



Canadian Study  
of Parliament Group

***Public Accounts Committee Profiles and  
Performance in Canada***

**Rick Stapenhurst and Cindy Kroon**

# **PAC Profiles and Performance in Canada**

**Rick Stapenhurst and Cindy Kroon**

## **Introduction**

While there is an increasing body of literature regarding the structure and operations of Public Accounts Committees (PACs) around the world (Gay and Winetrobe, 2003; Jacobs and Jones, 2009; Jacobs, Jones and Smith, 2007; McGee, 2002; Pelizzo and Stapenhurst, 2007; Stapenhurst, Sahgal, Woodley and Pelizzo, 2005; Wehner, 2003), there is a paucity of analysis on Canadian PACs (Malloy, 2004; CCAF-FCVI, 2006).

This Working Paper seeks to address this paucity of analysis. Using Stapenhurst et al, (2005) as a point of departure, two questions are considered: i) how do Canadian PACs compare with the 17 attributes proposed by Stapenhurst et al., that make an ideal PAC (page 25) and ii) how do Canadian PACs compare to the benchmarks proposed by Stapenhurst et al. regarding “potential indicators or benchmarks that can be used when examining PAC performance” (pages 21-22).

We proceed as follows. An introductory section considers the establishment, evolution and current profile of PACs across Canada. Section two presents the data used for this analysis. Section three considers the first question noted above, namely how do Canadian PACs compare against the 17 attributes of an ‘ideal PAC’ while Section four considers the second question, namely how is Canadian PAC performance, using the indicators and benchmarks proposed by Stapenhurst et al (2005).

## **Literature Review**

Although they have received little attention from academic researchers, PACs are the cornerstone to effective financial accountability and governance in the public sector. Within the parliamentary committee system, the PAC is typically one of the oldest committees in operation and is generally one of the most significant committees of the Parliament. Broadly speaking, the role of the PAC is to assist Parliament in holding the government to account for its use of public funds and resources. As such, the PAC has a critical role in ensuring public sector accountability and effective governance.

An important publication in this area came from David McGee in 2002, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. McGee wrote a comprehensive report on two important elements in the system of public financial accountability, namely the office of the Auditor General and the PAC. McGee sought to identify possible courses of action to improve outcomes through more effective use of PACS. Three main priorities were identified: capacity building, independence, and information exchange. Given the importance of institutional capacity of the overseers for

the effective financial oversight of the government expenditures, McGee suggests that the ability of the Parliament, of the PAC and of the Auditor General to carry out their oversight functions should be improved. In his view, this result could be achieved by providing staffing and resources, training and access to information. Second, McGee underlines that a key determinant of the success in the activity of Auditors General is represented by their independence from partisan and political influence. The Auditor General needs to have the freedom to carry out his or her duties independently and impartially. Finally, McGee stresses that a key determinant for success in the activities of the PACs is represented by the availability of information and information exchange, and he argues that PACs need to exchange information and ideas in order to stay up-to-date with developments, changing standards and best practices as they emerge.

More recent study of Canadian PACs was undertaken by CCAF-FCVI in 2004, with a final research report published in 2006 (CCAF-FCVI, 2006). The report explores accountability and governance relationships among public oversight committees, legislative auditors, and senior government managers, with particular focus on PACs, and suggests a framework of core powers and practices to support the effectiveness of PACs. The report makes four observations of Canadian PACs: i) each PAC is unique; ii) PACs must try to avoid partisanship to be effective; iii) PACs should operate independently of government and should be curious enough to ask probing questions; and iv) PAC proceedings can play a meaningful public-education role. One drawback of the CCAF-FCVI study is that it does not discuss observations and differences at the specific PAC level; it remains unclear in which jurisdiction PACs have which powers. As a result, it is not possible to compare individual PACs. CCAF-FCVI observes that because of the differences in size and traditions of the legislatures and administrations of the various jurisdictions, there may be no single model for a PAC. There are considerable variations in the relationships between the legislative auditor and the committee and between government senior managers and the committee, in the mandates of the committee, in how they conduct their business, in their reporting to the legislatures, and in requirements for government follow-up of a committee's recommendations.

These findings are consistent with Simon McInnes' research in the mid-1970s. His research investigated the provincial experience regarding legislative scrutiny of public expenditures. Particular attention is paid to the standard operating procedures of the committees, the role of the Auditor and the relationship between the PAC and the Auditor, and other factors which affect the ability of the committee to do its job. The most important finding is "that the PACs vary considerably from one province to the next in several significant ways" (McInnes, 1977, pp. 39). McInnes further reports that in 1975 the role of the PACs may have been clear, there were no established work procedures. There were very few official rules regarding the duties and procedures of PACs, and traditionally there was a set of informal rules by which PACs are governed.

In 2005, Stapenhurst et al published a working paper on the assessment of PAC performance, thereby deepening McGee's (2002) analysis of PACs. The authors define PAC success and identify those factors that affect PAC performance. They use data collected by WBI in 2002, when a survey questionnaire was sent to 51 national and

state/provincial parliaments in Commonwealth countries in Asia, Australasia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Consistent with McGee, the authors find that information availability and bipartisanship/non-partisanship are critical conditions for the success of the PACs. However, two sets of other factors seem of great importance as well: the institutional design of the PAC, and the PAC's behaviour and functioning. The success of the PACs depends to a large extent on how they are institutionalized, on what institutional features and characteristics they have, that is their power and mandate. In this respect, the authors suggest that PACs should focus on governments' financial activity and accountability rather than evaluating or assessing the content of the governments' policies. They believe that PACs should have the power to investigate all past and present government expenses regardless of when they were made. PACs should also be given the power to check whether the government actually undertakes some steps to implement the recommendations of the PAC itself. And finally, PACs should have a close working relationship with the Auditor General. But the success of PACs does not depend exclusively on institutional design. The behavior of its members and the functioning of the committee itself are of great importance as well. Identified good practices included that PAC members should act in a non partisan fashion, that they should strive for consensus, that they study the documentation and prepare themselves before the PAC meetings, that PAC secretariats should keep the transcripts of their meetings and publish Committee conclusions and recommendations, and finally that they should involve the public and the media. The paper ends with 17 aspects of an ideal committee (see Box 1).

