

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législative  
de l'Ontario

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

P-26

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

P-26

**Standing Committee on  
Public Accounts**

Committee business

**Comité permanent des  
comptes publics**

Travaux du comité

1<sup>st</sup> Session  
42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament

Wednesday 2 December 2020

1<sup>re</sup> session  
42<sup>e</sup> législature

Mercredi 2 décembre 2020

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Chair: Catherine Fife  
Clerk: Christopher Tyrell

Présidente : Catherine Fife  
Greffier : Christopher Tyrell

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building  
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-4327

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
COMPTES PUBLICS**

Wednesday 2 December 2020

Mercredi 2 décembre 2020

*The committee met at 1231 in room 151 and by video conference.*

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Good afternoon, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair being available to preside over the meeting, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? Madame Gélinas.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to nominate MPP Peter Tabuns from Toronto–Danforth.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Does the member accept the nomination?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** I do.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed and MPP Tabuns elected Acting Chair of the committee.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good afternoon, everyone. I'll start with the attendance check. Present in the room I have MPP Anand, I have MPP Crawford, I have MPP Bell and I have MPP Gélinas.

I just want to check those who are joining by Zoom. If you'll confirm who you are and your location. MPP Parsa?

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Good afternoon, Chair. It's Michael Parsa, and I am in Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you so much. I have MPP Kramp?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Good afternoon, Chair. Yes, Daryl Kramp, here in Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. I have MPP Hogarth?

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** Good afternoon, Chair. It's Christine Hogarth. I'm in Etobicoke, in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** MPP McKenna?

**Ms. Jane McKenna:** Thank you, Chair. I'm in Ontario, and it is Jane McKenna.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** And MPP Barrett?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** MPP Toby Barrett, Chair, present in Port Dover, Ontario.

I don't know whether your volume could be increased a little bit, Chair, compared to the others. Thanks.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay, thank you for that. I hope this works.

MPP Blais?

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Good afternoon, Chair. Stephen Blais in Toronto, Ontario.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you so much.

For the Zoom participants, please be aware that broadcast and recording will be controlling your microphones, as they usually would in committee. Depending on the version of Zoom you are using, you may have been asked to grant permission to unmute when you joined. If you accepted, the broadcast operator will be able to activate your microphone once I recognize you. Participants using older versions of Zoom may still get a request to unmute your microphone before you're able to speak. Please wait for the unmute notification before trying to unmute.

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I'll go over the voting process for clarity. If we have to hold a vote during today's meeting—and I believe we will—it will be through a show of hands. I'll start by asking, "Are the members ready to vote?" I will ask, "All those in favour, please raise your hands." The Clerk will count raised hands. I will then ask, "All those opposed, please raise your hands." The Clerk will count raised hands. I will then declare the vote. Unless someone specifically asks for a recorded vote after I've asked whether the members are ready to vote, the breakdown of the vote will not show up in Hansard. Are there any questions? There are none.

Before we go to the first item on our agenda, I would ask that everyone present in the room, if they're not speaking, please wear their masks. We're inside a building. It's in Toronto. Thank you.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** The first time on our agenda is the notice of motion filed last week by Madame Gélinas. Members, you should all have received copies of the motion. It will also be found on today's agenda. Madame Gélinas, I would invite you to move your motion at this time.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts request that the Auditor General conduct a follow-up, at her earliest convenience, on the three key areas of the COVID-19 Preparedness and Management Special Report, tabled on November 25, 2020.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Is there any debate? Madame Gélinas.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Last Wednesday, the auditor tabled the “Emergency Management in Ontario—Pandemic Response,” “Outbreak Planning and Decision-Making” and “Laboratory Testing, Case Management and Contact Tracing” reports. I would say that I learned lots from those three reports and would be interested in having a follow-up report, given the second wave of the pandemic and the limited time frame that the auditor had to report on those three issues.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Further debate? MPP Crawford.

