



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Friday, September 17, 2021
9 a.m.

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The 30th Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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9 a.m.

Friday, September 17, 2021

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I have 9 a.m., so I will call this meeting to order. This, of course, is the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, and I'd like to welcome everyone in attendance. Everyone can hear me okay? Good.

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West and the chair of this committee. We've got a number of people joining us via Microsoft Teams, so I'll begin by noting for the record that there are – I think what we'll do is have folks in the room introduce themselves, and I'm going to note for the record the substitutions. Then if the members who are participating remotely could just identify themselves.

We have the following substitutions: Mr. Amery for Mr. Walker, Mr. Dach for Ms Pancholi, Mr. Jeremy Nixon for Mr. Neudorf.

I now will turn things over to the room. If folks in the room could introduce themselves.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, Camrose constituency.

Mr. Amery: Mickey Amery, Calgary-Cross.

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

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

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

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and director of House services.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk. That's it in the room.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

We'll start just with folks that are on my screen, with the deputy chair, and then just go through folks who are on the line, if they could introduce themselves for the record, please.

Mr. Guthrie: Good morning. MLA Pete Guthrie, Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Singh: Good morning, everyone. Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

Mr. Dach: Good morning. Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Good morning. MLA Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Turton: Good morning, everyone. Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

The Chair: I think that's everyone.

We do have officials from the office of the Auditor General. If you wouldn't mind just introducing yourselves for the record. I do see the Assistant AG here. I don't know if there are any others. Please go ahead.

Mr. Leonty: No. I'm the only one today. Good morning. Eric Leonty, Assistant Auditor General.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

Then we will now move on, friends. We have, obviously, a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to our business today. I will note for members that masks should be worn in the committee room except when you're speaking, and members are also encouraged to leave an appropriate amount of physical distance around the table. Our microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff, so there's no need for you to turn them on or off. Our committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of our meetings are accessed on the Legislative Assembly website.

Those participating by videoconference are asked to please turn on your camera while speaking and to mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message in the group chat to the committee clerk, Aaron Roth, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. In this case, you would signal to the committee clerk. As per previous practice we can usually keep track of a speakers list all right, but if there is a point of order, just simply speak up because we find that that is probably the easiest way to do this when we have a mix of remote and in-person participation. Let's try to set our cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

We'll now move on to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda before us? I'm not seeing any, so unless I have missed something, would a member like to move that the agenda for the September 17 meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed?

Mr. Dach: Dach.

The Chair: I thank you, Member Dach.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

Not seeing any, then, before the committee votes, I'll ask all members to unmute their microphones. All in favour of the agenda? Are there any opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried. Members, please remute your microphones.

We'll now move on to item 3 of our agenda, approval of the minutes. Hon. members, we have minutes from our last meeting. Do members have any errors or omissions to note in regard to the meeting minutes?

Seeing none, would a member move that the minutes of the June 22, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed?

Ms Lovely: Lovely.

Mr. Singh: I would like to move.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Thank you. I heard Member Lovely move that. Is there any discussion on this motion? I see none unless I've missed something.

Before the committee votes, I'll ask all members to unmute their microphones. All in favour of approving the minutes? Are there any opposed? Thank you. That motion is now carried. Members, please remute your microphones.

We'll now move on to item 4 on our agenda, the fall '21, spring '22 schedule of committee meetings. Hon. members, the subcommittee on committee business met on September 15 to discuss the scheduling of meetings for our committee. A proposal prepared by me was presented to the subcommittee and was also posted to the committee's internal website for all of our members to review. I'd like to now open the floor to a discussion about the schedule and invite any comments or motions in relation to this matter of business.

Ms Renaud: I would like to speak.

Mr. Turton: Madam Chair, I have a motion I would like to put forth.

The Chair: Okay. I'm just going to look to the room for direction. We have a proposal on the floor right now. I don't know if anyone has moved it, though, so I'm looking to the committee clerk or others for how to proceed on this.