Together with La Trobe University, KPMG published a report on Public Accounts Committees (PACs) across Australia and New Zealand in 2006. The report aims to identify the range of structures, responsibilities and working practices adopted by those PACs, and is the first in-depth comparative study of PACs in all Australian states and territories, as well as the national level PACs in Australia and New Zealand. The clear theme that emerged from this study is that 'one size does not fit all': there is no one structure, terms of reference, or set of working practices that can be described as the practice to follow in establishing and operating an effective PAC. There are, however, a range of procedures and working practices that individual jurisdictions have developed or adopted that would be similarly beneficial to other jurisdictions. The study clearly shows the differences in rules, practices, and outcomes among individual PACs.

The outcomes of these various studies is, on the one hand, an observation that "one size does not fit all", and on the other, that there exists nevertheless several aspects of what be called 'a successful PAC'. In other words, although it is true that "one size does not fit all", there are some good practices among PACs that will likely improve PAC functioning and effectiveness. The existing literature on Canadian PACs addresses these good practices, but fails to clearly identify working practices of individual PACs. So far there has been no study that combines individual PAC data and the good practices that have been identified for PACs.

This Working Paper seeks to address this paucity of analysis. Over a period of about 6 months, from late 2007 through mid-2008, the World Bank Institute and the CCAF-FCVI

surveyed all PACs in Canada. Adapting an earlier survey instrument, used by KPMG and La Trobe University (2006), data for all Canadian PACs was collected. Using this data, and taking Stapenhurst et al, (2005) as a point of departure, two questions are considered: i) how do Canadian PACs compare with the 17 attributes proposed by Stapenhurst et al. that make an ideal PAC (page 25)? and ii) how do Canadian PACs compare to the benchmarks proposed by Stapenhurst et al. regarding “potential indicators or benchmarks that can be used when examining PAC performance” (pages 21-22)? This paper assesses every Canadian PAC on each of these criteria, and ranks them according to performance. In contrast to other studies, this will give clear insights as to the individual and general points for improvement for PACs. The ranking shows those requirements for successful PACs that are most often fulfilled, and those that only a few PACs currently comply with. This raises interesting questions - why is it that certain characteristics for success are in place in most/all jurisdictions, and why are other characteristics are not? Why do some PACs score well, and others do not? While answering these questions latter questions goes beyond the scope of this paper, we hope that pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian PACs will have important implications for wider debate.

## **Section 1**

This introductory section considers the establishment, evolution and current profile of PACs across Canada.

The Canadian federal and provincial parliaments have their genesis in the Westminster system developed in the United Kingdom. The first PAC is widely acknowledged to be that of the UK House of Commons, established by William Gladstone in 1861 as part of a broader set of reforms of public financial management.

Novel about the Gladstonian reforms was that the creation of the PAC was followed in 1866 by the creation of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, thereby establishing the parliamentary audit and review function associated with the Westminster system. Together, these – and associated - arrangements formed what Gladstone termed the ‘circle of control’, which include:

- the requirement for ministers and their departments to submit estimates to Parliament for approval;
- the requirement for all monies to be expended in accordance with the appropriations of Parliament;
- the rendering of accounts to Parliament which are subject to audit by the Auditor-General;
- the Parliament’s power to review budgets and subsequent expenditure through the PAC and separate Estimates Committees (KPMG, 2006).

As in other Commonwealth countries which adopted the Westminster system, the establishment of Canadian PACs drew on the experience of the UK parliamentary audit

system. However, to some degree, it would seem that the Gladstonian reforms in the United Kingdom also drew on Canadian experience.

In Prince Edward Island, there has been a PAC since November 16, 1786. The committee reported their findings that same day after having reviewed the public accounts dating from October 1780 to January 1784<sup>1</sup>. However, there is an earlier antecedent: the Committee of the Legislative Council, which was established in Quebec in 1763 to "...examine the public accounts before transmission to England" (Balls, 1963, page 20). Following the establishment of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada in 1791, the Public Accounts were submitted for the first time to a legislative assembly in 1795 and in 1796, an Inspector General – an antecedent to the Auditor-General – was appointed to "...examine and sign all accounts submitted to your inspection to their being transmitted to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, or laid before the Executive and Legislative Councils, or the House of Assembly by the Governor...and to take care that the same as far as possible be correct" (Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, 1824, Appendix S, Schedule I, quoted in Balls, 1963, page 21).

Over the past 150 years, all Canadian provinces have established PACs. In Canada, following Confederation in 1867, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was constituted as one of the standing committees of the House of Commons. However, the pre-Confederation practice of designating a member of the opposition as chair was abandoned and from 1867 until 1871 the PAC was chaired by a minister. Thereafter, until 1958, the chair was a private member of the governing party.

The Manitoba PAC was first constituted in 1871, at the start of the first Legislature. The BC PAC was established by the Legislature in 1874. The Legislative Assembly of the Province of Alberta was created in 1905, and among the first orders of business was the appointment of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. In Newfoundland & Labrador, the House of Assembly first initiated the PAC in 1972. In Yukon, the PAC was first established in 1979.

Each of the 14 legislatures in Canada (the federal parliament, 10 provincial legislatures and three territorial legislatures) has an independent officer (the legislative auditor) who provides assurance on the reliability of the public accounts and who reports to the legislature (CCAF-FCVI, 2006, page 7). Today in most Canadian jurisdictions the report of the legislative auditor is referred for review to a public accounts committee, which is made up of elected members of the legislature (CCAF-FCVI, 2006, page 8).

McInnes (1977) reports that, while the role of the PACs may have been clear, there were no established work procedures despite the fact that there were a set of informal rules by which PACs were governed. CCAF-FCVI (2006, page 19) notes that over the last two decades the roles of PACs had changed or their responsibilities or activities had increased. For example, several PACs are paying more attention to value-for-money issues or to reviewing the work plans of the legislative auditor.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Personal correspondence with the Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward

Canadian PACs share certain common features. They were virtually all established by Standing Orders, except for Nunavut and Northwest Territories. The Canadian Parliament as well as the Canadian provinces and territories have similar powers. According to Standing Order 108(3) of the House of Commons, which established the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the aim of the PAC is to focus on:

- The efficiency and effectiveness of government administration.
- The quality of administrative practices in the delivery of federal programs.
- Government’s accountability to Parliament with regard to federal spending.

