STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS



FOURTH REPORT OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

June 29, 2020 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan Standing Committee on Public Accounts



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June 29, 2020

To the honourable members of the Legislative Assembly:

HONOURABLE MEMBERS:

I have the pleasure to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the twenty-eighth legislature. The committee is authorized by the Assembly to review and report to the Assembly its observations, opinions, and recommendations on the reports of the Provincial Auditor and on the Public Accounts.

This report reflects the work of the committee for the period October 23, 2019 to June 29, 2020. During this time, the committee considered chapters in five annual volumes published by the Provincial Auditor; the Provincial Auditor's business and financial plan for the year ended March 31, 2021; the Provincial Auditor's annual report for the year ended March 31, 2019; and the Provincial Auditor's request for a special warrant.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,

Trent Wotherspoon, Chair MLA Regina Rosemont

COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE

Current Members

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Chair Regina Rosemont

Mr. Don McMorris, Deputy Chair Indian Head-Milestone

> Mr. Greg Brkich Arm River

Mr. David Buckingham Saskatoon Westview

> Mr. Herb Cox The Battlefords

Ms. Lisa Lambert Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood

> Ms. Vicki Mowat Saskatoon Fairview

> Mr. Randy Weekes Biggar-Sask Valley

Contents

Introduction	1
Membership of the Committee	1
Acknowledgments	1
Government Response	1
Review of Provincial Auditor's Annual Volumes	2
Summary	2
Central Services	
Executive Council	9
Finance	9
Government Relations	11
Provincial Capital Commission	20
Saskatchewan Arts Board	21
Standing Committee on Public Accounts	
Summary of Implemented Recommendations	11
Procedural Motions	12
Other Work of the Committee	
Review of the Provincial Auditor's Business and Financial Plan	13
Review of the Provincial Auditor's Annual Report	13
Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan request for a special warrant	13
Appendix A — Provincial Auditor's Officials	
Appendix B — Provincial Comptroller's Officials	15
Appendix C — Ministry and Agency Officials	16

Introduction

Membership of the Committee

The membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts consists of Greg Brkich, David Buckingham, Herb Cox, Lisa Lambert, Don McMorris, Vicki Mowat, Randy Weekes, and Trent Wotherspoon. There has been no changes to committee membership since the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was presented on October 22, 2019.

Acknowledgments

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts expresses its appreciation to the employees of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, including Provincial Auditor Judy Ferguson. The committee would also like to thank Provincial Comptroller Terry Paton, his staff, and the many witnesses who appeared before the committee. A list of witnesses is attached to this report as an appendix.

Government Response

Pursuant to rule 136(7), the Standing Committee on Public Accounts requests that the Government of Saskatchewan respond to this report within 120 days.

Review of Provincial Auditor's Annual Volumes

Summary

The committee reviewed chapters from the following annual volumes of the Provincial Auditor:

- 2017 Report Volume 2
- 2018 Report Volume 1
- 2018 Report Volume 2
- 2019 Report Volume 1
- 2019 Report Volume 2

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts considered 28 recommendations in the annual volumes of the Provincial Auditor. The committee concurred with 28 recommendations, noted compliance with 20 recommendations, and noted progress towards compliance on 6 recommendations. It concluded consideration of 15 chapters that did not have any new recommendations.

Central Services

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 14: Central Services — Securing the Data Centre

Considered February 26, 2020

Firewalls Not Effectively Configured

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 219 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 14, Central Services — Securing the Data Centre:

We recommend the Ministry of Central Services work with its service provider to configure its data centre firewalls to restrict inappropriate access.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Central Services has complied with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 15: Central Services — Using Consultants

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 29: Central Services — Planning Accommodations

Considered February 26, 2020

Executive Council

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 4: Executive Council

Considered February 26, 2020

More Detailed Review of Financial Reports Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 29 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 4, Executive Council:

We recommend that Executive Council review, in detail, its periodic financial reports.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Executive Council has complied with the recommendation.

