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The 30th Legislature
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Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

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[Ms Phillips in the chair]

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

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West and the chair of this committee. As we begin this morning, I would invite those participating in the committee room to first introduce themselves. We'll start to my right, please.

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

Mr. Walker: Good morning. Jordan Walker, MLA, Sherwood Park.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

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

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

The Chair: Thank you, colleagues.

And with folks joining us through various means of communication, I'll now just go to the UCP side, the government side, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourselves for the record. Then we'll go to the Official Opposition and anyone joining us from the Auditor General's office, please.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: MLA Armstrong-Homeniuk, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

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

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

Mr. Reid: Roger Reid, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod and deputy chair of the committee.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, Camrose constituency.

Ms Pancholi: Good morning. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud.

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

The Chair: Do we have anyone on the line from the office of the Auditor General? I see Mr. Wylie, please.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning, everyone. Doug Wylie, Auditor General.

The Chair: Do we have anyone on the line from the Legislative Assembly Office? I believe we do. If you'd like to introduce yourself for the record. All right. Very good.

We will now move on to the approval of the agenda. Friends, are there any changes or additions to this agenda today?

Hearing none, I am looking to the floor for a motion, then, that the agenda for the January 26, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed.

Mr. Reid: So moved.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any discussion on this motion that we have before us?

Seeing none, members, please unmute your microphones. All in favour? Are there any opposed? Thank you. The motion for the approval of the agenda is carried.

We'll now move on to the approval of the minutes. We have minutes from the December 14, 2021, meeting of the committee before us. Do members have any errors or omissions to note?

Seeing none, I'll look to the floor for someone to move that the minutes of the December 14, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed. If someone could just move that.

Mr. Turton: Yeah. I move that, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. That was Member Turton, I want to say.

Mr. Turton: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Any discussion on the motion?

Seeing none, all in favour? Thank you. Are there any opposed? Thank you. That motion is now carried.

We'll now move to the subcommittee on committee business report. Hon. members, the subcommittee on committee business met on January 14 – and we did have some discussions at the tail end of 2021 as well – to discuss a number of matters. We did discuss the schedule of committee meetings, and we'll get to that piece in a minute. It's the next item on our agenda.

I just wanted to update the committee on a couple of other matters. One, we did consider whether to continue the briefing sessions for members prior to meetings, and it was concluded that we would invite the LAO to provide their research briefing but not require the Auditor General's office to come to those meetings unless members feel that they would like to speak to the Auditor General on a prebriefing basis, in which case we will just simply send a note to the committee clerk and we will make those arrangements with a reasonable amount of notice.

We also discussed the matter of independent members given that there are some now, and the Official Opposition put forward a proposal that the last five-minute chunk of time be set aside for any independent members who did want to show up to the meeting. Sort of consistent with what had happened in previous Legislatures, as there were a number of different arrangements, it was felt by the government side that we should essentially, rather, in the alternative, play it by ear. If independent members do come, then we will deal with their presence when they arrive, as per the government MLAs' stated intention. So that is the process that we will follow should that happen.

We also heard from the Auditor General. Friends, I want to just make sure that we hear from the Auditor General and make sure that we have some ability for all members to hear from Mr. Wylie and his office on scheduling of meetings.

Mr. Wylie, I'm wondering if you can provide a few of the comments that you have provided to us members and a specific proposal after some deliberation on it with your office.

Mr. Wylie: Well, thank you very much, Chair. Yes, my offer to the committee was that my office would be prepared to come to the committee in the latter part of its spring session to discuss the reports that would have been released from now until that time. I think that affords the committee a couple of benefits. One, it will give the committee a timely opportunity to have a discussion with us to discuss any matters arising from our work and maybe help the committee if the committee itself wishes to pursue some of those

matters and make its own recommendations under the committee's authority.

The other thing that I think it does is that it potentially helps the committee in scheduling the fall session. You will have the most recent report from our office, that could be considered in the scheduling of the upcoming fall session. That was my offer, Chair and committee members, and the date that we were looking at was June 21. That date considers the time taken to review and the scheduling that we work with the Provincial Audit Committee on. As you are probably aware, before we table our reports in the Assembly, we are required to meet with the Provincial Audit Committee. They review our reports, and we hear their comments from them.