Canadian PACs report to the lower House (federal Parliament) and to unicameral legislatures in the provinces and territories. The size of legislature varies significantly, from 18 in Yukon to 308 in the federal House of Commons (see Table 1). Excluding the federal Parliament, the average size of the legislatures is 58 members. In most of the provinces there are at least one other committee with oversight responsibilities besides the PAC. Only in Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Yukon is the PAC the only oversight committee in place.

**Table 1: PAC and House name**

<b>Jurisdiction – PAC Name</b>	<b>Referring House (Size of House)</b>
<b>British Columbia-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (79)</i>
<b>Alberta-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of Alberta (83)</i>
<b>Manitoba-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of Manitoba (57)</i>
<b>Ontario-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of Ontario (107)</i>
<b>Prince Edward Island-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Prince Edward Island Assembly (27)</i>
<b>Saskatchewan-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly (58)</i>
<b>Yukon-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Yukon Legislative Assembly (18)</i>
<b>Canada-</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>House of Commons (308 MPs)</i>
<b>Northwest Territories –</b> <i>Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight</i>	<i>Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (19)</i>
<b>New Brunswick –</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick (55)</i>
<b>Quebec –</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Administration</i>	<i>National Assembly of Quebec (125)</i>
<b>Nunavut –</b> <i>Standing Committee on Government Operations and Services</i>	<i>Legislative Assembly of Nunavut (19)</i>
<b>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador –</b> <i>Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador House of Assembly (48)</i>

<i>Nova Scotia – Standing Committee on Public Accounts</i>	<i>Nova Scotia House of Assembly (52)</i>
--	---

## **Section 2**

Section 2 presents the data used for this analysis.

Over a period of about 6 months, from late 2007 through mid-2008, the World Bank Institute and the CCAF-FCVI surveyed all PACs in Canada. The survey instrument is appended (Appendix 1). It is derived from an earlier survey instrument, used by KPMG and La Trobe University, to assess the role, function and status of PACs in Australasia. The questionnaire has been sent to and completed by the respective Clerks of PACs from all Canadian jurisdictions, including the PAC of the federal Parliament.

The questionnaire consisted of 87 questions that were structured into the following categories:

- Powers and responsibilities of the PAC;
- Membership and leadership of the PAC;
- Processes and working practices of the PAC in terms of:
  - Setting the agenda of PAC meetings and inquiries;
  - Initiating inquiries;
  - Undertaking inquiries;
  - Reporting findings and recommendations;
  - Following-up on recommendations;
  - Ensuring continuity in process;
- Access to resources and support;
- Relationships with other committees; and
- Evaluation of PAC performance

### **Section 3**

Section 3 considers the first question noted above: how do Canadian PACs compare against the 17 attributes of an ‘ideal PAC’?

Following a survey of 33 PACs from different jurisdictions around the Commonwealth, in which PAC chairs were asked to self-assess the impact of the Committees work and to identify important ‘success factors’ and ‘inhibiting factors’ affecting PAC performance, Stapenhurst et al. (2005) presented, albeit cautiously, attributes of an ideal PAC. These factors have been suggested to different meetings of PACs around the Commonwealth, and there appears to be a general consensus on their validity. These factors are presented in Box 1. We will consider Canadian PACs attributes against each of these factors.

#### **Box 1: An “Ideal Committee”**

- The Committee is small; committees seem to work well with 5-11 members, none of whom should be government Ministers;
- Senior opposition figures are associated with the PAC’s work, and probably chair the Committee;
- The Chair is a senior parliamentarian, fair minded and respected by parliament;
- The Committee is appointed for the full term of the parliament;
- The Committee is adequately resourced, with an experienced clerk and a competent researcher(s);
- There is clarity on the Committee’s role and responsibilities;
- The Committee meets frequently and regularly;
- Hearings are open to the public; a full verbatim transcript and summary minutes are quickly available for public distribution;
- A steering committee plans the Committee’s work in advance and prepares an agenda for each meeting to the full Committee;
- The typical witness is a senior public servant (the “accounting officer”) accompanied by the officials that have detailed understanding of the issues under examination;
- The Auditor’s Report is automatically referred to the Committee and the Auditor meets with the Committee to go over the highlights of the report;
- In addition to issues raised by the Auditor, the Committee occasionally decides to investigate other matters;
- The Committee strives for some consensus in their reports;
- The Committee issues formal substantive reports to parliament at least annually;
- The Committee has established a procedure with the government for following up its recommendations and is informed about what, if any, action has been taken;
- In all its deliberations, the Committee uses the Auditor as an expert advisor;
- Parliaments hold an annual debate on the work of the Committee.

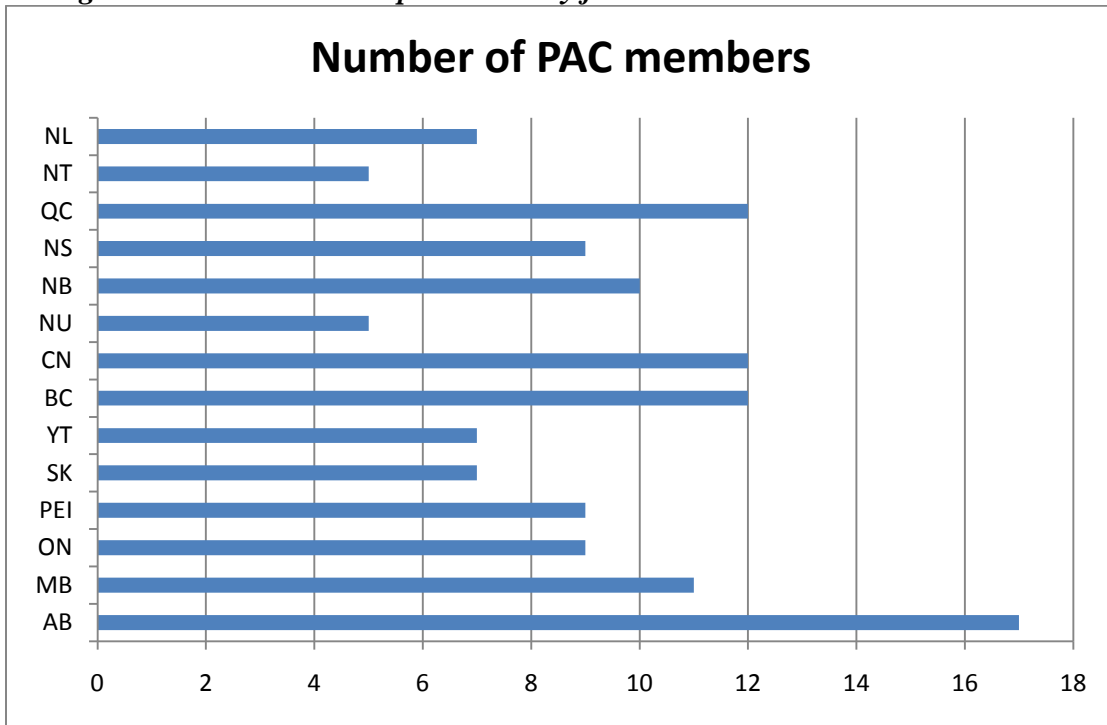
*Source: Stapenhurst, Sahgal, Woodley and Pelizzo (2005), page 25*