Mr. Roth: Hello, Chair. No motion has been moved yet. It's just the item of business that's up for discussion.

The Chair: Right. I heard Member Renaud speak to it, so I'm going to move to her first, and then I heard Member Turton.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the proposal that was posted for committee members. I would like to thank the chair for developing a schedule that is informed by key principles. Those principles allow this committee to do its work, and that has included input from the office of the Auditor General. I think it's vital that we remember that.

Let me quickly review those principles. First, and most importantly, it is critical that this committee actually meets to review the annual reports and the outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General for all ministries.

Second, and following this past year's request of the Auditor General, it is important that we have a stand-alone meeting to consider his 2020-2021 report, which includes the audit of the consolidated financial statements of the province of Alberta.

Third, it is important that this committee appreciates the important work before us. The work of Public Accounts will be unique in our history. I think back in terms of committee meetings, where we've all sat in this room and listened to members repeatedly use the word "unprecedented." It has been unprecedented, and we need to invest some serious energy. We need to review the fiscal year, that included a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was unprecedented: a year in which we had a budget developed before we knew what was coming; a year in which we had necessarily some massive spending and variances from that budget; a year in which each and every ministry was pressed and challenged, had to do new things, innovate, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. Never has the work of this committee been more important. As everyone has heard from their constituents, the public is demanding more transparency, more accountability, more than ever before.

The fourth and final principle is straightforward. We should give ministries at least four weeks' notice before they are set to appear. Obviously, in my view, it's clear that this committee has a lot of work to do.

Let me make a few additional points about why this is such a thoughtful proposal. Because of the earlier decisions of this committee and because of when this pandemic hit, we haven't heard from the Ministry of Health in two years. Two years: over \$40 billion in spending, some major reforms to the health care system, big decisions on pay with doctors, big plans, big reviews, the Ernst & Young review, and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. This proposed schedule, for example, devotes two meetings to Health, one for the ministry proper and one for AHS. I think all committee members can agree that this is vital, that we separate these two entities and be given an opportunity to hear from them. Of course, that's probably not enough, but at least that gives us one meeting per fiscal year, which is what the public expects from this committee.

This schedule also follows the previous practice of this Legislature. It meets when we are both in and out of session, a principle which both the NDP and the UCP caucus have agreed to.

9:10

The schedule is also properly sequenced and takes the input and feedback from the Auditor General. For example, it holds off bringing Treasury Board and Finance until after the audit of the consolidated financial statements so we can review the effectiveness of that ministry's corporate-wide oversight role. This is a small thing but something this committee has gotten wrong in the past, and we have the ability to correct that going forward. My point is simply this. This schedule is serious, it is thoughtful, and I would like to thank the chair for her good work.

I also understand that the subcommittee met on Wednesday and that this was the only proposal brought forward, and I understand that the deputy chair promised to take it back to his members of caucus. We, of course, would like to hear from them. Do they have changes? Is this workable? If not, specifically, why not? I know that in the past we've met in September, in December, and in the summer. I've had the honour of being on this committee for six years, and that is indeed the practice that we've undertaken, all kinds of caucuses, all kinds of combinations of committee membership. This schedule allows people to be back in their constituencies with one hundred per cent certainty after the spring session wraps, as it would get through all ministries by the end of March.

Let me wrap there, and let me urge all members of this committee to support this schedule, that fulfills the obligations we have to Albertans to review all of the public accounts of the province, all of them, in a timely fashion.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: As I understand it, the member has moved a motion for this proposed schedule. The first person that I heard speak up was Member Turton, and then from the chat I have Member Dach, and then after that, I saw Member Singh put up his hand. I think that because of the remote chairing, putting your desire to speak in the chat would be great.

Ms Renaud: Sorry.

The Chair: Sorry. Go ahead, Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. I wanted to move a motion that we accept the proposal as presented by the chair, for clarity.