Remuneration Rates for Legislative Secretaries Inconsistent with Board of Internal Economy Approved Rates

The committee concurred with recommendation 2 made at page 30 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 4, Executive Council:

We recommend that Executive Council work with the Board of Internal Economy to remunerate legislative secretaries at rates consistent with Board of Internal Economy approved rates.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 13: Communicating Information about Government Programs and Services in a Non-Partisan Way

Considered February 26, 2020

Criteria for Non-Partisan Communications Not Documented and Made Public

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 210 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 13, Communicating Information about Government Programs and Services in a Non-Partisan Way:

We recommend the Government of Saskatchewan make public its criteria for what constitutes non-partisan communications about government programs and services.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Executive Council has complied with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 5: Executive Council

Considered February 26, 2020

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 33: Executive Council — Communicating Information about Government Programs and Services in a Non-Partisan Way

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

Finance

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 6: Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency

Considered February 26, 2020

Procedures to Verify Plan Participant Data Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 43 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 6, Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency:

We recommend that the Public Employees Benefits Agency have written procedures for verifying the completeness and accuracy of pension and benefit plan participant data before providing it to the actuaries.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Finance has complied with the recommendation.

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 32: Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency — Securing Personal Information Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 5: Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency — Effectively Informing Certain Pension Plan Members

Considered February 26, 2020

Required Information on Retirement, Termination and Death Issued but Sometimes Late The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 69 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 5, Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency — Effectively Informing Certain Pension Plan Members:

We recommend that the Ministry of Finance — Public Employees Benefits Agency provide Municipal Employees' Pension Plan terminating and retiring members with all legally required information within timeframes required by law.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Finance has complied with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 24: Finance — Monitoring the Fuel Tax Exemption Program

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 45: Modernizing Government Budgeting and Reporting

Considered February 26, 2020

Outdated Legislation with Focus on the General Revenue Fund Repealed and Not Replaced
The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 374 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 45, Modernizing Government Budgeting and Reporting:

We recommend that the Government of Saskatchewan formally require interim public financial reporting on the Summary Budget.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Finance has complied with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 6: Finance

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 34: Finance — Implementing the Revenue Administration Modernization Project Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

Government Relations

2018 Report Volume 1

Chapter 1: Municipal Potash Tax Sharing Administration Board

Considered February 26, 2020

Timely Submission of Financial Statements Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 18 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 1, chapter 1, Municipal Potash Tax Sharing Administration Board:

We recommend that the Municipal Potash Tax Sharing Administration Board submit its audited financial statements within the timeframes required by *The Municipal Tax Sharing (Potash) Act*.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations has complied with the recommendation.

Minister's Formal Approval of Board Remuneration Rates Required

The committee concurred with recommendation 2 made at page 18 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 1, chapter 1, Municipal Potash Tax Sharing Administration Board:

We recommend that the Municipal Potash Tax Sharing Administration Board obtain the Minister responsible's written approval of the remuneration and expense rates it pays its board members. It should obtain this approval prior to changing remuneration rates.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations has complied with the recommendation.

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 11: Northern Municipal Trust Account

Considered February 26, 2020

Segregation of Incompatible Duties Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 68 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 11, Northern Municipal Trust Account:

We recommend that the Ministry of Government Relations adequately segregate duties of employees responsible for the key accounting functions of the Northern Municipal Trust Account.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 6: Government Relations — **Alerting the Public about Imminently Dangerous Events** Considered February 26, 2020

Responsibilities of Key Parties Well Defined

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 83 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 6, Government Relations — Alerting the Public about Imminently Dangerous Events:

We recommend the Ministry of Government Relations maintain a robust and enforceable written contract with the party providing day-to-day administration for the SaskAlert program.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations has complied with the recommendation.

Better Monitoring of Program Administrator Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 2 made at page 88 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 6, Government Relations — Alerting the Public about Imminently Dangerous Events:

We recommend the Ministry of Government Relations document its regular monitoring of all key responsibilities of its SaskAlert program administrator.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

The committee concurred with recommendation 3 made at page 88 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 1, chapter 6, Government Relations — Alerting the Public about Imminently Dangerous Events:

We recommend the Ministry of Government Relations work with the operator of Alert Ready (the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination System) to obtain information needed to enable a periodic review of the appropriateness of user access to the System.

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations has complied with the recommendation.

Quarterly Practice Alerts Not Always Done and Monitoring of Live Alerts Not Documented
The committee concurred with recommendation 4 made at page 89 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019
report volume 1, chapter 6, Government Relations — Alerting the Public about Imminently Dangerous
Events:

We recommend the Ministry of Government Relations actively monitor whether SaskAlert participants complete timely and accurate alerts, and take action where necessary (e.g., suspend system access).