At the conclusion of that process I think there would be an opportunity on June 21, Chair, or thereabouts to meet with the committee, if it so chooses, to discuss the reports that we would have released up to that point. I will share with the committee that we will have probably in excess of 10 reports that will be publicly released by that time, Chair and committee members.

That was my offer, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Wylie. That does get into the scheduling, but I wanted to make sure that you had an opportunity to discuss and share with the committee members everything that had been discussed at the subcommittee. The members now have that information in front of them, and they have heard from Mr. Wylie. With that, I think that unless there are any questions or comments on any of the matters that I have brought forward to you as reports from the subcommittee, if there are no other questions or comments, we can consider that report, then, and that piece of the agenda finalized.

I'm looking to the floor now and to the folks who are joining on videoconference if there are any questions or comments at this time.

All right. Seeing none, then I think we can move on to the spring 2022 committee meeting schedule portion of our agenda, number 5 on the agenda here. The subcommittee on committee business, as I indicated, did discuss our meeting schedule for the 2022 spring session of the Legislature. At that time we could not come to a consensus, and there is no recommended schedule being put forward by the subcommittee for our consideration here today.

There were a couple of different suggestions and a couple of different approaches that were brought forward by the two groups, the opposition and the government MLAs, and essentially the daylight between the two proposals is that there were more ministries considered under the Official Opposition proposal, at least in the first instance, than the government proposal, and now we have a government proposal that has come to us that is a little bit different than what came to the subcommittee, which is fine. It's before all of the committee members. I just want to make sure that you all know where the two proposals are. They're on the PAC internal website.

9:40

I will now open up the floor to conversation about this. Friends, I believe I have some folks in the chat, and we have Member Renaud, who indicates that she'd like to move a motion. But, first, I just want to give MLA Toor an opportunity to introduce himself for the record, because I didn't see that part in the chat from the committee clerk. MLA Toor, please introduce yourself for the record, and then we'll go to Member Renaud to put herself on the speaking list.

Mr. Toor: Good morning, Chair, and good morning, everybody. Devinder Toor, MLA, Calgary-Falconridge.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Toor, and welcome.

We'll now look to the floor. I am recognizing Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to make this motion. I move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite officials from the following ministries to attend a meeting of the committee, on the dates specified, to discuss the ministry's most recent annual report and any outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General: (1) Treasury Board and Finance on February 15, 2022; (2) Infrastructure on February 15, 2022; (3) Municipal Affairs on February 22, 2022; (4) Executive Council on February 22, 2022; (5) Indigenous Relations on April 5, 2022; (6) Culture and Status of Women on April 12, 2022; (7) Jobs, Economy and Innovation on April 19, 2022; (8) Justice and Solicitor General on April 26, 2022; (9) Advanced Education on May 3, 2022; (10) Children's Services on May 10, 2022; (11) Community and Social Services on May 17, 2022; (12) Labour and Immigration on May 24, 2022; (13) Energy, May 31, 2022; (14) Environment and Parks on June 7, 2022; and, (15) Agriculture and Forestry on June 7, 2022.

Now, today I'm bringing forward the Official Opposition's proposed schedule for the committee for spring 2022. Now, I understand that this is the same proposal that went to the subcommittee but that there was no agreement, and I understand that the government members brought forward a proposed schedule as well to the subcommittee but that it did not align with the government's sessional calendar, which is, you know, strange at best.

Unfortunately, as members of this committee know well, no revised schedule was put forward by the government side before the close of business yesterday. That is unfortunate because accountability matters. I hope that the government members will remember that we did not have an opportunity for proper estimates in 2021, so I would suggest that we do everything we can to be transparent and accountable to the people of Alberta through this committee's work.