The Chair: Yeah. That's how I understand this motion on the floor.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Member, for clarifying what is on the floor.

The next speaker, that I heard at the very beginning, after Member Renaud, was Member Turton, and then I see Member Dach and then Member Singh. That's the speakers list that I have currently. We'll go with that, and we'll begin with that.

Please proceed, Member Turton.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just a couple of quick comments. I know most of my comments are actually referring to the motion that I, hopefully, will have an opportunity to put forth to the committee next. I guess that, just regarding this motion specifically, as put forth by Marie Renaud, my specific reasons for voting against it are that, you know, when you look at the actual schedule that it's putting out, it goes out quite a ways. I fully expect that this committee will continue its work into

the new year, but by really focusing on the next-highest priority committees first and then giving the committee a chance to be able to re-evaluate in terms of the next list of committees at that point, I just think that would give us a little bit more flexibility in which to deal with the Public Accounts schedule. I know some of my other caucus colleagues have some additional comments that they want to put, but those will be my reasons why I will not be supporting the motion as put forth by MLA Renaud.

Thank you.

The Chair: I have Member Dach next, please.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Chair. I think what we need to be showing as a committee, as a Public Accounts Committee, is an earnest desire to be willing to look at the last year, that we've just gone through, and publicly cast some light on the budgeting that took place in a very unusual and unprecedented year. Like, all the ministries really had an abbreviated budget estimates process, and I know that even the Premier promised a full accountability and an opportunity to review. This is probably one of our last real official opportunities to look back, as this committee does, to the public accounts of these ministries, which suffered an abbreviated budget estimates process. We've had unprecedented spending in the past year, and I think it's incumbent upon us as a committee to take this opportunity to really look at all the ministries and not just simply say that we're going to take a slice of them and choose the other ones later on or decide what we're going to talk about later on.

Let's schedule these and tell the public that we're earnestly going to be looking at all the ministries and have a proper, full accounting and make up for some of the shortened and abbreviated glimpses into the ministries that happened last year as a result of the pandemic-abbreviated budget estimates process.

I mean, I think the AG meeting date works well for the committee, and I think that this proposal is one that reflects what this committee should be doing. It's a responsibility we have to make sure that the work of the budgeting that was done last year actually gets some public attention and that we can look at what some of the spending was. There were huge amounts of money spent – rightly so, as the chair pointed out – to respond to the pandemic, and the public needs to see that accountability, and I propose that we do so by following the meeting suggestions in the proposal put forward by the chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Dach.

I have Member Singh, Member Guthrie on the speakers list, and I'll revisit the chat in a moment for the rest of the list. Please go ahead, Member Singh.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I oppose the motion regarding the schedule as proposed because it does not follow the list provided by the LAO, which lays down the ministries that have not appeared in front of the committee the longest. This schedule includes meetings with ministries the committee has met with very recently within the first couple of meetings. This includes Energy, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Environment and Parks, which the committee had the opportunity to see just this past sitting. It doesn't make sense to bring them back so soon when there have been ministries that have not been seen since 2019 and early 2020, like Service Alberta. I do not believe that we need a separate meeting for the Health ministry and AHS as the latter is under the Health ministry. It can be done in one single meeting. I trust the ministry will be able to send officials capable of answering the queries of the committee. We just had a review of the accounts

of the Advanced Education ministry in the last session, and the proposed schedule in the motion indicates that six months after that, the committee will review them again.

Having said that, Madam Chair, I oppose this motion. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Singh.

I have Member Guthrie, please.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member Singh. He covered some of the points there very well, and, yeah, I'd just like to reiterate some of those. He mentioned the proposed schedule. It doesn't follow the order of appearance from furthest out. We would recommend following the order that was supplied by the clerk. Also, going out into the immediate session – sorry; one past this immediate session – going into the spring of next year: I think that's problematic. As you know, our schedule is dynamic, and we make quite a few changes along the way, and that's only when we're dealing with one session. I think that if we start going beyond that, we could really get into a problem where we're continually having to make changes and alterations to the schedule.