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 25: Government Relations — Safe Drinking Water in Northern Settlements Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 7: Government Relations

Considered February 26, 2020

Improved Processes Needed to Make Key Accounting Estimates

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 55 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 7, Government Relations:

We recommend the Ministry of Government Relations regularly review and update the processes it uses to make key accounting estimates (e.g., for education property tax revenues, treaty land entitlement obligations).

The committee noted that the Ministry of Government Relations has complied with the recommendation.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 35: Government Relations — Proposing Education Property Tax Mill Rates Considered February 26, 2020

Provincial Capital Commission

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 10: Provincial Capital Commission

Considered February 26, 2020

Well-Defined Process for Public Consultations on Major Developments Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 71 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 10, Provincial Capital Commission:

We recommend the Provincial Capital Commission make public written processes about the timing, nature, and extent of public consultations for major amendments to the Wascana Centre Master Plan.

The committee noted that the Provincial Capital Commission is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

Clear Communication of Design Review Process for Major Developments Required

The committee concurred with recommendation 2 made at page 72 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 10, Provincial Capital Commission:

We recommend the Provincial Capital Commission publish, using clear language, its design review process for major developments in Wascana Centre.

The committee noted that the Provincial Capital Commission has complied with the recommendation.

The committee concurred with recommendation 3 made at page 72 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 10, Provincial Capital Commission:

We recommend the Provincial Capital Commission keep the public informed about the status of each proposed and approved major development in Wascana Centre until its completion.

The committee noted that the Provincial Capital Commission is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

Documentation of Conformity to the Master Plan Necessary

The committee concurred with recommendation 4 made at page 73 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 10, Provincial Capital Commission:

We recommend the Provincial Capital Commission clearly document in its Board minutes how major improvements and developments it approves conform to the Wascana Centre Master Plan.

The committee noted that the Provincial Capital Commission has complied with the recommendation.

Formal Requirements with Owners of Buildings in Wascana Centre Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 5 made at page 74 of the Provincial Auditor's 2019 report volume 2, chapter 10, Provincial Capital Commission:

We recommend the Provincial Capital Commission establish agreements with building owners of major developments in Wascana Centre to facilitate control of building use and conformity with *The Provincial Capital Commission Act* and the Wascana Centre Master Plan in effect.

The committee noted that the Provincial Capital Commission is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

Saskatchewan Arts Board

2017 Report Volume 2

Chapter 12: Saskatchewan Arts Board

Considered February 26, 2020

Grant Payments Made Without Approval

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 77 of the Provincial Auditor's 2017 report volume 2, chapter 12, Saskatchewan Arts Board:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board follow its established policies when making grant payments.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 13: Saskatchewan Arts Board

Considered February 26, 2020

Approved Written Guidance over Accounting for Grants Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 75 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 13, Saskatchewan Arts Board:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board maintain written management-approved guidance about accounting for and payment of grants.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 22: Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently Considered February 26, 2020

Objectives of Grant Programs Align with Strategic Direction, but Program Review Frequency not Set The committee concurred with recommendation 1 made at page 124 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board establish the frequency of formal program reviews of its major grant programs.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

<u>Fair and Objective Procedures Established, but Need to Include the Use of Independent Assessors</u>
The committee concurred with recommendation 2 made at page 126 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board set out, in writing, its process to use and select independent assessors when awarding grants.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Clearly Defined—Process Generally Followed

The committee concurred with recommendation 3 made at page 128 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board obtain signed agreements from evaluators before releasing grant application packages to them.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

The committee concurred with recommendation 4 made at page 128 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board record the time the person with a declared conflict of interest left and returned to a grant adjudication session.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

<u>Application Evaluation Criteria in Place but More Guidance Needed on Scoring Applications</u>
The committee concurred with recommendation 5 made at page 132 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board give evaluators detailed written guidance about scoring grant applications against evaluation criteria, and make its guidance available to applicants.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board is making progress towards complying with the recommendation.

Tracking on Complaint Resolution Needed

The committee concurred with recommendation 6 made at page 134 of the Provincial Auditor's 2018 report volume 2, chapter 22, Saskatchewan Arts Board — Awarding Grants Impartially and Transparently:

We recommend that the Saskatchewan Arts Board track receipt and resolution of complaints about its grant programs.

The committee noted that the Saskatchewan Arts Board has complied with the recommendation.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 50: Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 49: Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

Summary of Implemented Recommendations

2018 Report Volume 2

Chapter 20: Summary of Implemented Recommendations

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 1

Chapter 2: Summary of Implemented Recommendations

Considered February 26, 2020

The committee reports that this chapter was received and reviewed for informational purposes and that there were no new recommendations on which to report.