The data collected provides no information on the third requirement of an ideal committee: “The Chair is a senior parliamentarian, fair minded and respected by parliament”.

**1. The committee is small; committees seem to work well with 5-11 members, none of whom should be government ministers**

As Figure 1 indicates, the average number of legislators is (approximately) 9. Although the National Parliament is the largest Canadian legislative institution, the largest committee was found to be in Alberta (17) while the smallest committee was found to be in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (5 members each). Balls (1963, pp. 23) reports in 1963 the Canadian PAC consisted of 50 members, but membership has varied from 21 in 1867 to 97 in 1882.

*Figure 1: PAC membership numbers by jurisdiction*



McGee (2002) reports that the typical size of a PAC around the Commonwealth is 11 members, although there is a range from over 20 members in the larger Parliaments in South Asia to six or fewer in smaller jurisdictions like the Caribbean. Given that the PAC mandate generally does not examine policy per se, but rather its implementation, and that in most jurisdictions there is a desire – if not requirement – for unanimity, there is an advantage of *not* having ministers serve as members, although as Stapenhurst et al. point out, many chairs point out the advantage of having former ministers involved, as they may provide valuable experience to committee deliberations. In the federal PAC, from Confederation to 1958, the Chairman was a supporter of the government, but it has been a member of the opposition since 1958 (Balls, 1963, page 23).

The majority of PACs reported that ministers were prohibited from serving on the PAC. 10 of the 14 PACs reported a prohibition in place (Alberta, British Columbia, federal Parliament, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec). However, Malloy (2004, page 172) notes that the

Manitoba committee includes the Minister of Finance. The remaining 4 PACs do allow ministers to serve on their PACs (Ontario, Newfoundland & Labrador, Saskatchewan, Yukon). In practice only Yukon has any ministers (3 in total) serving on its PAC.

While the Ontario legislative assembly is larger than its Alberta counterpart, the Alberta PAC has seventeen MLAs, while the Ontario committee has only eight. This reflects the very different structure and status of committees in the two assemblies. Ontario has several very active standing committees all of similar size to the PAC, and most bills are sent to standing committees for study. Alberta committees are more specialized and less active, and bills are generally considered by the entire assembly meeting as a committee of the whole. The Ontario committee system is more active and places more demands on members' time, making a small committee necessary. Similar discrepancies between assembly size and PAC membership are found in other assemblies.

**Result Question 1.**

**Requirement: “The committee is small; committees seem to work well with 5-11 members, none of whom should be government ministers”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 2: Size of Committee, Ministers as Members**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
1a (size)	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
1b (minister)	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5

**2. Senior opposition figures are associated with the PACs work, and probably chair the committee**

By tradition, in the United Kingdom, the Chair of PAC is a leading member of the Official Opposition. Wehner (2003, page 27) suggests that “This gives organizational expression to the non-partisan tradition that underpins the work of PAC, and indicates an intention of parliament to promote transparency through independent scrutiny.”

Regardless of party affiliation, the Chair is ultimately responsible for the effective operation of the PAC (KPMG, 2006); McGee (2002, page 66) notes that the CPA Study Group considered “...what is of first importance is the capacity of the Chair to carry out the duties of the office effectively, rather than whether he or she is drawn from the government or the opposition ranks.”

For this question there were no data for Nunavut and Northwest Territories<sup>2</sup>. All other PACs that answered this question, reported to have a member of the opposition as the chair of their PAC (see Table 1). In 6 of the 12 PACs this is due to a mandate (Canada, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, Ontario and Saskatchewan). In the other 6 PACs, past practice is the reason for having a member of the opposition chair the PAC (Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon). Malloy notes that most PACs have had an opposition chair for many decades, but Prince Edward Island only adopted it in 1987. The federal PAC has had an opposition chair since 1958 (Malloy, 2004, page 167).