We have been waiting for months for the government side to lay out a plan for this committee to do its job and provide oversight and accountability for all government ministries. That oversight and accountability matters, particularly for fiscal year 2020-2021 because we all know that this was not a normal year. A budget was introduced in February 2020, and it was obviously made quite irrelevant by the pandemic. At that time, in early March 2020, the government made a decision: they decided to close down the estimates process and shove the budget through the Legislature. Now, many would say that it was an undemocratic decision, but whatever your views, we can all agree that we were in unique circumstances.

But that decision had consequences. The government limited the ability of the Legislature through the estimates process to get accountability on the front end of the budgetary process, and now we are at the back end of the process, which is Public Accounts. This is finally where Albertans, through their Legislature, get to hold the government to account for their spending decisions. We had billions of dollars in extra spending. It's our position, given that there wasn't a real estimates process, that every ministry must come before Public Accounts this year.

That means that we have 15 ministries to go, and we can do that with this proposed schedule. Yes, that will mean a little bit more work for members of this committee, but that's what Albertans elected us to do. If we don't have estimates and we don't have Public Accounts, then this government is cabinet only, and that's government behind closed doors. That's a secretive government. That's an unaccountable government, and that's a government the public doesn't want. We believe Albertans want a reasonable exercise in accountability, and that means, at minimum, spending two hours with each ministry to go over their work of the previous

year. That is the bare minimum. I know that we have questions for all of the ministries we're trying to schedule, and I assume the government members do, too, so let's do our job.

The proposed schedule would see us wrap up by June 7, which allows all members a very good, long summer to rest, relax, and, more importantly, meet with constituents. We are proposing to bring forward ministries based on the longest period of time since they last appeared. While we appreciate that there is another approach to bring forward ministries, based on the highest number of outstanding recommendations by the Auditor General, we are following the lead of this government. At the subcommittee we heard loud and clear that they preferred an approach of bringing ministries based on last appearance, so we are accommodating their wishes.

In conclusion, the proposed schedule is reasonable. It allows for accountability, which is sorely lacking because of the lack of estimates, and it gets this committee back on track. With that, I strongly ask for support from the government members so that they, too, can hold this government to account.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Renaud.

Is there any further discussion on this motion?

Mr. Turton: Yes, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak to the motion.

The Chair: Sure. Thank you. I can't see the floor right now when they put the motion up on the screen, just so that you are aware. So if you do want to speak, hon. members, please do put it in the chat because I can't see you. I'm going to assume that was Member Turton that was speaking.

Thank you.

Mr. Turton: Yes, it was, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for recognizing me. I'd like to thank the hon. member across for putting forth the motion. I guess I have a couple of points to describe on why I do not support the motion as put forth by the hon. member.

First of all, I do feel as if the schedule does go against precedent, in which we typically give ministries four weeks' notice. Obviously, there are a lot of questions that the opposition and the government side have for the various ministries. I feel it's incumbent upon us to allow them ample time to be able to prepare. Given the fact that the schedule does not allow for those four weeks, it does cause me a little bit of concern.

As well, the schedule as put forth doesn't really take into consideration that there are many members from around the province that have to travel long distances. And it doesn't take into account constituency weeks. Meeting with constituents, as the hon. member talked about, is extremely important. Those constituency weeks are extremely valuable for many of us to be able to meet with the various stakeholders and groups in our respective ridings. I feel it's incumbent upon us to be able to ensure that MLAs from around the province have that opportunity to meet with the residents that elected them to the Legislature.

But I do want to affirm that obviously we do want to hold the various ministries to account. I'm thankful that both the opposition and the government side share that, because residents and taxpayers, you know, demand that higher level of accountability. While I appreciate some of the comments concerning the estimates last year – obviously, given COVID, it was extraordinary times – I do feel as if the estimates time that government members had in the budget last year was appropriate just given the situation at the time. Unfortunately, I can't support the motion as put forth by the opposition for those various points.

I look forward to, hopefully, a second motion put forth on the government side that I think will better take into consideration both

constituency time for MLAs as well as continuing to hold ministries to account. Thank you.

