



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Wednesday, January 8, 2025
1 p.m.

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP), Chair
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Deputy Chair

Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)

Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)

de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)

Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)

Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)

McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)

Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)

Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)

van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)*

* substitution for Chantelle de Jonge

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Rachel McGraw

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Wednesday, January 8, 2025

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

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

I'm Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. I would like to invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves, and we will start on my right.

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

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

Mr. Wylie: Doug Wylie, Auditor General.

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

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and executive director of parliamentary services.

Mr. Huffman: Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: We will now go to those joining us online. Please introduce yourself as I call your name.

Mr. Scott Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

The Chair: And we have a substitute for Ms de Jonge: Mr. van Dijken.

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

The Chair: Mr. Court Ellingson.

Mr. Ellingson: Yeah. Court Ellingson, Calgary-Foothills.

The Chair: Mr. Luntz.

Mr. Luntz: Good afternoon, everyone. Brandon Luntz, Leduc-Beaumont.

The Chair: Mr. McDougall.

Mr. McDougall: Hello. Myles McDougall, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Ms Renaud.

Mr. McDougall: Your sound is off, Marie.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would note a substitution for the record: Mr. van Dijken for Ms de Jonge.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your cameras while speaking and 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 to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting, and please make sure that comments flow through the chair at all times.

Approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? If not, can a member move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its Wednesday, January 8, 2025, meeting? Moved. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? All in favour, those online? Any opposed? The motion is carried.

We have meeting minutes for the Tuesday, December 3, 2024, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? If not, can a member move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the meeting minutes as distributed of its meeting held on Tuesday, December 3, 2024? Garth Rowswell. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Those online, all in favour? Any opposed? The motion is carried.

At our last meeting on December 3 we began a discussion regarding a proposed meeting schedule for our weekly Tuesday morning meetings to be held during the upcoming 2025 spring session. The deputy chair moved a motion based on recommendations from the subcommittee on committee business, which identified six ministries to invite and set aside two spots to review identified audit reports of the Auditor General. Hon. Member Schmidt moved an amendment to revise the ministries on that list, and the meeting adjourned with that amendment on the floor. The clerk will have both of the motions on the screen. They have been read into the record.

Mr. Huffman: They have to read them for this.

The Chair: Then we will read them into the record for the purpose of this meeting, and then we will continue with the amendment.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the motion be amended by striking out the following: (1) Jobs, Economy and Trade, (2) Tourism and Sport, (3) Infrastructure, (4) Municipal Affairs, (5) placeholder for audit-focused meeting, (6) Arts, Culture and Status of Women, (7) Transportation and Economic Corridors, (8) placeholder for audit-focused meeting, and substituting the following: (1) Jobs, Economy and Trade, (2) Health, (3) Seniors, Community and Social Services, (4) Affordability and Utilities, (5) placeholder for audit-focused meeting, (6) Environment and Protected Areas, (7) Energy and Minerals, (8) placeholder for audit-focused meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on the amendment?

Seeing none. I think Member Schmidt had already made some arguments in the last meeting, so seeing no further discussion, we will . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Well, I'll just say that the ones that were there we did last spring of '24. So I was trying to get the older ones caught up and get ones that haven't been done for a long time done.

The Chair: All right.

With that, I guess I will call the question. All those in favour of the amendment? Any opposed? Those online, all those in favour of the amendment? Any opposed online?

The amendment is defeated.

We are back on the main motion. Is there any discussion on the main motion?

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to propose another amendment to the motion that Mr. Rowswell presented.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I need to see it on the screen. Yes, that's right, that

the motion be amended by striking out "Transportation and Economic Corridors" and substituting "Advanced Education."

The Chair: Thank you.
Any discussion?

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that we have emphasized bringing forward ministries to the committee that haven't been here yet. I note that the last time Advanced Education appeared before the committee was December 6, 2022. I think that now would be a good time to revisit Advanced Education, and that would mean replacing Transportation and Economic Corridors for a future date.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any discussion?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I think we need to get to that one, and I think it can be first on the list in the fall. Transportation hasn't been done since November 30 of 2021. So I think we can work our way towards that and get it first on the list for the fall.

The Chair: Those joining online, any comments?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the amendment? Any opposed? All those in favour online? All those opposed?

The amendment is defeated.