2019 Report Volume 2

Chapter 19: Summary of Implemented Recommendations

Considered February 26, 2020

Procedural Motions

Members moved one procedural motion in regards to the proposed Brandt building in Wascana Park. This motion and the resulting decision of the committee is presented below.

1 Columny 20, 2020	Februar	y 26,	2020
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It was moved by Ms. Mowat:

That the Public Accounts Committee recommends the Government of Saskatchewan reject the proposed Brandt building in Wascana Park and restart the process from the beginning.

A debate arising and the question being put, it was defeated on the following recorded division:

Yeas — 1					
Mowat					
Nays — 6					
Brkich	Buckingham	Cox	D'Autremont	Lambert	Weekes

Other Work of the Committee

Review of the Provincial Auditor's Business and Financial Plan

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is responsible for reviewing and approving the business and financial plan of the Office of the Provincial Auditor. The committee considered and adopted resolutions for the estimates requested by the Provincial Auditor for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The motions adopted on December 4, 2019 for the 2020-21 fiscal year were:

That the 2020–21 estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, vote 28, Provincial Auditor (PA01) be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$7,978,000;

and

That the 2020–21 estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, vote 28, unforeseen expenses (PA02) be approved, as submitted, in the amount of \$537,000.

The committee then agreed:

That the 2020–21 estimates of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, as approved, be forwarded to the Speaker, as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy, pursuant to section 10.1(4) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*.

Review of the Provincial Auditor's Annual Report

On December 4, 2019, the committee concluded consideration of the Provincial Auditor's annual report for the year ended March 31, 2019.

Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan Request for a Special Warrant

On May 21, 2020, the committee considered the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan request for a special warrant and Mr. McMorris moved the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommend a special warrant in the amount of \$1,980,300, being 3/12ths of the 2020-21 funding previously approved for Vote 28 – Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, estimates; and, further

That the said amount as approved be forwarded to the Minister of Finance, pursuant to section 10.2(3)(b) of *The Provincial Auditor Act*.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Appendix A — **Provincial Auditor's Officials**

Judy Ferguson, Provincial Auditor
Angèle Borys, Deputy Provincial Auditor and Chief Operating Officer
Tara Clemett, Deputy Provincial Auditor
Carolyn O'Quinn, Deputy Provincial Auditor
Melanie Heebner, Principal
Linda Klassen, Principal
Kim Lowe, Principal
Jason Shaw, Principal
Jonathan Pituley, Senior Manager

Appendix B — Provincial Comptroller's Officials

Terry Paton, Provincial Comptroller Diana Fink, Senior Analyst Alanna Schemenauer, Analyst

Appendix C — Ministry and Agency Officials

Central Services

Mike Carr, Deputy Minister Nancy Cherney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Property Management Troy Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate and Commercial Services Kelly Fuessel, Acting Chief Information Officer, Information Technology

Executive Council

Cam Swan, Deputy Minister Kristen Fry, Executive Director, Corporate Services

Finance

Rupen Pandya, Deputy Minister

Brent Hebert, Assistant Deputy Minister, Revenue

Karen Lautsch, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Office of Planning, Performance and Improvement

Arun Srinivas, Assistant Deputy Minister, Taxation and Intergovernmental Affairs

Terry Paton, Provincial Comptroller

Dean Cursons, Director, Financial Services

Government Relations

Greg Miller, Deputy Minister

Laurier Donais, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Disaster Recovery

Sheldon Green, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal Relations

Giselle Marcotte, Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs

Elissa Aitken, Executive Director, Policy and Program

Susan Carani, Executive Director, Lands and Consultation Branch

Brad Henry, Executive Director, Northern Municipal Services

Jeff Markewich, Executive Director, Corporate Services

Provincial Capital Commission

Monique Goffinet Miller, Chief Executive Officer

Grant Hilsenteger, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Disaster Recovery

Greg Miller, Board Chair

Patrick Coulthard, Director, Stewardship and Operations

Ryan Whippler, Director, Outreach and Visitor Experience

Public Employees Benefit Agency

Dan Gudmunson, Director, Finance and Planning

Tasha Lupanko, Director, Education and Engagement

Saskatchewan Arts Board

Michael Jones, Chief Executive Officer

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency

Marlo Pritchard, President and Fire Commissioner Teresa Florizone, Vice-President Jean Longpre, SaskAlert Manager