The Chair: I have Member Pancholi speaking to the motion that we have on the floor.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to echo my colleague MLA Renaud from St. Albert's motion and the reasons for it. I just want to simply address some of the comments made by Member Turton with respect to his objections to this motion. I want to note for the record that, you know, our proposed motion here seeks to call the first two ministries, Treasury Board and Finance and Infrastructure, three weeks from now. So it's giving them three weeks to prepare. I imagine both ministries are already well under way on their work to prepare for the upcoming budget. It shouldn't be a hardship. They've probably been looking very closely already at the results of the previous fiscal year in order to prepare for that.

I think we've heard a number of times in this committee varying timelines that are necessary for ministries to respond and to appear before this committee. All of a sudden, now, I hear Member Turton saying that they need at least four weeks' notice. I think I recall previous meetings where it was at least three weeks' notice, where it was at least two weeks' notice. It seems to be a convenient way to really deny Albertans the chance to get some answers as to how public funds are being spent and the outcomes that have come from that.

9:50

As noted by my colleague from St. Albert, Albertans really were not provided with full transparency and accountability at the front end of the estimates process. This has been an unusual time period, and they deserve the transparency and accountability now, at the end of that fiscal year, to find out exactly how those funds are being spent. I believe the ministries and the public service are incredibly competent and able to prepare and come before this committee.

With respect to the comments around constituency weeks, there's no requirement in the standing orders that says that we cannot meet during constituency weeks. I appreciate all members want to be able to connect to their constituents, but we're talking about, you know, a two-hour meeting from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., one meeting during those constituency weeks. I'm sure we all are used to dividing our time between our obligations in the Legislature and on committees as well as with our constituents. I was surprised to hear the member refer to the long travelling distances since so many of us are participating virtually right now and have been for some period of time. So I fail to see how any of the arguments put forward by Member Turton should deprive or justify the deprivation of Albertans from getting true accountability on the back end from these ministries, and I urge all the other members of the committee to support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll just look to the floor, if there are any other folks who would like to speak to this motion that we have on the floor right now.

Seeing none in the chat, I will now look to the committee members to vote on this motion. All in favour of the motion as is on the screen in front of you?

Mr. Huffman: Madam Chair, I think you might have frozen. Can you hear me?

Hi, Mr. Deputy Chair. Maybe could you finish the vote on this? Mr. Reid?

[Mr. Reid in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I certainly can. Thanks, Warren.

Apologies for the technical difficulties. We'll now call for the vote of those who are opposed to the motion.

That motion is defeated.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, it's Marlin Schmidt here. I'd like a recorded vote on this motion, please.

The Deputy Chair: Certainly. The member has called for a recorded vote, so if we could have those in favour please turn on your video screens when you vote. All those in favour?

Ms Renaud: Yes. In favour.

Ms Pancholi: Yes. In favour.

Mr. Schmidt: In favour.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Now all those opposed. Again, I remind those not in the room to please turn on your video screen when you are voting.

Mr. Rowswell: Opposed.

Mr. Toor: Opposed.

Mr. Singh: Opposed.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Opposed.

Ms Lovely: Opposed.

Mr. Turton: Opposed.

Mr. Walker: Opposed.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, members.

I see that the chair is now back online, so I will return the chair back to her.

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

The Chair: Thank you. I just had to use my phone. It just kicked me out.

Mr. Huffman: Pardon me, Madam Chair. We just had a recorded vote on the motion. Would you like me to read out the results?

The Chair: No. I caught most of it.

Mr. Huffman: Okay. Yeah. Sorry. I'll just announce the results of the vote. Thanks.

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Huffman: For the motion, three; against, seven.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Sorry about that, hon. members. Usually it's considerably more dramatic when I get kicked out of the Legislature, but there you have it. Thank you for that.