Now we are back on the main motion. Is there any discussion?

Mr. Rowswell: Do we need to read it in?

The Chair: Just the main motion presented by MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I'll read it.

The Chair: That's on the screen.

Mr. Rowswell: That

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the following ministries to appear before the committee to respond to questions regarding each ministry's most recent annual report, responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period as well as relevant reports of the Auditor General and allot two spots, as indicated, for audit-focused meetings with the relevant ministries and entities: (1) Jobs, Economy and Trade; (2) Tourism and Sport; (3) Infrastructure; (4) Municipal Affairs; (5) a placeholder for audit-focused meeting; (6) Arts, Culture and Status of Women; (7) Transportation and Economic Corridors; (8) another placeholder for audit-focused meeting.

1:10

The Chair: Good. Thank you.
Any discussion?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I just think this aligns with catching up on our old ones and continuing down that process and then the new, adding in the Auditor's reports, which I think is going to be an interesting thing to do. So that's the reason for it.

The Chair: Any comments from members joining online?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion put forward by Mr. Rowswell? All those opposed? Those joining online, all those in favour? Any opposed?

That motion is carried.

Moving on. To assist the committee in choosing which audit report it would like to review during the spring session, the subcommittee has recommended that the committee have an off-the-record technical briefing with the Auditor General about his recent audit report. Would members be in favour of this briefing?

Hon. Members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Wylie and his staff have joined us today and are prepared to give that briefing following this meeting.

Finally, the subcommittee on committee business report also recommends that the committee delegate to the subcommittee the selection of two audits which would be the focus of two identified meetings during the spring sitting. Doing so would eliminate the need for another committee meeting to make this decision. If members are in favour of that, we have some wording for a possible motion prepared. The motion would look something like: that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts authorize the subcommittee on committee business to select two reports of the Auditor General for the committee to review during the 2025 spring session. Is any member willing to move this motion?

Mr. Rowswell: I'm just wondering. There's one word there, "select." I had "recommend."

The Chair: We can change it to "recommend to the committee."

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Sure.

All right. I think that's fine the way it is.

The Chair: That's fine?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

Mr. Huffman: I changed the wording.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Fine. That's good, too.

Mr. Huffman: That's more clear.

The Chair: Is any member willing to move this one?

Mr. Rowswell: I will so move.

Mr. Huffman: Do you mind reading it out?

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. That

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts direct the subcommittee on committee business to recommend two reports of the Auditor General for the committee to review during the 2025 spring session.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any discussion?

Mr. Schmidt: Just a process discussion. When would the committee review the subcommittee's recommendation and vote on it? Do we know?

Mr. Rowswell: I think as soon as we could. There has to be time for whoever we select to prepare. We thought maybe we could wait till we have our first PAC meeting in the spring, but that might be too late, so it might require . . .

Mr. Schmidt: A meeting beforehand.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Yeah. That's fine.

The Chair: A couple of things. I think the subcommittee has to meet first and prepare a report. Either we can call a special meeting of this committee, or we can do it at the end of the next available meeting, the very first meeting.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I'm inclined to agree with Mr. Rowswell's suggestion that we should probably do this sooner rather than later so that the ministries have time to prepare for that. Leaving it until the first regular meeting of the Public Accounts Committee might be cutting it a bit close.

Mr. Rowswell: That could be a virtual one, right?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. We will let Warren figure out that one.

Mr. Rowswell: There you go, man. Get it done.

The Chair: With that, any discussion on the motion? Those joining us online?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion? Those opposed? Online, all those in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Under other business I just have information to share. The ministries of Children and Family Services, Forestry and Parks, and Technology and Innovation have provided written responses to questions asked during meetings this past fall sitting. They were posted on the committee's internal site for members to review, and, as has been our practice, they will be made available on the Assembly website.

Are there any other items for discussion today? Those joining online? Seeing none.

Unless something arises earlier, which, I think, it might, the next meeting of the committee will be set in conjunction with the start of the spring session. Once the sessional calendar is available in mid-January, a notice of meeting dates during the spring session will be sent out.

With that, I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the Wednesday, January 8, 2025, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be adjourned? So moved. All those in favour? Anyone opposed? Those joining online, all those in favour? Anyone opposed? The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:17 p.m.]