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** I appreciate the work the Auditor General has done. I’m sure we’ve learned some valuable information, and we’ll learn more as we go. My feeling is that given that we are in the midst of a pandemic, I don’t think it’s appropriate for us to be putting a motion like this in place at this time. There will be extensive investigation into the government’s handling of COVID as we get through this, as there will be with every government throughout the world, but I think that at this time I would be voting against it.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Are there other speakers? No one else speaking? Sorry, MPP Barrett; I missed your hand.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I have the report in front of me. It’s 69 pages, and I have to admit, it’s been a busy week. I haven’t had time to really read this very important report in depth. I see there are a number of recommendations here, of course, which we haven’t discussed on this committee. There is feedback, I notice, from Public Health Ontario, there’s feedback from the Solicitor General and, I assume, feedback from other government agencies or ministries.

I don’t know whether we’re putting the cart before the horse. I appreciate doing parallel work rather than leaving everything to the very end, but I think it’s important for the Ontario government—and I know this is a constant moving target. There was made mention of the second wave. We see the ever-increasing numbers of cases. I think it’s important for us to deal with this report and reflect on the report. I would prefer deferring this motion from Madame Gélinas. I think MPP Crawford put forward something similar last week, but I think we should defer it. I would vote against the motion, Chair.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Are there any further speakers? MPP Bell.

1240

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I support this motion. It is the job of this committee, and it’s the Auditor General’s job to—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I apologize—

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I can’t hear—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):**—move the microphone closer to you. Thank you.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** It is the job of this committee and it’s the Auditor General’s responsibility to ensure the government does the best work that it can do. I do believe this is the appropriate place for a follow-up report to the Auditor General’s initial report to take place.

This committee can be open; it can be closed. It allows people from different parties to ask very good questions. That’s the whole purpose of having this committee, so I do support this motion.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Other speakers? MPP Anand.

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** First of all, I want to commend the AG’s work in this report. I’ll tell you, AG, I was looking at one of the booklets and it was showing the most powerful women ever in Ontario. It had the previous Premier’s picture and the first MPP, and I saw your picture there as well, so I think you’re doing a commendable job.

Giving us this report actually tells us, with respect to the data, what the target was, what we achieved, what we could have achieved more and what we can do to go back and fix it. But having said that, and I appreciate MPP Crawford—actually, he was the one who came and said that we need to have some kind of follow-up. I believe we should have this follow-up at some point in time, but I personally think doing it at this time, in the middle of the fire, the way MPP Crawford said last time, is too early because we already have the data, which we’re still living through. And if we need to learn, we can learn from that subset and work on it.

I would say at this point or moment, I would suggest deferring it for a later time. Thank you, Chair.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, MPP Anand. Are there other speakers to this motion? Madame Gélinas?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Can I ask the auditor—I see from my colleague that the idea came from MPP Crawford. I see from my colleague that they are a little bit uncomfortable to go at it at this time and prefer to defer. Could the auditor tell us would you automatically go back and update those reports? And if you don’t automatically do this, when would be a good time for us to ask you to do that?

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** Thank you for the question. When we issue reports, we do typically go back after a period of time to make sure that the recommendations have had a chance to be considered and implemented. We typically go back within about two years.

In this case, likely, if it’s a motion from the committee for whatever issue, time frame, we can comply with that and go forward with that. Or if not, we can consider it within our own work decision-making in terms of which audits we go forward with. As an office, I think we’re open to both: a committee motion or just handling it through our normal process.

We did have a lot of good co-operation during the course of those audits, and the information in those audits, I think, is solid and probably needs some time to gel and

reflect on. So, I would say, it would probably be a little too early to go in and continue looking at those same areas within the next, let's say, three to six months. But perhaps it might be good to have it as a standing item to bring up in another maybe six months from now. If the committee at that point still thinks that you would like us to take it further, we can do it.

We're in contact, typically, with the health area on a regular basis. So if there was something that we thought needed to be reported sooner, we could still do that under our normal mandate without a request from the committee. I would say it's good to have it on a standing agenda.

The other thing I would comment on is that the National Audit Office in the UK has done several audits on the pandemic. There are probably about 10 to 12 audits that have already been executed by the National Audit Office in the UK. Australia is performing some right now. The feds in Parliament passed a motion in their standing committee, so the Auditor General there is involved in about four to six audits on this. Their reports will be coming out in the spring this year. You will see more coming out across Canada and in the world from the Auditor General community, but I think each one will maybe bring more information and more knowledge. Between now and the six months, maybe that will inform more as to whether you'd want another look at this. I hope that answers your question—a little long.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you.

