go to the accounting conference?

Mr. Tyrell: Yes.

The Chair: I am coming from my honeymoon. Perhaps that's a good place for my honeymoon.

Ms Dean: Mr. Chair, I just thought I would provide an amusing historical footnote. Dr. Massolin did take his wife to a Clerks conference. I opposed it, but I authorized it.

The Chair: All right. Well, we are in the Edmonton dome. I thank Dr. Massolin for his great service to Alberta.

Dr. Massolin: And my wife's.

The Chair: And your wife's service to Alberta.

All right. I've worded a suggested motion. Perhaps counsel or the clerk would perhaps put something more formalized, a formal wording for it, or was that good enough?

Ms Dean: We're good.

The Chair: There was a motion on the floor. Did you wish to withdraw that?

Mr. Loyola: Well, I believe that the wording that you provided accurately reflects the motion I have already put on the floor, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: If I could say, I do believe that the motion you had put forward would not allow for people at their own cost to attend minus the registration fees.

Mr. Loyola: Can we call it a friendly amendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We may make that a separate motion, then. Okay.

Mr. Loyola: Or a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Would anyone like to make a friendly amendment?

Ms Renaud: Sure.

The Chair: Moved by Ms Renaud. I am learning the procedure. I believe we would have to vote on the amendment before the full motion.

Mr. Tyrell: Not if it's a friendly amendment.

6:15

The Chair: If it's a friendly amendment, then no, and it is friendly.

Very well. Further discussion on the motion on the floor? All in favour? Opposed? Carried unanimously. Jeez, if only the House could work like this.

All right. We are on to the best part, other business. Is there other business that members of the committee would like to bring forward?

Okay. Hearing none, we will move on. The working group, comprised of myself, Ms Gray, and Mr. Bhullar, will be in contact soon to discuss our first proposed agenda items representing, as best as possible, the consensus of all members of the committee on what first witnesses and departments or ABCs we would like to look at. I think that would take care of our broad first agenda for the first meeting. But as we've all discussed, we have a lot of learning to do.

The date of the next meeting: an e-mail will be sent out by Mr. Tyrell regarding the scheduling of the next meeting, likely to be in September. A lot of the things are up in the air right now.

Mr. Loyola.

Mr. Loyola: Yeah, Mr. Chair. Just a request for a point of clarification. When can we expect the binders again? I believe you mentioned we may have received them already or not. I just wanted a clarification on that.

Mr. Saher: No. You won't have received them already. Traditionally they're available before the end of June, probably sometime in the early part of next week.

Mr. Loyola: Okay. And you did say, sir, that they would be sent to our office?

Mr. Saher: I'm afraid I don't know how they're distributed.

Mr. Loyola: Okay.

The Chair: I'm glad that Mr. Loyola is so eager for his summer reading.

Mr. Tyrell: They will be sent to me.

The Chair: Okay. They will be sent to Mr. Tyrell, and he will distribute them. Are you able to send them to our constituency offices for those of us not in the capital?

Mr. Tyrell: Sure.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Loyola: How much is it going to cost?

The Chair: That is the spirit that we want on a Public Accounts Committee.

All right. I think that takes care of all business. Is there a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Loyola: I so move.

The Chair: That is very eager. Moved by Mr. Loyola. All in favour of adjourning? Opposed? All right. Carried unanimously. Have a good summer, folks.

[The committee adjourned at 6:17 p.m.]

