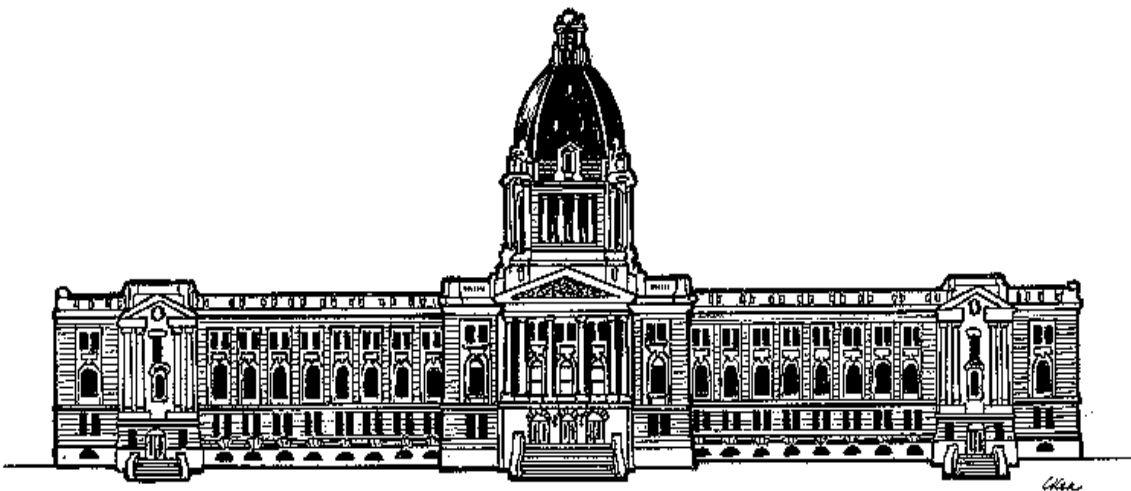




STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hansard Verbatim Report

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-sixth Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Chair
Regina Rosemont

Mr. Glen Hart, Deputy Chair
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Pat Atkinson
Saskatoon Nutana

Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Mr. Warren Michelson
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Rod Gantefoer
Melfort

Mr. Lyle Stewart
Thunder Creek

[The committee met at 10:00.]

The Chair: — Good morning, committee members and the many, many, many individuals who are tuning in from communities across Saskatchewan watching us on video streaming. It's the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and I welcome committee members here today: Mr. Hart, Mr. D'Autremont, Mr. Gantfoer, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Michelson, and Ms. Atkinson.

As a basic introduction of our agenda here today, we have a couple documents I'll be tabling. We have then election of our Deputy Chair for a seat that is vacant, and then we will have a brief recess and reconvene to consider a steering committee report with respect to the hiring of a new Provincial Auditor, with that spot being vacant as well.

So at this point in time, I'll just table two documents. PAC 22/26 from the Ministry of Finance, this is in response to a question raised at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting on Friday, June 25th regarding the government's unfunded pension liability and as it relates to when that will peak, and that was dated June 29, 2010. Second document that'll be tabled here today or that is tabled at this point in time is PAC 23/26, Ministry of Finance reporting of public losses for the period from April 1, 2010, to June 30, 2010, dated July 30, 2010.

Election of Deputy Chair

The Chair: — Moving along to our second agenda item here today is to move along to preside over the election of our Deputy Chair. This is due to change in committee membership, and the Deputy Chair position is vacant at the moment. And I just simply want to remind members of this process. I'll call for nominations. Once there are no further nominations, I will then ask members to move a motion to have a committee member preside as Deputy Chair.

So I will now call for nominations for an individual to serve as Deputy Chair. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would like to nominate Glen Hart.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont has nominated Mr. Hart to the position of Deputy Chair. Are there any further nominations? Seeing none, I would now invite one of the members to move that motion. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would move:

That Glen Hart be elected to preside as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Chair: — Okay. It has been moved by Mr. D'Autremont:

That Mr. Hart be elected to preside as Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

All in favour of this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — All opposed? So moved.

We will now take a brief recess for a meeting of the steering committee to work through the report as it relates to the hiring of the Provincial Auditor, the process for hiring that Provincial Auditor. If we take — I'm just looking to committee members here — about 20 minutes for that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . 15 minutes? That would be fine.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Second Report of the Steering Committee

The Chair: — We'll reconvene our Standing Committee on Public Accounts. At this point in time, I would like to table the second report of the steering committee with respect to the Provincial Auditor selection process, dated September 29, 2010, to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I would invite the Deputy Chair, Mr. Hart, to maybe run through the recommendations that are proposed within this report.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Committee members, the steering committee's report has 10 recommendations included in it. I will briefly summarize each recommendation.

Recommendation no. 1: the steering committee recommends that Nola Buhr, Chair of the audit committee, act as an external subject matter expert to assist in the development and implementation of the selection process for the Provincial Auditor for the province of Saskatchewan.

Recommendation no. 2 is the steering committee recommends that Nola Buhr, Committee Clerk Kathy Burianyak, and assistant director of human resource and payroll, Ginette Michaluk, request meetings with Mr. Fred Wendel, recently retired auditor, and Mr. Terry Paton, Provincial Comptroller, Ministry of Finance. The objective of these meetings would be to identify any issues specific to the Saskatchewan content which will need to be considered in the development of the assessment process for the new Provincial Auditor.

Recommendation no. 3 states that Ms. Burianyak be responsible for the overall management of the electronic submission process.

Recommendation no. 4: the steering committee recommends that Kathy Burianyak and Ginette Michaluk be appointed to the screening panel to provide human resource and administrative support for the screening process.