Additionally, our members feel that, you know, we should give the departments plenty of time to work and prepare. We're now five weeks out, so we think that that will be adequate time, and we recommend beginning the week of the beginning of session. October 26, I think, would be the first scheduled day. Session begins October 25. We recommend going forward when session begins.

9:20

I know that Health has been mentioned here. I'd just like to say that according to the order that was provided by the clerk, that would be the third ministry on the list, so we would be hitting them. We would be getting them quite early on. They, too, have come before estimates. They've visited estimates over these last couple of years, during our government, I believe, three to four hours a period, so we're looking at six to eight hours, I'm sure, that they would have sat in estimates. There is plenty of opportunity to speak to Health at other times in the year, and I suppose that would be later, February of this year.

I'll leave it at that, Chair, and turn it back to you.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Guthrie.

We have Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a lot to respond to there from the government members. First of all, I want to address this notion that Member Turton raised and that Member Guthrie apparently reinforced, the so-called need for flexibility when it comes to this committee's work. I would put to the committee members that flexibility is less of a concern than providing accountability and transparency in the public accounts of the province of Alberta. We don't actually have a lot of flexibility in the work. It's written in the standing orders that all of the annual reports of the government of Alberta stand referred to the Public Accounts Committee. That's the only job that we have to do. The matter before us is: how much work are we going to do in reviewing those reports? What we're hearing from the government is that they don't want to do the work that the committee is expected to do and that Albertans are expecting the committee to do.

We know that there are over 20 ministries with reports that are referred to this committee. We have here from the chair a proposal to examine, to get through most of those. The members opposite are concerned that perhaps we might be providing too much

accountability and transparency on this government's spending over the past fiscal year and are using this bad-faith argument about flexibility to avoid telling Albertans when they can expect this committee to do its work. I just want to put it on the record that I don't for a second believe that the government members are making a good-faith argument when they're talking about the need for flexibility in scheduling our work. There is no need for flexibility here. We just need to come in and put in the time to get through the work.

I want to address one of Member Singh's eyebrow-raising comments. He said that we only need two hours to review the annual report of the Ministry of Health. Well, Madam Chair, the Ministry of Health spent approximately \$40 billion last year, and he thinks that we can get through it in two hours. That's reviewing \$330 million of spending every minute that this committee sits, according to the schedule that Member Singh wants to follow. No Albertan can realistically expect the committee to do a good job of reviewing the spending of the most important ministry in this government at that kind of rate. I suspect that when the members opposite say that we have enough time to go through Health, what they're really saying is that we have enough time to make it look like we've gone through Health but without allowing members of this committee to actually dig into and expose the problems with spending that we've seen in the health care ministry over the last year.

Madam Chair, I think I'll wrap up there. It's quite clear that we have our work cut out for us this year. We know that the government of Alberta has spent more money than in any year in its history. That means that this Public Accounts Committee should be busier than any year in its history, so that's why I think it's prudent for members to adopt the agenda that was brought forward by the motion.

I do want to address one other thing that Member Guthrie said, that we can meet in early 2022 and set the schedule for the spring. Well, for the members opposite who were not on the Public Accounts Committee in the spring of 2020, let me remind you that we did have meetings to try to schedule ministries coming forward to this committee. When we did that, the government members moved to adjourn before we could even begin the discussion. I don't trust them when they say that they're willing to meet with us and set an agenda for this committee in the springtime because we have a past record that we can point to, where members opposite came in and tried to shut down the work of this committee.

Unfortunately, Madam Chair, that move was so embarrassing that they had to come back and, at the very least, schedule the ministries that we wanted to talk to months after we should have been talking to them. I don't trust the members opposite when they say that they're going to be willing to work with us to set up a committee schedule in the spring.

For all of those reasons, Madam Chair, I think it's prudent that this committee adopt the schedule as proposed by the chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Schmidt.

