



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Chair  
Regina Rosemont

Ms. Colleen Young, Deputy Chair  
Lloydminster

Mr. Marv Friesen  
Saskatoon Riversdale

Mr. Todd Goudy  
Melfort

Mr. Delbert Kirsch  
Batoche

Mr. Hugh Nerlien  
Kelvington-Wadena

Mr. Dana Skoropad  
Arm River

Ms. Aleana Young  
Regina University



[The committee met at 09:30.]

**The Chair:** — Well good morning, everyone. We'll convene the Standing Committee on Public Accounts here this morning. Thank you for joining on what's an incredibly blustery morning out there. Please be safe; I know many of you are on the road here today. Please be safe.

I'll welcome and introduce our members. We have Ms. Young. How do I differentiate between the two Youngs at the committee? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Ms. Young, Lloydminster. We have Mr. Nerlien; Mr. Friesen; Mr. Kirsch; Ms. Young, Regina University; Mr. Goudy; and Mr. Skoropad. So good morning, members.

The committee has received a letter from Mr. Bradshaw who's stepped down and resigned from his position as Deputy Chair to take on responsibilities as a minister. We wish him well in that role, and we thank him for his brief service as Deputy Chair.

I'll just remind members of the process. First I'll ask for nominations. Once there are no further nominations, I'll then ask a member to move a motion to have a committee member preside as Deputy Chair. So at this point I'll call for nominations for the position of Deputy Chair. Mr. Nerlien.

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Colleen Young.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Nerlien has nominated Ms. Young, Lloydminster to the position of Deputy Chair. Are there any further nominations? Not seeing any, I would now invite one of the members to move that motion.

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Mr. Chair, I move:

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

**The Chair:** — It's been moved. All in favour of that motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — All opposed? That's carried. Thank you, Ms. Young, for serving as Deputy Chair. Looking forward to working with you within this committee.

I'll table the following documents: PAC 12-29, Ministry of Education: Report of losses, September 1st, 2020 to November 30th, 2020; PAC 13-29, Saskatchewan Health Organizations: Report of losses, January 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2020.

So we're finished with the election of the Deputy Chair. Is there any further business of the committee? I believe we've received a letter from Ms. Young, Regina University. I'll recognize her at this time.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now that I guess we've finished our official business for the day, I do have a motion to put before the committee for discussion. I guess I'll give brief, very brief remarks and then I'll read the motion.

As members will know, there have been significant concerns

raised — I'm sure you've all heard them as well — around Extencicare. And these are folks who, you know, built Saskatchewan, raised families here, worked, paid taxes for 60, 70, 80 years some of them. And these concerns are accompanied by considerable anguish felt by families over the crisis of the past month.

So I would like to make the point that this motion is meant constructively. I'd like to draw attention to the fact that it does not condemn the government in any way and really reflects what I believe is just a sincere need for an independent and non-partisan investigation into what occurred and how and why.

So I will read the motion that I provided in advance:

That pursuant to section 16 of *The Provincial Auditor Act*, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts requests that the Provincial Auditor perform a special assignment to examine the following:

1. Whether Extencicare, the Ministry of Health, and/or the Saskatchewan Health Authority took appropriate steps to ensure that residents in Extencicare Parkside were receiving the levels of care outlined under *The Housing and Special-care Homes Regulations* and that residents were adequately protected from COVID-19;
2. Whether Extencicare, the Ministry of Health, and/or the Saskatchewan Health Authority had appropriate measures in place to ensure adequate levels of staffing at Extencicare Parkside to address the risk of COVID-19;
3. Whether Extencicare, the Ministry of Health, and/or the Saskatchewan Health Authority had appropriate measures in place to ensure staff at Extencicare Parkside had access to appropriate personal protective equipment;
4. Whether Extencicare, the Ministry of Health, and/or the Saskatchewan Health Authority had appropriate policies and procedures in place to address heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, HVAC, and other infrastructure issues identified in numerous reports at Extencicare Parkside; and
5. Whether the Ministry of Health and/or the Saskatchewan Health Authority had adequate procedures and processes in place to ensure that Extencicare was fulfilling all of its obligations under the affiliate agreement between Extencicare and the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

I so move.

**The Chair:** — So the motion moved by Ms. Young, Regina University. I would open it up for any debate on the matter before we would move to a vote. Deputy Chair Young.

**Ms. C. Young:** — Yes, I know I'm new on this committee, but I believe that there is a process in place that before a motion comes before Public Accounts, it should probably be vetted through House Services if I'm not mistaken, as that . . . Some of these details that are in here, as we know the Privacy Commissioner

has already addressed in his report, and the Minister of Health has, you know, made some changes already, that maybe this may already, some of it may be dealt with at this point in time.