Recommendation no. 5 is the steering committee recommends that Ms. Nola Buhr, Chair of the audit committee, and Ms. Joyce Stubbins, member of the audit committee, be appointed to the screening panel to provide subject matter expertise in the overall selection process.

Recommendation no. 6: the steering committee recommends that the resumés be initially reviewed by the screening panel. The screening will be based on the criteria approved by the steering committee, composed of the Chair and Deputy Chair of this committee.

Recommendation no. 7: the steering committee recommends that Ms. Burianyak and Ms. Michaluk remove and cover the names of candidates from the resumé and cover letters.

Recommendation no. 8: the steering committee recommends that Nola Buhr and Joyce Stubbins conduct secondary screening either by personal or telephone interviews, and that's dependent on the number of qualified candidates, with the steering committee acting as observers. Ms. Burianyak and Ms. Michaluk will be in attendance to provide human resource and administrative support. Any written documents will be reviewed and assessed by Nola Buhr and Joyce Stubbins.

Upon conclusion of the secondary screening process, the screening panel will determine which candidates will be brought for the first personal interview. This interview will be conducted by the screening panel with the steering committee acting as an observer.

Recommendation no. 9: the steering committee recommends that Nola Buhr and Joyce Stubbins conduct a partial reference check on candidates interviewed. Specifically Ms. Buhr and Ms. Stubbins would handle those questions related to the professional accounting-audit domain. Kathy Burianyak and Ginette Michaluk will conduct the remainder of the reference checks specifically for those elements that are not accounting and auditing related.

Upon completion of the reference checks, the screening panel will provide a report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The report will outline the screening panel's assessment, evaluation, and overview of each candidate's competencies as they relate to the position of the Provincial Auditor.

And finally, recommendation no. 10 which speaks to the second interview process: the steering committee recommends that the interview panel be chaired by Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. The final interview will be conducted by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The screening panel will be in attendance to ensure the accurate, written capture of candidate's responses and continuity of the overall process. Upon completion of the second personal interview, supplementary reference checks will be conducted as needed.

Mr. Chair, that outlines the recommendations of the steering committee dealing with the selection process.

The Chair: — Thank you, Deputy Chair Hart. I suspect at this point there may be some questions or some discussion, and I would open the floor to committee members. Mr. Michelson.

Mr. Michelson: — Mr. Chair, I hope there's an understanding in recommendation no. 9 that talks about a partial reference check. Is that being like kind of pregnant or . . . like that's just a preliminary . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Michelson, make your statement and recommend what you'd like to convey to the committee here.

Mr. Michelson: — I guess I would like to see that changed as a preliminary reference check rather than a partial.

Ms. Atkinson: — If I may, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — Ms. Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that the two subject experts will be checking the references in terms of the technical ability of the candidates when it comes to accounting practices and that others will be checking the references of the candidate when it comes to other aspects, other qualifications or their competencies. So as I understand this, there will be a full reference check done on each of the potential final candidates, but it will be done by various people that are on the committee.

The Chair: — Good discussion and if I look at recommendation 9 here and we want to make sure we have the confidence in this recommendation, but it does state specifically that the two subject area experts will do a partial reference check. And I think certainly that would be within the area of subject area expertise, and then the human resource experts at the table as defined here within recommendation 9 will conduct the remainder of the reference checks. So my belief would be that the statement "conducting the remainder" would certainly state that we're doing a full and complete reference check because certainly that's very important for this process. But certainly welcome to, if there's . . . looking to put forward an amendment.

Mr. Michelson: — No, I think that's fine. I just wanted to bring that up and you know I just . . . as long as there is a complete reference check done prior to the final recommendations.

[13:45]

The Chair: — Any other questions on any other aspects of the report before us here today?

Without further questions, at this point I would entertain a motion. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I'd be pleased to move a motion:

That the second report of the steering committee be adopted and that the steering committee be authorized to make decisions on process and procedure relating to the selection of a Provincial Auditor; and

That if a non-committee member is unable to participate in the process, the steering committee shall be authorized to select another LAS employee or subject matter specialist.

The Chair: — Was the motion heard by all members? All in favour?

Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Opposed? So the Chair would like to point out that that motion was passed unanimously. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — *Nemine contradicente.*

The Chair: — That's correct, unanimous. At this point in time

and for the public to understand, this sets out the process, defines a process for the province of Saskatchewan to seek a new Provincial Auditor for a term to serve the public honourably and for us as a Standing Committee on Public Accounts to make that recommendation to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. Ms. Atkinson.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chair, a technical question. Will the committee be able to proceed before this is formally approved by the Legislative Assembly when we meet towards the end of October? So are we going to . . .

An Hon. Member: — Proceed in what manner?

Ms. Atkinson: — Proceed in terms of doing the advertising, getting . . .

The Chair: — That's my understanding, correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — This committee is authorized.

Ms. Atkinson: — Yes, okay. But we need to put that on the record.

The Chair: — We will.

Ms. Atkinson: — And so then my next question is, will the process that we have just agreed to be put on the Internet so that if people are interested in looking at this report that they can understand the process that this committee is going to use in order to choose a new Provincial Auditor?

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Atkinson. And good questions and important for the public to be aware that this committee has the authority to set this process in motion — that's with this motion here today — so the process as defined in the report today will now convene.

And further to the second question, very important for individuals who are tuning in from home or that are interested in following these proceedings that this report will be made public in entirety on the website of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and will be there for reference. Further to that, we'll be issuing a media release from this committee today, as Chair and Deputy Chair, to state to the broad public that we have set this process in motion and defined its terms of reference.

At this point in time without further questions, I would encourage or welcome a motion of adjournment. Mr. Gantfoer. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — So moved. This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 13:46.]