I'm looking in the chat, and I'm not seeing any other members for the speakers list. I did see a hand, one of the raise-hand functions, come up at one point, but I think that might have been maybe a mistake on someone's part because I don't see anyone else in the chat.

We do have a motion on the floor. Before the committee votes, I will ask all members to unmute their microphones. The motion is up on the screen. I will ask now: all in favour of this motion that is up on the screen? Are there any opposed? Okay.

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Chair, can we get a recorded vote?

The Chair: Yes. Let's go back to the "all in favour?" I ask each member to unmute your microphone and please say whether you are in favour.

Mr. Dach: In favour.

Ms Renaud: In favour.

Mr. Schmidt: In favour.

The Chair: Okay. I'll now go to those that are opposed. I'll start in the room, and then we'll go remotely. Are there any opposed?

Ms Lovely: Opposed.

Mr. Amery: Opposed.

Mr. Rowswell: Opposed.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Opposed.

Mr. Singh: Opposed.

Mr. Guthrie: Opposed.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Opposed.

The Chair: Thank you, members. That motion is defeated. Please remute your microphones.

We will now move on . . .

Mr. Roth: Sorry. Excuse me, Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Roth: Sorry. Just to have the vote count for the record, if I might put that on.

The Chair: Yes. Please do.

Mr. Roth: Chair, total for the motion, three; total against, seven.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

That motion does not pass.

I will now move on. Is there any other business to move forward with, hon. members?

Mr. Turton: Madam Chair, I believe I have a motion that I'd like to put forward.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Member Turton.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My motion is to move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts adopt the meeting schedule as proposed by the government caucus for the fall 2021 sitting of the Legislature.

I'd like to speak to that as well if that's appropriate, Madam Chair.

9:30

The Chair: Yes. We have a motion on the floor. I'm recognizing Member Turton to speak to it, and I'll look to the chat for anyone else who wants to be on the speakers list. Go ahead.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Well, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the motion, Madam Chair. As many of the members talked about previously, the function of this committee is to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being maximized and that value

is being achieved in execution of policies and programming. A key reason why we want to put forth this motion and specifically identify these five ministries is because these five ministries – it's been the longest since we've actually had a chance to meet with them. Unlike the formerly proposed motion with the schedule, this schedule with Service Alberta, which was last seen in September 2019; Education, last seen February 2020; Health, last seen February 2020 – I know that many members of this committee are very anxious to talk with that ministry, only about eight weeks away – Seniors and Housing, which was last seen in May 2020; and also Transportation, last seen in June of last year, this proposed schedule focuses our efforts and activities on the five ministries that it has been the longest since we've last seen.

I mean, there are many outstanding items that we need to discuss, that we need to look into to make sure that taxpayers are getting the bang for their buck, per se. By really keeping it nice and tight when it comes to a scheduling perspective, it will allow this committee to be able to refocus on the next set of ministries in the new year. As many of us know, schedules do change, and sending out an onerously long schedule in advance just simply means that we'll be endlessly modifying that schedule moving forward. We can start fresh again in January with a new schedule and new priorities for this committee. Focusing on these ministries will allow that taxpayers will be able to get best value by our good work that we need to do, to hold them to account.

I urge all members of this committee to please vote in favour of this schedule. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's remarkable to listen to Member Turton's statement about the schedule and his comments around the urgency of dealing with ministries that haven't been before the committee for so long, because the two seem completely unrelated to each other. This schedule that's proposed by the government members, of course, only invites five ministries when we know that we have more than 20 that we need to get through. With respect to his statements that we're going to be dealing with ministries that haven't been before the committee in a while, well, I need to remind Albertans that it is this government's fault that these ministries haven't appeared before the committee.

We proposed a schedule way back in February of this year that, if it had been adopted, would have allowed this committee to get through all of the ministries' annual reports from last year, but that government voted it down. So, you know, it's incredibly frustrating to hear Mr. Turton talk about the need for this committee to get through all of these annual reports that haven't been reviewed by the committee for so long when it was his own members who prevented this committee from reviewing those annual reports in the first place.