Madame Gélinas, you still have the floor.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Yes, it does. Thank you for your answer.

Clerk, I'm going to you, just for procedure. I see that people would prefer to defer. Is this something that I'm allowed to do?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** If you would like to, at this point in time, withdraw your motion, you are more than welcome to do that. You are welcome to propose it at a later date, so if you wanted to wait the three or six months, you can definitely file another notice of motion at that time, and then the committee would consider this motion again at that time.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** So my two choices are I take a vote or I withdraw? I don't have an option to defer?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Someone can move a motion to postpone consideration, which is in order to move right now, but that would just kick it down the road for a week. The next time the committee met, it would be incumbent on the committee to reconsider this motion.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** So the deferral is only for one week at a time?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** It's until the committee has the next opportunity to consider it.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Okay, so I'll just have a vote on it, it'll die, and I will look at the Clerk to remind me to bring it back in May, in six months, as recommended by the Auditor General. I'm joking. I will make a note for

myself to bring it back in May and deal with it again. But I'm just going to go through with the vote and be done.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. Auditor General?

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** I will just comment one more time that, in addition to the three reports that you have, there will be three more that will be tabled in due course. One of them is the COVID expenditures; the second one is an audit of personal protective equipment, PPE; and the third one is long-term care that we've been working on. Those will be before you, and altogether there will be the six and you can consider going forward what you'd like to request of us.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you very much. Does anyone else want to speak before we go to a vote? No one. Okay.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Recorded vote.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** A recorded vote is called for. Are the members ready to vote?

#### Ayes

Bell, Blais, Gélinas.

#### Nays

Anand, Barrett, Crawford, Hogarth, Kramp, McKenna, Parsa.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I declare the motion lost.

There being no further business scheduled for today, this committee stands adjourned until—yes?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Am I allowed to ask a question before we adjourn?

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yes, you caught me in time.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The auditor shared with us a letter that says that she will be tabling her annual report on Monday. I was just wondering if the committee has any interest in getting some kind of a briefing from 9 until 10:15 Monday morning before—I see 10:30. Does that mean at 10:30 you're in the media studio?

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** No, that will happen after that, so 10:30 is the approximate time that it would be public.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Okay. Is anybody interested and is the auditor's office available to give us a little bit of a briefing from 9 until 10:15 on Monday morning?

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Is there an interest on the part of the committee?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'm interested.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** Yes, I just wanted to point out to Madame Gélinas that if there is an appetite for a briefing on Monday at 10:15, this committee is only allowed to sit on Wednesdays from 9 to 10:15 and from 12:30 to 3 p.m., so any briefing would not be a meeting of this committee. It

would need to be the members on their own with the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** Oh.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Can I just say, does that mean the Auditor General could offer a briefing and people could attend or not, but it would not be a meeting of this committee?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** It's not a meeting of this committee, but what happens outside of this committee is up to the members.

1250

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. Auditor General?

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** I think before the committee sessions had resumed, we did host a briefing on the last special report we issued, on border crossers. So we could host a Zoom meeting if that's the committee's desire. It would be informal, is what I understand, but we could do that if that was the desire of people, to attend it.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. It seems like it's possible to do it. Is there an interest?

Sorry, the microphone—could you repeat yourself, please, MPP Anand?

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** Yes, thank you, Chair. I was saying, again, it's optional. It's not a part of a committee meeting; it's everybody's wish and will, who said they would want it. Thanks to the AG if she wants to do it.

Personally speaking, if she's going to report it at 10:30 anyway—if I know everything at 9 and you're going to report at 10:30, I might wait for you to report it at 10:30 and we can listen to it at the same time as well. I'm not making any action after I have a briefing.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. Thank you, Madame G elinas.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** I just want to ask the auditor: We would still get a full briefing during the committee at 10:30 on Wednesday?

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** Yes. I think we could brief the committee on Wednesday from 9 till 10:15, and then, if you wanted, from 12:30 till 3 as well. We could do that. Either we can offer it through our office, we can send you a Zoom link if you want a briefing in the morning on Monday, and we can also do the one on Wednesday, however you decide.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** Clerk, what did we have for next Wednesday?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** We currently don't have any business scheduled. If the report will be tabled prior to next Wednesday and the auditor has offered to brief the committee on Wednesday from 9 to 10:15 and 12:30 to 3, I would consult with the Chair, but I would imagine that that's what we would be meeting to do next week.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** Thank you.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you. MPP Parsa.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Many thanks, Chair. I appreciate that.