We now have a member who has put himself in the chat, Member Rowswell. He has a motion for the committee members. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Thank you very much. I would like to move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite officials from the following ministries – in the following order: Treasury Board and Finance; Infrastructure; Municipal Affairs; Executive

Council; Indigenous Relations; Culture and Status of Women; Jobs, Economy and Innovation; Advanced Education; Children's Services; Community and Social Services; Labour and Immigration; Energy; Environment and Parks; Agriculture and Forestry; and Service Alberta – to meet with the committee during its regular scheduled Tuesday morning meeting time when the Assembly is sitting, notwithstanding the period during main estimates consideration, to discuss their most recent ministerial annual report and any outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General for the remainder of the 2022 calendar year and that the committee invite the office of the Auditor General to meet with the committee on the first Tuesday after the Assembly adjourns in the fall session to review the 2022 report of the Auditor General if it is released prior to that date.

Have we got that up there? Okay. Good.

This is consistent with the practice, just like the last proposal of meeting with those ministries that we have not seen for the longest period of time and putting them at the front of the list and reverting to past practices of prescribing a list rather than specific dates to reduce the need for administrative scheduling of meetings, as was requested by the LAO. To ensure a reduction in administrative scheduling of meetings, this list contains more ministries than there are scheduled sitting Tuesdays to make sure that if the spring and fall sittings are extended, there would be enough ministries to avoid idle sitting Tuesdays. Not listing dates will allow flexibility to accommodate unintended changes in the sitting schedule such as estimates. Only meeting on regular sitting days of the House will also ensure that members are able to spend critical time in their constituencies to ensure they are fulfilling that responsibility.

This motion would also ensure that the annual meeting with the Auditor General continues, as was the precedent for PACs since 2015.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I am now looking to the floor for any questions, comments, and any other speakers. I have, I believe, Member Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a question about the proposed motion. I'm sorry. I'm having a bit of difficulty seeing it on the screen here. I just want to ask maybe a question to – do we have Parliamentary Counsel in the room? I'm sorry. I'm afraid I can't see. If we do, I just want to ask a question about this motion, as to whether it's in order, because it seems to indicate, you know, that it references meeting at the regularly scheduled meeting time, when, I believe, meeting times are actually in the standing orders to be determined by the call of the chair. So I'm just wondering if this somehow limits or somehow restricts the standing orders with respect to how meetings of this committee are called.

Ms Robert: Madam Chair, it's Nancy Robert. Would you like me to try to address that? Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not a lawyer, so I don't know that I can comment legally. I think, though, when I read this motion, what I see in terms of the intent is that it is very, very typical for this committee to meet on Tuesday mornings during session – that is a very standard practice of the committee – and I think that that's the intent of this language. But, certainly, the motion is amendable, so if a committee member wanted to propose an amendment to it, that certainly would be in order.

Thank you.

10:00

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Robert.

We also have a question, I believe, from Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe to the member who brought this motion forward, I just have a question. There are no dates, so I'm assuming that by using the language "when we're sitting," this committee is deciding that we aren't going to meet, like, in February to take advantage of the time to get a jump on this instead of just hoping that the session goes a little longer, that we, you know, cover some of these or that we have time to do it. Instead, I'm alarmed that we understand how important this is, how important this work is, especially during the last couple of years that we've had, and just lackadaisically saying: well, we'll get to it when we get to it. We'll arrive at a situation that we were in last year where we had ministries that hadn't shown up before this committee for, like, two years. Community and Social Services was one example. We hadn't seen them since 2019. I would just like to know why there are no dates and why we aren't taking advantage of every single week available to us to get a jump on this work.

Thank you.

The Chair: Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. This was requested by the LAO. It gives them more flexibility, so we are accommodating their request.

The Chair: All right. Are there any other questions, comments, other interventions on this matter?

Ms Pancholi: Sorry, Madam Chair. I have a question.

The Chair: Yes. Please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: I just want to follow up on Ms Robert's comments. I understand the intent of the motion. I guess my question is: does a motion passed by the committee – I believe a motion passed by the committee cannot contravene or limit in any way authority under the standing orders. I appreciate Ms Robert is not a lawyer, but I just feel like we need some clarification on that, or I would appreciate some clarification on that. That's my question. I guess I don't know if we're going to get an answer today if we don't have Parliamentary Counsel with us, but that's just – I want to be clear that the committee does not have the authority in any way to amend the standing orders.