The other thing that is frustrating is that we know that we have a lot of work to do and that during the spring session we can't meet during estimates, which takes me back to a point that I wanted to make earlier, that the members opposite have asserted that: oh, you know, dealing with these ministries isn't as urgent because all of those ministries have gone through the estimates process. As my colleagues here on this side of the table have mentioned before, in the spring of 2020 the Legislature didn't get the opportunity to complete its budget estimates processes as we normally do, and in fact most of the ministries were jammed through in a record amount of time with almost no oversight from members of this Legislature. So I think that makes the work that Public Accounts has to do much

more important than it would be in normal circumstances because of the abbreviated budget process that the government chose to adopt in spring of 2020.

You know, I need to remind members opposite that it's not our job and it's not their job to protect a deeply unpopular Premier from having his government not answer questions. I know that the members opposite are feeling the heat from their constituents. We see members on this committee having their letters, apologizing to their own constituents for the actions of this government, splashed all over the media, so I would say that . . .

Mr. Guthrie: Point of order.

The Chair: Thank you.

Please go ahead, Member Guthrie.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. I guess it would be under 23(b) – the member is speaking to matters other than those we have before us – and probably also 23(j), trying to create disorder. You know, I think the member has made his point. He's now getting quite a ways off track here with the subject matter that we have before us. Perhaps if we could just bring this back to the discussion at hand and not go down the path of trying to instigate, I think everybody here would appreciate that, and we could move this along.

The Chair: Thank you.

Member Schmidt, please proceed accordingly.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. I will do that.

The point that I was trying to make is that all of us are feeling the pressure from our constituents to hold this government to account. We in the opposition, private members of the government caucus: we all have constituents who are demanding answers from this government. Here's an opportunity for all of us to do the work that will allow us to go back to our constituents and say: we have done everything that we can to hold this government to account, to make sure that they're doing the best job of guiding the province of Alberta through the COVID-19 pandemic in a responsible way. It's frustrating that the government members don't view that as being their job.

One of the things that concerns me about the government's proposal is the absence of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. We know that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is responsible for emergency management during the pandemic. It's the ministry that has helped co-ordinate the whole-of-government approach, and it's nowhere to be found on the proposed government schedule. That's not acceptable, and I want to address that by moving an amendment, then, to the schedule as discussed, Madam Chair, if I may.

The Chair: Yes, you may.

Mr. Schmidt: I move that

the Ministry of Municipal Affairs be invited to attend a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee on Friday, October 15, 2021.

The Chair: All right. Members, we have an amendment that has been moved. Is there discussion on this amendment?

Mr. Dach: Dach can speak.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Member Dach.

Mr. Dach: I would like to speak in support of this amendment. I know, given the committee's schedule, that this works for the committee, to have the Auditor General appear at this time. I think

it's something that his office has responded to positively in the past and has quite willingly come forward to address our committee, and it's been very, very useful to have their office make that appearance. So I speak in support of this motion to have the Auditor General appear as proposed.

The Chair: All right. I have Member Lovely next.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, we just are fresh out of a conference that we had for this particular committee, and one of the items that was in the package that we all got was an item about cross-party collaboration. I'd like to just get back to that positive spirit with the dialogue that's happening in the room. One of the ways that I feel that we can do that is by treating other members with respect, and I just don't find the negative comments that Member Schmidt has been making to be very positive.

9:40

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'm hearing a point of order.
Please.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, we've seen government members try to hijack discussion at the table by using 23(b), so why don't I give it a shot. Ms Lovely is obviously intent on launching a personal attack and not discussing matters under consideration by the committee. So I would ask that the member refrain from attacking me personally and restrict her comments to the amendment that I brought forward, which is that we invite the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to appear before the committee on October 15, 2021.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think what we'll just do is – Member Lovely, if you could just move on in the spirit as we did with the last point of order, just as Member Guthrie brought up, avoiding this sort of thing, and get to the point of the amendment, which is the relative merits of the amendment on Municipal Affairs, please. Member Lovely, you may go back to your thoughts on the relative merits of the amendment to the motion, please.