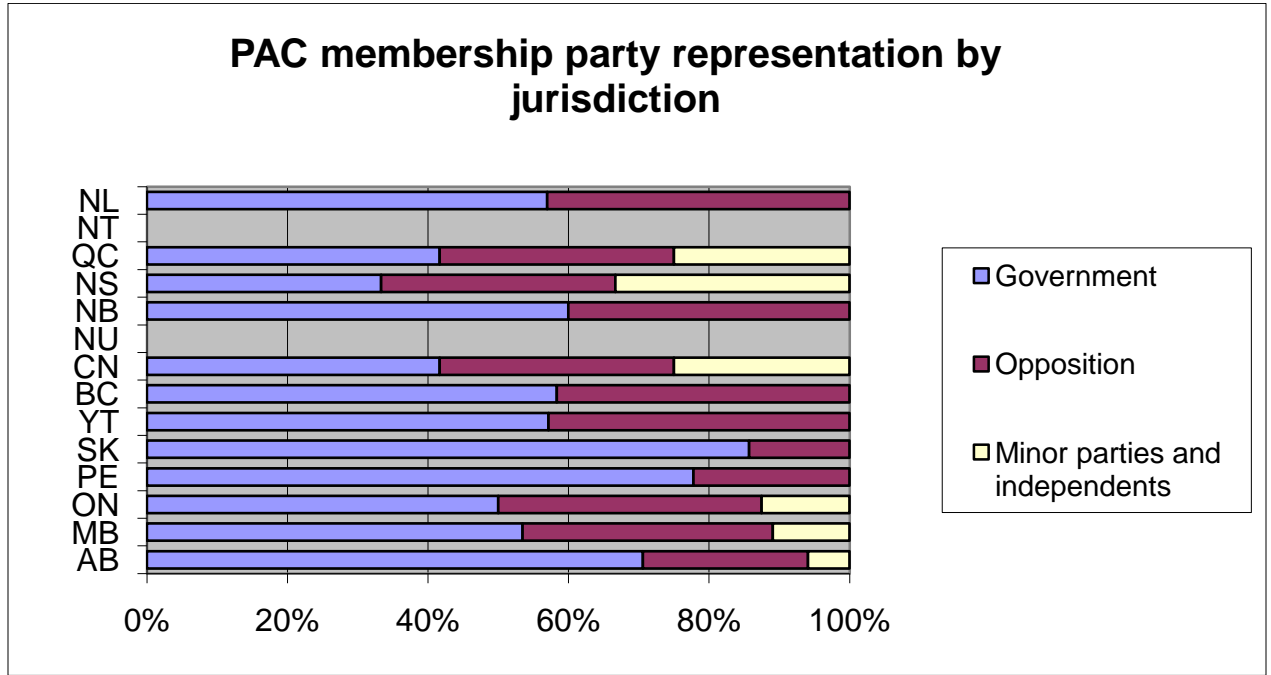
**Table 3: PAC chair opposition member?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NB	NS	QC	NL
PAC chair opposition member	V	v	v	v	V	v	v	v	V	v	v	v
Due to mandate		v	v		V			v	V	v	v	
Due to past practices	V			v		v	v					v

Generally the government party will have the most members on the committee: on average the governing party held about 57% of seats. Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have non-partisan legislatures, with only independent legislators. The smallest percentage of government seats was found in Nova Scotia (33% of seats), while the most government-dominated PAC was Saskatchewan (86% of seats). See Figure 2.

<sup>2</sup> In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, there is no ‘official opposition’; these are consensus legislatures. For more details, see White (2006)

Figure 2: PAC membership party representation by jurisdiction



**Result Question 2**

**Requirement: “Senior opposition figures are associated with the PACs work, and probably chair the committee”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 4: Senior Opposition Member Associated With/Chairs Committee?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	1	1	1	NA	1

**3. The Chair is a senior parliamentarian, fair minded and respected by parliament**

No data collected

**4. The committee is appointed for the full term of the parliament**

McGee (2002) noted that in most Commonwealth parliaments, PAC members are appointed for the term of Parliament, although in some, they serve for shorter periods. He contends that committee effectiveness is promoted by continuity of membership and that, "...in general, longevity of membership will strengthen the PAC" (page 62).

Across Canada, by convention, PAC members serve for the term of the legislature, with the committee dissolved when the Parliament is prorogued. There is no prohibition against reappointment in the next Parliament and reappointment is quite common. 7 of the 14 PACs reported that their PAC members are appointed for the length of the life of the legislature (Alberta, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Islands, Yukon). The other half of PACs reported that length of tenure was determined by, but not necessarily equal to, the length of tenure of the legislature (British Columbia, federal Parliament, Nunavut, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan).

**Result Question 4**

**Requirement: "The committee is appointed for the full term of the parliament"**

1 = Compliance with requirement

0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement

0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 5: Committee Appointed for the Term of Parliament?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q4	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

**5. The committee is adequately resourced, with an experienced clerk and competent researcher(s)**

Reporting on Australia, KPMG reported that the PAC's ability to undertake inquiries is limited by two factors – availability of committee members and the level of staffing resources available to assist the committee (KPMG, 2006). Of course, the same is true for Canadian PACs.

According to KPMG (2006), the functions of committee staff are many and varied. They include:

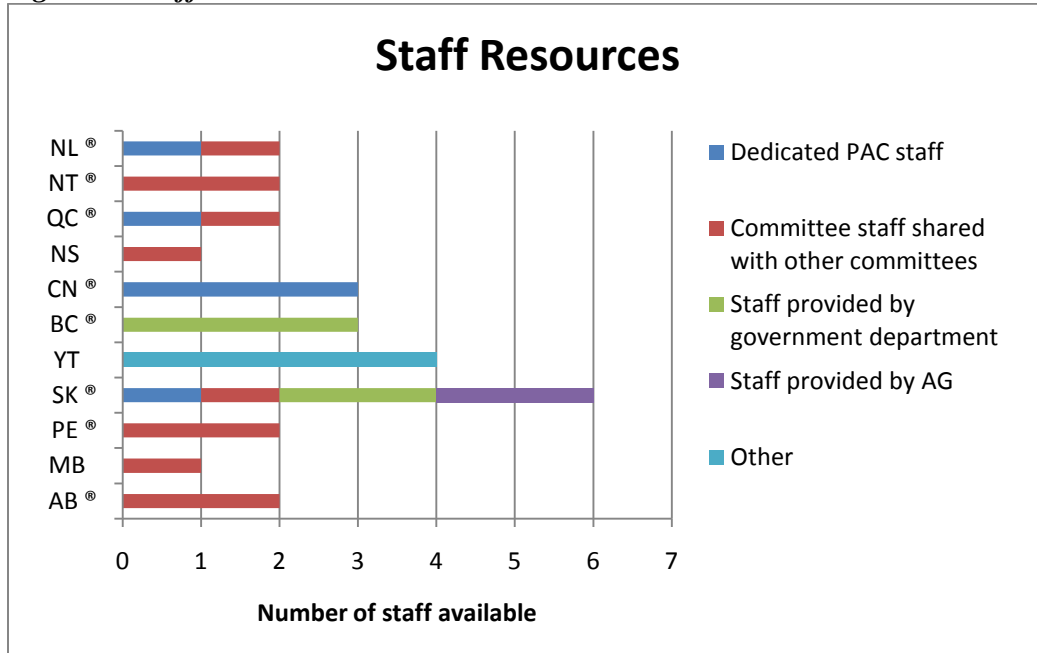
- a. Providing administrative support to the committee, ensuring all work is managed within the committee's budget;
- b. Preparing meeting agendas and maintaining committee minutes;
- c. Advising the committee on procedural matters;
- d. Organizing inquiries;
- e. Conducting research;
- f. Drafting reports and preparing briefing notes;
- g. Preparing tabling statements, speeches and media releases;
- h. Organizing delegations and study tours.