The Chair: Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, you know, in reading this motion, it doesn't mention the standing orders anywhere. I think that if there's a concern, perhaps the committee may wish to seek to amend the motion to say something to the effect of: to meet with the committee during Tuesday mornings while the Assembly is in session. Something to that effect if that would make the committee more comfortable. But I don't think that it says anything about the standing orders, so I'm not sure – again, I'm not a lawyer – if it's contravening the standing orders.

Thank you.

Ms Pancholi: If I may, Madam Chair, then I would like to propose an amendment. If I may?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Pancholi: Okay. We can finesse the wording but basically with respect to after the list of ministries to say, "to meet with the committee in accordance with the standing orders notwithstanding the period during main estimates consideration." So to delete "to meet with the committee," delete "during its regularly scheduled Tuesday morning meeting time when the Assembly is sitting," just to really say, "in accordance with the standing orders."

The Chair: Thank you.

We do have an amendment on the floor, and I'm looking, then, to the group for any discussion on this amendment.

I'm not seeing any discussion or indication that anyone wants to discuss this in the chat, so we will move then to a vote on this amendment. Looking to hon. member . . .

Ms Robert: Sorry, Madam Chair. It's Nancy Robert. If I could just interrupt. I'm just hoping we can let the committee clerk have an opportunity to perhaps put the language of the amendment up on the screen so that everybody has a chance to see it, and Ms Pancholi can read it and make sure it reflects her intent.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Huffman: Sorry, Ms Pancholi. Which was the part you wanted to delete from the original motion?

Ms Pancholi: In that paragraph after the list of ministries maybe delete "during its regularly scheduled Tuesday morning meeting time when the Assembly is sitting notwithstanding the period during main estimates consideration," and then once that's deleted, just replace it with "to meet with the committee" and replace it with "in accordance with the standing orders."

Mr. Huffman: Okay, everyone. Thank you for your patience. I have put the amendment into the chat and also on the internal site under the motion.

If you don't mind reviewing that, Ms Pancholi, and just letting me know if that's what you had intended.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. That is fine. Yup. Thank you.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. members, we have an amendment. Any further discussion on this amendment?

Ms Pancholi: If I may, Madam Chair, I just simply want to say that this is for clarity, just to be completely clear that, of course, we all know that no matter sort of what we do in this committee, it is guided by the standing orders. I just wanted that for clarity's sake. This is the intent of the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, I'm not seeing folks who would like to comment right now, so I'm wondering if we should move, then, to a vote. Looking, then, to the floor for all in favour of this amendment. Are there any opposed? All right. It appears that that amendment has failed.

We are, then, back to the main motion. Friends, I'm wondering if there is – I'm looking to the floor for any other discussion on this motion as put forward by the government members that is up on your screen.

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Chair, I'd like to propose a motion if I could.

The Chair: Yes. Please, hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: An amendment. An amendment to this motion – sorry – to be clear. I'd like to amend this motion to include an invitation to the Auditor General to meet with the committee on June 21 of 2022.

The Chair: All right. I'm looking to the committee clerk to put that amendment up, the addition to the motion that affixes a specific date of June 21, 2022, for an appearance by the Auditor General's

office to discuss his reports, as we heard from him in the report on subcommittee business, as I understand this particular amendment, given that the Auditor General has requested a specific date.

Is that correct, hon. member?

10:10

Mr. Schmidt: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

I will just wait for the committee clerk to put that up on the screen or in the chat, whatever the case may be.

Ms Robert: Sorry, Madam Chair. We're just trying to figure out the best way to fit it in. We're going to have to either add it at the end or put it between sub (1) and sub (2). I'm just not sure, you know, if the committee has – like, if Mr. Schmidt has a preference as to whether he wants to add it as a sub (3) even though what he's requesting would be occurring before what's happening in sub (2) in that the Auditor General is being requested to meet in the fall with the committee, and then (3) would be asking the Auditor General to meet in the spring with the committee. Do you see what I mean?

Mr. Schmidt: Right. If I may, Madam Chair, respond to the question, I guess my amendment would be a sub (3) to include an invitation to the Auditor General to appear before the committee on June 21, 2022. That's in addition to this invitation to have the Auditor General appear in the fall of 2022.