Ms Lovely: With regard to the amendment – and I will refer back to the cross-party collaboration sheet, that I have here in front of me, that was distributed in the packages from the conference. It says under Ways to Promote Collaboration:

- Ensure consistent committee membership.
- Treat other members respectfully.
- Avoid having ministers as members or witnesses.
- Focus on the committee's ability to strengthen public administration.

That's the only additional point that I wish to make. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Okay. I have Member Renaud on the amendment.

Ms Renaud: Actually, I have withdrawn. I don't wish to speak. Thank you.

The Chair: Pardon me. Sorry. Yes, I see that now.

Is there anyone else on the amendment?

Okay. Seeing none, we'll move this amendment to a vote. All members in favour of the . . .

Mr. Roth: Pardon me, Chair. May I?

The Chair: Oh, yes.

Mr. Roth: Sorry. Would it be all right if I read the proposed amendment into the record for *Hansard*, please?

The Chair: Yes. Please do.

Mr. Roth: Thank you, Chair. Moved by Mr. Schmidt that the motion be amended by adding the following after "Legislature":
with the exception that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs be invited to attend the meeting of the committee on October 15, 2021.
Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Members, we have the amendment up on the screen. All in favour? Any opposed?

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Chair, could we have a recorded vote on that?

The Chair: Yes, we can. I will now move to all in favour. If you could say your name, please.

Mr. Dach: Dach. In favour.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud. In favour.

Mr. Schmidt: Schmidt. In favour.

The Chair: Very good.

All opposed? I'll go to the room first, and then we'll go online.

Ms Lovely: Lovely. Opposed.

Mr. Amery: Amery. Opposed.

Mr. Guthrie: Guthrie. Opposed.

Mr. Rowsell: Garth Rowsell. Opposed.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Armstrong-Homeniuk. Opposed.

Mr. Singh: Peter Singh. Opposed.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon. Opposed.

Mr. Turton: Searle Turton. Opposed.

The Chair: Very good.

That amendment has not passed.

We are back . . .

Mr. Roth: Pardon me, Chair. May I read the result into the record?

The Chair: Yes, please read that.

We're reading the result into the record.

Mr. Roth: Chair, total for the amendment, three; total against, eight.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

We're back on the main motion as moved by Mr. Turton.

I have Mr. Singh, please.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I support the motion for the reason that this committee should hear from all ministries. The function of this committee is to ensure that taxpayers' money is being maximized and value is being achieved in the execution of policies and programming. The proposed schedule is taking the ministries that haven't appeared before the committee in the longest

period of time based on the list provided to the committee by the LAO. Service Alberta was last seen by the committee in September 2019 – that’s a long time – the Education ministry in February 2020, the Health ministry in February 2020, Seniors and Housing in May 2020, and Transportation in June 2020. The ministries should be given priority in view of fairness and equality among the ministries.
Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Singh.
Member Renaud wishes to speak.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish to move an amendment to the motion moved by Mr. Turton. I would like to amend the motion to read that the Auditor General be invited to a meeting on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

Just to be clear, I’m making this amendment as this was asked for. Let’s be clear about that. This was requested by the Auditor General, so if you choose to vote against this amendment, you are very clearly sending a message that you think that you know better. I would like to suggest that in the spirit of actual transparency and cross-party collaboration, we actually pay attention to what is being requested and that we all vote in favour to amend the motion to invite the Auditor General on December 14, 2021.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Renaud.

Hon. members, we do have the text of the amendment to the motion up on the screen, “December 14, 2021.” Are there any speakers to this amendment?