All PACs have staff resources available for assistance. Manitoba and Nova Scotia have the least staff members available (1) and Saskatchewan the most (6) (see Figure 3). Only 4 PACs (Newfoundland & Labrador, Quebec, Canada, and Saskatchewan) have dedicated staff available at their service. Malloy (2004, page 168) reports that the federal committee has a full-time clerk and two legislative library researchers, as well as members' personal staff and party research offices.

Most other committees share staff with other committees. British Columbia gets its entire staff from a government department while Saskatchewan has staff provided by a government department and by the Auditor General. The Alberta PAC has no staff of its own (see also Malloy 2004, page 169). The indication "other" regarding the PAC of Yukon can be specified as staff provided by and shared with the legislative assembly.

While all PACs have a Clerk assigned specifically to the committee, only eight have in-house research staff. Some respondents commented that they had the power to hire external consultants if they needed to, but that it might become a budgetary issue (see also CCAF-FCVI, 2006, page 26). Eight of the 13 PACs for which data were available reported their staff conducted research (Alberta, British Columbia, federal Parliament, Newfoundland & Labrador, Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan). Three of the 13 PACs reported that their staff is predominantly working on administrative matters (Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Yukon). Malloy (2004, page 182) states that a giving all PACs research support would be an improvement of the current situation.

**Figure 3: Staff resources**



The symbol “®” stands for research staff. For this question there are no data available for NB. Nunavut and Ontario have research staff as well, but did not specify further and are therefore not included in the figure.

**Result Question 5**

**Requirement: “The committee is adequately resourced, with an experienced clerk and competent researcher(s)”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 6: Committee Adequately Resourced?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
5a (dedicated staff)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	NA	0	1	0	1
5b (research staff)	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
5c (clerk)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

**6. There is clarity on the committee’s role and responsibilities**

A fundamental goal of a PAC is to enhance government accountability through the scrutiny of public sector financial administration, in particular the ex-post scrutiny of budget execution (KPMG, 2006). Stapenhurst et al (2005) concurred, stating that “Having a **clear focus on accountability** (emphasis in original) is one way to instill a unity of purpose among different parties” (page 11).

As touched upon earlier, the federal PAC as well as the provincial and territorial PACs have similar powers. The aim of the PAC of the federal Parliament is threefold. The committee focuses on 1) the efficiency and effectiveness of government administration; 2) the quality of administrative practices in the delivery of federal programs; 3) government’s accountability to Parliament with regard to federal spending.

While all provincial assemblies have some type of public accounts committee, the rules and mandates of these committees differ. As Malloy (2004, page 168) puts it: “Some committees, such as the House of Commons PAC, enjoy broad rights to investigate any matter of their choice, while others do not. However, rules can be misleading, since the Commons PAC almost exclusively investigates issues upon which the Auditor General has reported. It rarely uses its broader mandate.” Although the general focus of Canadian PACs is the same (an examination of public accounts and financial affairs), some PACs have additional roles and responsibilities (see Table 7). Northwest Territories also takes budget estimates other than from the Audit Office into consideration, and all except Manitoba, Yukon, and Quebec examine the efficiency and effectiveness of government policy as well. CCAF-FCVI (2006, page 19) reports most PACs noticed a change in their responsibilities or activities since 1981. For example, several PACs are paying more attention to value-for-money issues or to reviewing the work plans of the legislative auditor.

**Table7: PACs role and responsibilities**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Examination of public accounts and financial affairs (ex post)	V	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Consideration of budget estimates (other than Audit Office)													v	
Efficiency of government policy	V		v	v	v		V	v	v	v	v		v	v

Although not every PAC has the same relationship and role vis-à-vis the Auditor General, the relationship itself with Auditor General is clear. The differences in roles and responsibilities of PACs regarding the Auditor General, is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Relationship with the Auditor General**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Formal responsibility for the examination of AG reports	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Formal power to refer matters to the AG for examination		v	v	v	v	v	v	v		v		v	v	v
Determination of Audit Office priorities					<i>approves priorities</i>	v	v	v			v	v	v	
Development of Audit Office annual plan					v									
Assess Audit Office performance								v			v	v		
Consultation Audit Office annual budget and resources					<i>Re-commends budget</i>		v	v			v			

**Result Question 6**

**Requirement: “There is clarity on the committee’s role and responsibilities”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 9: Clarity in Committee’s Role**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

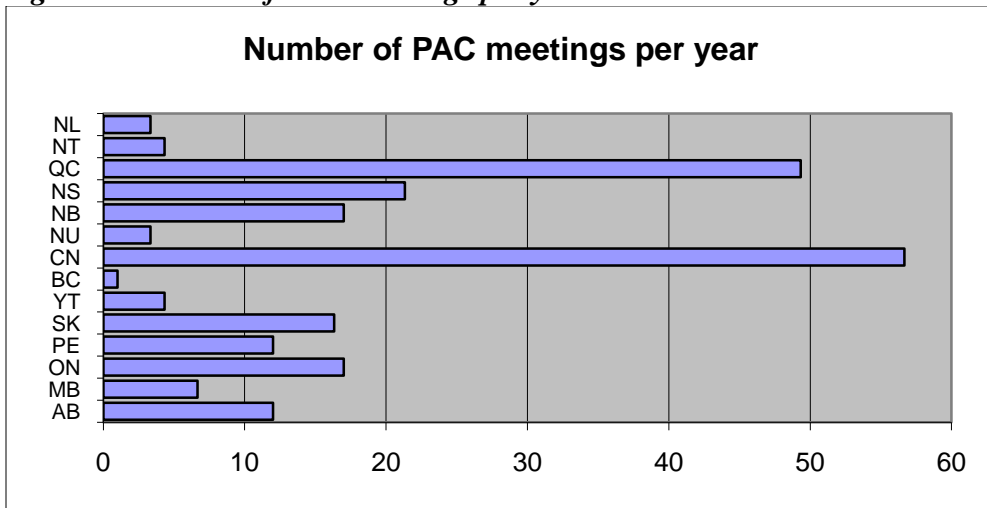
### 7. The committee meets frequently and regularly

McGee (2002, page 72) states that “[c]ommittees that meet on a frequent basis have a better opportunity of promoting consensual working practices than committees whose members come together infrequently.”