To Madame G elinas's point, it's very valuable when we get—even when the Auditor General makes her report public, usually, the in-depth review that we get from her when she sits with us—personally, I really appreciate it. You already discussed it. As long as we have an opportunity to do it on Wednesday—because some of us have House duty, so I won't be able to participate on Monday, but I would really appreciate it, if we do host it on Wednesday at our regular time—it would be very informative, I think, for all members of the committee.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, MPP Parsa.

This is a very loosey-goosey process. You're still asking for a briefing on Monday morning at 9?

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** If the auditor offers one, I will take it. I leave it up to the auditor's office to see if she can accommodate it and I will respect her decision. I am happy that on Wednesday, we will use the morning and the afternoon to make a deeper dive into what looks like a very substantive annual report; I didn't count them, but there are many, many. So yes, I'm interested in the deeper dive than just the one hour.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Auditor General, if you're available on the Monday morning, I guess you will consult with the Clerk. We'll set something up on an informal basis and all members of the committee will be invited.

Sorry. MPP Kramp.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** It's important to hear from the Auditor General, but we all have a lot of activities going on in this last week, per se, of this session. I'm willing to commit on the Wednesday and spend whatever time is necessary on that, but I certainly don't plan on being able to be here Monday as well to then hear the same thing that I'm going to hear on Wednesday. I think Monday is a waste, quite frankly. I don't plan on being here Monday, but I will certainly be here on the Wednesday to hear what the Auditor General has to say.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. Thank you for that.

I think we have a—no. Auditor General.

**Ms. Bonnie Lysyk:** We'll coordinate with Chris and we will send a link out. For people who want to attend, we'll be available to do the briefing, and we can do the briefing on Wednesday as well.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Okay. That seems to address—no. MPP Parsa, you indicated you wanted to speak again?

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Yes, I apologize, Chair. I just wanted to confirm, on process: Does the Chair have to approve for us to be able to meet to discuss—to have this report by the Auditor General, or no? Is that a decision that we can make now?

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Well, it's my understanding that, generally, officers of the Legislature can provide briefings to whichever members of the Legislature want to attend. It appears the Auditor General is willing to provide a briefing, and members of the committee are free to attend or not attend. It will not be a meeting of the committee.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Sorry, Chair, I'm specifically referring to the Wednesday session.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Ah. I will ask the Clerk's advice on that.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell):** I, as a matter of course, always consult with the Chair before scheduling meetings. I will let her know that the report is coming and that the committee would like to meet to get a briefing from the Auditor General. As soon as I get the go-ahead from her, I will send out the notice and the agenda for that meeting.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Okay. That's what I was asking. I was just wondering if it was the Chair who would have to confirm this.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yes, I apologize for the confusion. Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Thank you, sir.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** It looks like we've covered the business at hand. There being no further business scheduled for today, this committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, December 9.

*The committee adjourned at 1256.*





## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

### **Chair / Présidente**

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### **Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente**

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Mr. Deepak Anand (Mississauga–Malton PC)

Ms. Jill Andrew (Toronto–St. Paul's ND)

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk PC)

Mr. Stephen Blais (Orléans L)

Mr. Stan Cho (Willowdale PC)

Mr. Stephen Crawford (Oakville PC)

Ms. Catherine Fife (Waterloo ND)

M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas (Nickel Belt ND)

Ms. Christine Hogarth (Etobicoke–Lakeshore PC)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Hastings–Lennox and Addington PC)

Mr. Michael Parsa (Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill PC)

### **Substitutions / Membres remplaçants**

Ms. Jessica Bell (University–Rosedale ND)

Ms. Jane McKenna (Burlington PC)

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth ND)

### **Also taking part / Autres participants et participantes**

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General

### **Clerk / Greffier**

Mr. Christopher Tyrell

### **Staff / Personnel**

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Mr. Dmitry Granovsky, research officer,  
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Ms. Erica Simmons, research officer,  
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