Mr. Guthrie: Hello, Chair. Yeah. You know, we did have our subcommittee meeting. The AG did come to that meeting. The AG did recommend that they were fine with coming before the committee. I know that last time we met with them, it was kind of a special circumstance. Hearing in the subcommittee that they would be interested in coming before us, their only recommendation was, as this motion had indicated, that it be a little bit later in the year, and mid-December is what they recommended. I think that this is a fair request, and I would support it.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Looking to the chat for any other speakers to this amendment.

Seeing none, I believe we will then move to a vote on the amendment. All in favour of the amendment up on the screen as proposed by Ms Renaud?

I don’t know, Mr. Clerk, if you would like to read it into the record.

Mr. Roth: Pardon me, Chair. Can I just ask a question first with regard to the amendment inviting the Auditor General? Just to clarify, is that for an Auditor General’s report that typically comes out later in the fall? Is that correct? Is that the intention?

The Chair: That’s right. To discuss the fall Auditor General report. I suppose that’s sort of implied by this amendment, but if we want to clean that up – I think that was the understanding of the committee.

Mr. Roth: Right. Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to clarify for the record, to make sure that that was the intention.

The amendment moved by Ms Renaud is that the motion be amended by adding the following after “Legislature”:

with the exception that the Auditor General be invited to attend a meeting of the committee on December 14, 2021.

The Chair: Correct.

All in favour of this amendment? Very good. Are there any opposed? Seeing none.

That amendment passes.

We are back on the main motion, friends. I am looking to the room or the chat for any further speakers to this motion.

9:50

All right. Seeing none, we will now move to a vote on this motion for

this meeting schedule as put forward by the government caucus for only the fall 2021 sitting of the Legislature, with a smaller number of departments and the Auditor General on December 14.

All in favour of this motion? Are there any opposed?

Mr. Turton: Madam Chair, would it be okay to ask for a recorded vote for this motion, please?

The Chair: Yeah. Absolutely. First, I’ll call for those opposed. Okay. In the room, then? All in favour, say your names.

Ms Lovely: Lovely.

Mr. Amery: Amery, in favour.

Mr. Schmidt: Schmidt, in favour.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, in favour.

The Chair: All right. Very good. I’ll go to those attending remotely, please.

Mr. Dach: Dach, in favour.

Mr. Guthrie: Guthrie.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Armstrong-Homeniuk, in favour.

Mr. Singh: Peter Singh, support.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, support.

Mr. Turton: Searle Turton, support.

The Chair: All right. Very good.

Mr. Clerk, if you could read out the results of that, please.

Mr. Roth: Pardon me, Chair. Could we ask those on the line to vote again? There were a few voting at the same time, so it was unclear to the table as to who was voting.

Thank you.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, in favour.

Mr. Singh: Peter Singh, support.

Mr. Dach: Dach, in favour.

Mr. Guthrie: MLA Guthrie, in favour.

Mr. Turton: Searle Turton, in favour.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Armstrong-Homeniuk, in favour.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, in favour.

Mr. Roth: Chair, total for the motion as amended, 11; total against, zero.

The Chair: All righty, then. We will be moving forward with a smallish schedule of the number of annual reports that stand referred to our committee for fall 2021. I will remind committee members that it is our job to review them all, and when we have a schedule to do so, it means that we can plan for that and so can the departments and that we can actually read those annual reports and make sure that we are doing our work and showing up to work as committee members.

Now, under other business, I wish to inform the committee that the following ministries provided their written responses to questions asked by us during committee meetings held in spring '21. We have Agriculture and Forestry, Energy, and Environment and Parks, who all appeared in June. Their written responses are up

on our internal website, and they will be posted to the public website shortly.

Is there any other business that members wish to bring forward?

Seeing none, our next meeting is then scheduled in October.

With that, would a member like to move that this standing committee adjourn?

Ms Renaud: I move.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour? Any opposed? All right. That motion is carried.

We'll see you all in October.

[The committee adjourned at 9:55 a.m.]