The average number of meeting per PAC is 16 times per year. However, there is significant variation in the data (see Figure 4). Unsurprisingly most meetings are held by the federal PAC (170) while British Colombian PAC only met 3 times between 2003 and 2006. The strong variation in the number of meetings is consistent with Malloy (2004, page 169).

Malloy (2004, page 169) reports that most assembly standing orders do not permit committees to meet when the assembly is not sitting, which is why committee activity is strongly linked to the length of parliamentary sessions. For example, because the House of Commons sits longer, the federal PAC has more meetings. Malloy (2004, page 169) notes that “the Saskatchewan PAC sometimes concentrates its meetings in weeklong blocks in order to minimize demand on members’ time.”

**Figure 4: Number of PAC meetings per year**



#### Result Question 7

**Requirement: “The committee meets frequently and regularly”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 10: Committee Meets Frequently & Regularly**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q7 (cut=10)	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0

**8. Hearings are open to the public; a full verbatim transcript and summary minutes are quickly available for public distribution**

Opinion is divided on whether PAC hearings should be open to the media and public. On the one hand, being open encourages parliamentary transparency and it has been argued that the media not only provide valuable information for a PAC inquiry but also its presence may also keep public servants and auditors on their toes and encourage more realistic government follow-up. On the other hand, it has been suggested that open hearings may encourage political grandstanding by committee members and discourage bi-partisanship (Messick, 2002).

All 14 PACs reported that their reports and hearings are open to the public, and 13 PACs publish their transcripts on the internet (no data for Manitoba). All except Yukon have meetings recorded by Hansard, and these are made available to the public as well (see Table 4).

Eleven of the 13 PACs (no data available for Quebec) allowed public access to PAC meetings; two PACs reported no such access (Newfoundland & Labrador, Yukon).

**Table 11: Open to the Public?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Reports/hearings open to public?	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Reports/hearing transcripts published on internet?	v	na	v	v	v	v	V	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Meetings recorded by Hansard and available to the public	v	v	v	v	v		V	v	v	v	v	v	v	v

**Result Question 8**

**Requirement: “Hearings are open to the public; a full verbatim transcript and summary minutes are quickly available for public distribution”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 13: Open to the Public?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
<i>Q8a (hearings)</i>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Q8b (transcript)</i>	1	na	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

**9. A steering committee plans the Committee’s work in advance and prepares an agenda for each meeting to the full Committee**

McGee (2002, page 75) notes that some PACs around the Commonwealth use subcommittees to give a support service to the main PAC; noting Canadian experience, he states that all have a subcommittee to prepare a work program the PAC can adopt. All respondents report that the PAC itself was responsible for determining the timing and agenda of its own meetings. Only 7 PACs (British Columbia, federal, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Yukon) say they have a subcommittee that deals with administrative matters. The federal PAC has a subcommittee to hold inquiries as well.

**Result Question 9**

**Requirement: “A steering committee plans the Committee’s work in advance and prepares an agenda for each meeting to the full Committee”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 14: Steering Committee to Plan Work?**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q9	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

**10. The typical witness is a senior public servant (the “accounting officer”) accompanied by the officials that have a detailed understanding of the issues under examination**

Because PACs do not examine policy issues, they generally confine themselves to hearing evidence from departmental officials rather than ministers (McGee, 2002). It can reasonably be assumed that representatives of government agencies, statutory authorities and representatives of government-owned corporations are senior public servants that have sufficient understanding of the issues PACs examine. Table 14 shows that most PACs have the power to call representatives of government agencies, government owned corporations and statutory authorities as witnesses. New Brunswick is the exception—there are restrictions on its PAC to call representatives of government agencies and it is unable to call representatives of government-owned corporations and the rest of the selected list of possible witnesses shown in the table at all.

*Table 15: Power to call as witness (number of PACs)*

	Witness	Not as Witness	Restrictions
Government agencies (finance portfolio/ministry)	12	0	1
Government agencies (other)	12	0	1
Statutory authorities	12	0	1
Government owned corporations	12	1	0
Local government authorities	5	7	1
Government service providers	6	6	1
Government funded NGOs	6	6	1
Private sector organizations	4	8	1

*There are no data available for Quebec*

Table 16 shows a more detailed list of possible witnesses that PACs have the power to call for questioning and actually do so. The table shows that ministers are generally not called as witnesses, except in Alberta, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island. This is consistent with Malloy (2004, page 174), who reports that cabinet ministers rarely appear before PACs, except in Alberta. According to Malloy (2004, pp. 178) the point is not to have ministers answering or taking responsibility for their departments. Rather, “the objective is to investigate the conduct of government affairs by public servants, exploring problems and possibly recommending solutions. But this may produce an important gap of particular concern to public servants. To what extent should politicians be allowed to grill public servants directly, rather than the ministers who head their departments? Is it unfair to require public servants to appear in such a political forum?”

Our respondents indicated that deputy ministers and department officials are called by most PACs except for Alberta, Manitoba (department officials), Quebec and federal, while the Auditor General is called as a witness by all except Yukon and Quebec. Prince Edward Island calls every possible witness, as does Newfoundland & Labrador (except for ministers). Balls had already noted in 1963 (page 24) that although in the federal PAC, the minister is responsible for all the activities of the department over which (s)he

presides, (s)he is seldom called to give evidence before the PAC. Rather, the deputy head of the department is called as a witness, together with departmental officials. Only on rare occasions has the minister appeared before the PAC.

All PACs usually have the right to call interest groups, academics/specialists and government service providers as a witness, but in practice this only happens in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland & Labrador. Alberta only calls ministers and the Auditor General as a witness, while Quebec restricts itself to representatives of government boards.