As we've seen multiple times, you know, the Auditor General releases lots of reports throughout the year. It sounds like he's got a busy year ahead of him in his office. He has specifically requested to come and speak to us on June 21. He also will release a fall report, I'm sure, at which time the committee would be happy to meet with him in the fall, as proposed here by the government members. So this is a meeting in addition to the one that the government has proposed.

The Chair: All right. I'm just looking to the floor and to the chat to see if we have any speakers to this amendment.

Mr. Turton: Yes, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak to the amendment.

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Turton: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to the hon. member for putting forth the amendment. I guess a couple of questions I have – not questions but, I guess, just comments about why I will not be supporting this. While I appreciate the sentiment of the hon. member for putting this forth, I mean, there has been a precedent since 2015, even since the previous government, that the Auditor General only appears before the committee once a year, and that's to review the Auditor General's annual report. To this point in all my years serving here on this committee, I find that it has been efficient and effective. I also just want to make sure that we give the time and effort and energy to the ministries that are on the list by Member Rowswell. I just don't see the need at this point to go against existing precedent which has existed for many years.

I will be voting against this, and I urge all members to vote accordingly. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I see Member Pancholi would like to speak to this amendment, please.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm seeing a disturbing trend from the government members of this committee, who are appearing to

try to do as little work as possible in this committee. I don't know if they've got other things on their minds. But when we are a member of this committee, our obligations are to provide accountability and transparency for Albertans. I see no significant precedent that is in place that says that the Auditor General, who is a key part of this committee – why the Auditor General's office should only appear once a year. We just heard an explicit request from the Auditor General to come before this committee in June. He specifically requested June 21. It was very clear that he was saying that that's important work that needs to be done. There are going to be important recommendations spanning a period of time that's been very difficult for Albertans, where we've had limited transparency and accountability from this government with respect to debating the budget and the estimates.

To now try to limit based on some unstated precedent that apparently the Auditor General, according to the UCP committee members, only appears once before this committee is quite shocking, frankly, and I don't know why they're not willing to do their jobs and do the work. They've been trying to limit the number of meetings that this committee will have, limit the appearances of the Auditor General, who has been specifically asked that that is going to be key reporting information for planning our schedule for the fall session of this committee. I am frankly shocked. At every turn the UCP members of this committee seem to be wanting to do as little work as possible, which, frankly, is consistent with what we've seen throughout their conduct while in government. Well, the opposition members are ready to do their work, ready to provide the accountability and transparency for Albertans, and I urge all committee members, including the government members, to step up and do their jobs.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I am now looking to the floor or the chat for any other members who would like to speak to this amendment. I can't quite see the screen, but I'm going to assume that the amendment is up on the screen, that the clerk has had an opportunity to do that. If someone could just let me know because I cannot see the font.

Ms Renaud: Sorry, Madam Chair, this is Member Renaud. I'd just like to make a comment, but I can't put a note in the chat. My computer has died.

The Chair: Yes. Please go ahead, Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you very much. I'm a little bit stunned, actually. You know, I'm used to the government members doing everything they can to limit debate, doing everything they can to limit transparency and all of this, but to have the Auditor General just not that long ago tell us as a committee the amount of work that they're doing in these times that are so incredibly challenging and difficult, that this government has spent millions and millions and millions of dollars – and you would think that all of us on this committee would want to know exactly what is happening, where the recommendations are. Or the outcomes that we're seeing: are they appropriate, measurable? Any of this.

The Auditor General has literally told us that he's willing to come to talk about his work so that we can do our work properly, and the UCP government members are literally saying no. We're used to them not wanting to work very hard or limiting debate, but this is just unprecedented, that the Auditor General, a member of this committee, is not allowed to present to this committee when the Auditor General chose the best time for his office to present. It's just astounding to me that the government members are just so willing to do what they're told to limit debate and transparency. It's stunning.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Just looking now to the chat to see if there are members that would provide their comments to the amendment so that we have before – I just wonder if the clerk could read it out one time just simply because I cannot see it. I'm going to assume that maybe other folks can't.