**The Chair:** — So there's nothing preventing a motion coming to this table by any member by way of a motion. And certainly the motion as brought here — it was circulated to me and to others just as we were . . . in advance of coming into this meeting — certainly is within order and respects the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee. So certainly the motion is within order.

The matter of debate as to whether or not some of the questions this asks are being addressed by other levels of government is a fair question. I think the role of the Public Accounts Committee is to provide that check and balance and, as the scrutiny committee, to work with the Provincial Auditor to provide those assurances and to do those reviews. Certainly if some of that work has gone on by other agencies or other actors or other independent commissioners, I would suspect that that would be canvassed by the auditor.

**Ms. C. Young:** — You mentioned that, you know, you have seen it prior to. Well I hadn't seen it until it was on the table here in front of me. So I mean, you know, there's a lot of things in here, as I said, that may already be in process, so I'm not sure that at this point in time the motion is appropriate to be on this table.

**The Chair:** — I guess I would just . . . As Chair, it's certainly appropriate for it to be here. It was sent to us, I'm not sure what time this morning. I caught it shortly before coming in here as well, and that's the first that I reviewed the motion as well. But this is what this table is for, and I welcome and encourage the questions and debate. Mr. Goudy.

**Mr. Goudy:** — Yes, I understand the procedure is being followed, but I agree with Colleen that I think our role is maybe not to be ahead of others in our audit position. It may be we follow up afterwards if there's questions and concerns down the road. But you know, at this point, I think we need to let the people look into what the situation is. I think it can get the cart ahead of the horse if we start auditing things right after they've happened. That's my own opinion. Though we appreciate you bringing things forward, I think this may, you know, put the cart ahead of the horse to say the least here.

**The Chair:** — Any other points of discussion? Any other entries from members? I would urge members just to . . . the reason this committee stands is for a different purpose than . . . You know, we're not part of executive government right here. The role of the auditor is independent, non-partisan. And I certainly see the motion that's been brought forward to be certainly within order and certainly focused as well — my perspective — on matters that are very important.

Ultimately what's being asked I guess is for the auditor to do this work in her independent role. Some of this work she may already be very well engaged in. And I would suspect as well if this motion is passed here today and if this task is passed to the auditor, I'm certain that the auditor will be reporting out to us on this front and I suspect that that will include some aspects of this that may already be under way.

But I'll leave it there. It's the choice of members. Certainly the

motion is in order. It's the first I've seen of it here today. I'm supportive of the motion, but I'll leave it to members to cast their vote here today. Any other discussion at this point? Ms. Young, Regina University.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thanks. Sorry, I'm new to this as well. So I am allowed to speak to the motion again?

**The Chair:** — You can. Yes.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you. So yes, it was circulated in advance, and it sounds like some folks didn't get it. So that's unfortunate and I appreciate the concerns.

I think some of . . . I could be mistaken, but in regards to the Privacy Commissioner, I think that's in regards to eHealth, not the content of this motion, although I don't want to presume what the other Ms. Young's concerns are.

But I reflect back on my time as a school board trustee and our experiences with the Provincial Auditor there. And I know in our school division we once had an audit of student behaviour, which was a really interesting thing to sit there as a governor and see someone try and audit what the processes and approaches are to that. So to that extent it did make our division stronger, and I think it addressed a lot of the concerns that we had.

So I'd really urge members, especially you know, as we've seen what's happened in other provinces. I know we all saw the horror stories coming out of Ontario and Quebec, and I think there is a national agreement that long-term care needs to be addressed and that the way that some people have experienced it is not adequate and in many cases is not humane.

And I just urge the members to really consider this in the context that it is being brought forward here to Public Accounts for the Provincial Auditor who does make provisions, both in the scope of her work and within her budget, to perform these sorts of special assignments. If there is interest, we can always bring it back again to vote on a second time. But I would hope that the members on the committee would consider this in the spirit in which it is brought forward.

**The Chair:** — Are there any other entries or any other further debate before we . . . Mr. Nerlien.

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Mr. Chair, just to the point that the member is making, I would agree that the process may well be in order. And I agree with the member from Melfort entirely, in that I suspect this is really premature in the process. We all are aware of what the publicity has been on this particular situation, and we also know what remedial actions have been undertaken that have been reported in the media. But I think this is a significant step well down the road at this stage. And I think it's important that we all know what happened, what's going on. There's no question about that. But I personally think this is a little premature. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any other points of entry from any other members before we move to a vote on the matter?

So the motion that's been brought by Ms. Young, Regina University, it's been read out to us here today, so that's been

moved. I'd ask all that are in favour? I see one person.

All opposed? That motion is defeated.

Any other matters? Any other business? Not seeing any, I'd welcome a motion of adjournment.

**Ms. C. Young:** — So moved.

**The Chair:** — Moved by Deputy Chair Young. All in favour? All right, that's carried. This committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 09:45.]