Mr. Huffman: Hi. I apologize for that. I'll read out the text of the amendment, that

the motion be amended by adding the following after (2): (3) that the committee invite officials from the office of the Auditor General to present a report on June 21, 2022.

I will try to make that text a little bit bigger so you can see it online. Thank you.

The Chair: It's not you. Thank you for that. It's the fact that I switched to my phone after getting kicked off the laptop. That's the only reason why I can't read it. I imagine everyone else who's on a properly functioning computer will be able to read it.

Looking to the chat now, I'm seeing no further members wishing to speak to this, so we will now move to a vote on this amendment. Hon. members, all in favour of this . . .

Ms Renaud: If we could get a recorded vote, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Sure. Hon. members, all in favour . . .

Mr. Huffman: Sorry, Madam Chair. We have to do the vote first before we can do the recorded vote. Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. Yeah. We're going to do the regular vote, and then we will move to a recorded vote after that. Hon. members, I am looking now for you to unmute your microphones. All in favour of this amendment, please say so. Hon. members, any opposed to this amendment?

That amendment is defeated.

10:20

All right. Now, it appears that we have had a request for a recorded vote, that we will now move. Hon. members in favour of the amendment as it is in front of you, please state your names or state that you are in favour.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud. In favour.

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi Pancholi. In favour.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt. In favour.

The Chair: Okay. Seeing no others in favour, please, then, all those opposed, state your name for the record.

Mr. Reid: MLA Reid. Opposed.

Mr. Toor: MLA Toor. Opposed.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: MLA Armstrong-Homeniuk. Opposed.

Mr. Singh: Peter Singh. Opposed.

Ms Lovely: MLA Lovely. Opposed.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell. Opposed.

Mr. Turton: MLA Searle Turton. Opposed.

Mr. Walker: MLA Jordan Walker. Opposed.

The Chair: Thank you very much hon. members. It appears that that amendment has now failed. And so we are . . .

Mr. Huffman: Oh, sorry. Sorry, Madam Chair, to interrupt. Can I read out the totals?

The Chair: Yep.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you. For the motion, three; against, eight.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

We are now back on the main motion, friends, so I am looking to the chat for any other folks who wish to speak to this main motion.

Seeing none that are looking to speak to this main motion, we will now move to a vote. Looking to the floor, then, for all in favour of the motion as it is in front of you. All opposed to the motion as it is in front of you? Thank you, hon. members. It appears that that motion has now passed.

I'll now look to the floor for any other discussion on the spring 2022 committee meeting schedule.

Seeing none, then we will move on to agenda item 6. Under other business, hon. members, is there any other business to raise at this meeting at this time?

All right. I will just then advise folks that the committee has received written responses to questions asked by committee members during our fall meetings from the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, which was November 16, 2021, the Ministry of Transportation on November 30, 2021, and the Auditor General on December 14, 2021. As per the usual practice those will be posted to the committee's public website.

Hon. members, I would like to briefly discuss one other matter under other business. As committee members know, it is standard practice for the committee to prepare a report for the Assembly on its activities from the previous year. The usual practice has been to have the committee clerk prepare this report and distribute the draft to members of the committee for our approval. It is primarily intended to provide an information overview of our activities for the records of the Assembly. The report contains information on meetings that we have held, any professional development workshops our members have participated in, and information on any conferences attended by our committee members. This year the report will also contain information about the 2021 CCPAC-CCOLA conference that was cohosted by our committee. Are there any questions or concerns in relation to the committee clerk drafting this report?

Seeing none, very well, the committee clerk will then prepare a draft report for our review at an upcoming meeting. Not seeing any other items for discussion under other business, I'll just give us one more chance.

If not, we will now move to item 7 on the agenda, which is the date of the next meeting, which is at the call of the chair.

I will now move to adjournment. Friends at the table, please be reminded to remove your own bottles and cups for the safety of LAO staff. I'll call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned?

Mr. Reid: So moved.

The Chair: All in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 10:25 a.m.]