**Table 16: Power to call witness, and does so**

	Ministers	Deputy ministers	Departmental officials	AG	Statutory authorities	Interest groups	Academics / specialists	Gov. service providers
AB	✓			✓				
MB	✓	✓		✓				
ON		✓	✓	✓				
PE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SK		✓	✓	✓	✓			
YT		✓	✓					
BC		✓	✓	✓	✓			
CN								
NU		✓	✓	✓	✓			
NB		✓	✓	✓	✓			
NS		✓	✓	✓	✓			
QC								
NT		✓	✓	✓				✓
NL		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Result Question 10**

**Requirement: “The typical witness is a senior public servant (the “accounting officer”) accompanied by the officials that have a detailed understanding of the issues under examination”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 17: Calling Witnesses**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q10a (power)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1
Q10b (practice)	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1

**11. The Auditor’s Report is automatically referred to the Committee and the Auditor meets with the Committee to go over the highlights of the report**

Wehner (2003, page 27) notes that the “...overwhelming majority of PAC work is dedicated with dealing with AG reports. ...In the Westminster tradition, the PAC is the principal audience of the AG, and it is vital that a cordial relationship is maintained between the two. While the PAC depends on high quality audit reporting to be effective, the AG in turn requires an effective PAC to ensure that departments take audit outcomes seriously.” Or, as quoted from the Indian Lok Sabha in Stapenhurst et al. (2005 page 12), the Auditor General is the PACs “friend, philosopher and guide’.

Our questionnaire provides insufficient information to evaluate this statement, but some available information can be used as a proxy. Every single PAC reported to have unrestricted access to examine the Auditor General’s reports. Furthermore, 11 of the 14 PACs reported having unrestricted rights to refer a matter to the AG (British Columbia, federal, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Northwest Territories, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon). Two PACs reported having restricted rights to refer a matter (Nova Scotia, Nunavut) and Alberta has no right to refer matters to the AG. From the previous question we know that most PACs have the right to call the AG as a witness, and do so in practice.

Based on this information it can be assumed that the Auditor’s report is automatically referred to the PAC in all cases. However, the questionnaire contains no information on whether or not the Auditor meets with the Committee to go over the highlights of the report. Malloy (2004, page 173) reports that most PACs work closely with their Auditors. For the seven committees most closely working with the Auditors General (British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Islands, Newfoundland & Labrador, federal), the procedure is to review audit reports and select issues for hearings. “The committee commonly hears first from the legislative auditor and/or his or her senior staff, reviewing the issues and perhaps clarifying aspects of the auditor’s report” (Malloy, 2004, page 173).

**Table 18: During hearings the Auditor General is a witness (w) or advisor (a) to the committee**

AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
W	A	a	w	a	a	w	w	w	w	a		a	w

**Result Question 11**

**Requirement: “The Auditor’s Report is automatically referred to the Committee and the Auditor meets with the Committee to go over the highlights of the report”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 19: Auditor’s Reports and Meets**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q11a (report)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Q11b (meetings)	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1

**12. In addition to issues raised by the Auditor, the Committee occasionally decides to investigate other measures**

While it is important for PACs to consider the advice of the AG in planning and structuring hearings, the committee should not be constrained in its choice of which aspects of an audit report should be further investigated (Wehner, 2003) or, as Stapenhurst et al report: PACs “...are most effective if they can initiate inquiries on their own as necessary”. Ian Harris, Clerk of the Australian House of Representatives, commenting on Australia’s PAC, put it succinctly: highlighting the ability to pursue any circumstances linked to an audit report, financial account or statement of government is “one of the main source’s of the committee’s authority...This power is unique among parliamentary committees and gives the committee a significant degree of independence from the executive arm of government” (quoted in Wehner, 2003, page 28).

Table 20 shows that all PACs have the right to undertake self-initiated inquiries – that is, investigation of matters not raised in the Auditor’s report - except Manitoba. However Saskatchewan, Canada, New Brunswick, Quebec and Northwest Territories have certain restrictions for such inquiries.

**Table 20: Undertake self initiated inquiries**

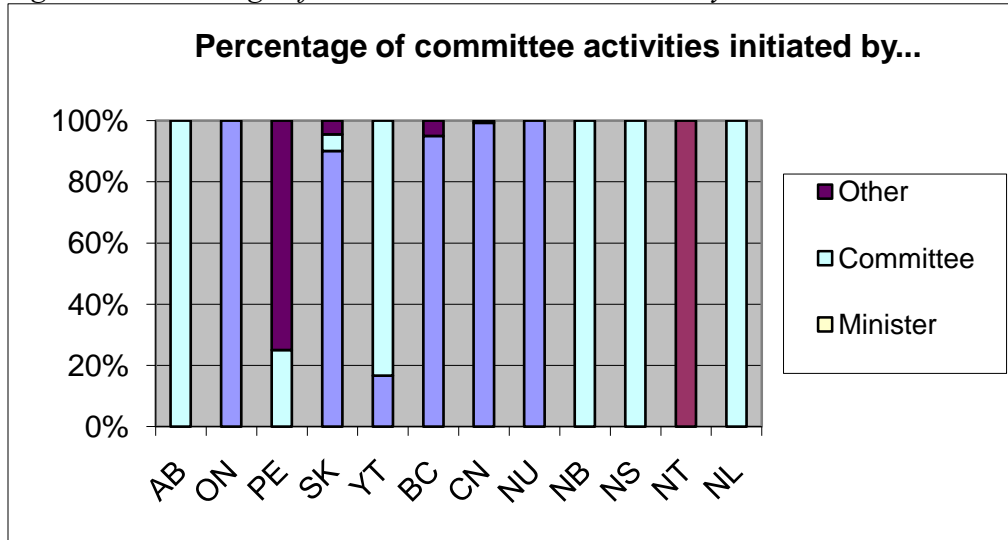
AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
v		v	v	r	v	v	r	v	r	v	r	r	v

*V = without restrictions*

*R = restrictions*

Of the 12 PACs self initiated inquiries were (just) the most common source of PAC activities (about 43% of PAC inquiries) (see figure 5). In 5 jurisdictions (Alberta, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Yukon) all activities were self-initiated. Northwest Territories, Nunavut, federal, British Columbia and Ontario did not have any self initiated activities. The second most common source of PAC activities was the Auditor-General who is responsible for generating about 42% of all PAC inquiries. No PAC reported any activities being generated by a reference from a minister.

Figure 5: Percentage of committee activities initiated by...



There are not data available for Manitoba and Quebec.

**Result Question 12**

**Requirement: “In addition to issues raised by the Auditor, the Committee occasionally decides to investigate other measures”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 21: Can Initiate Own Inquiries**

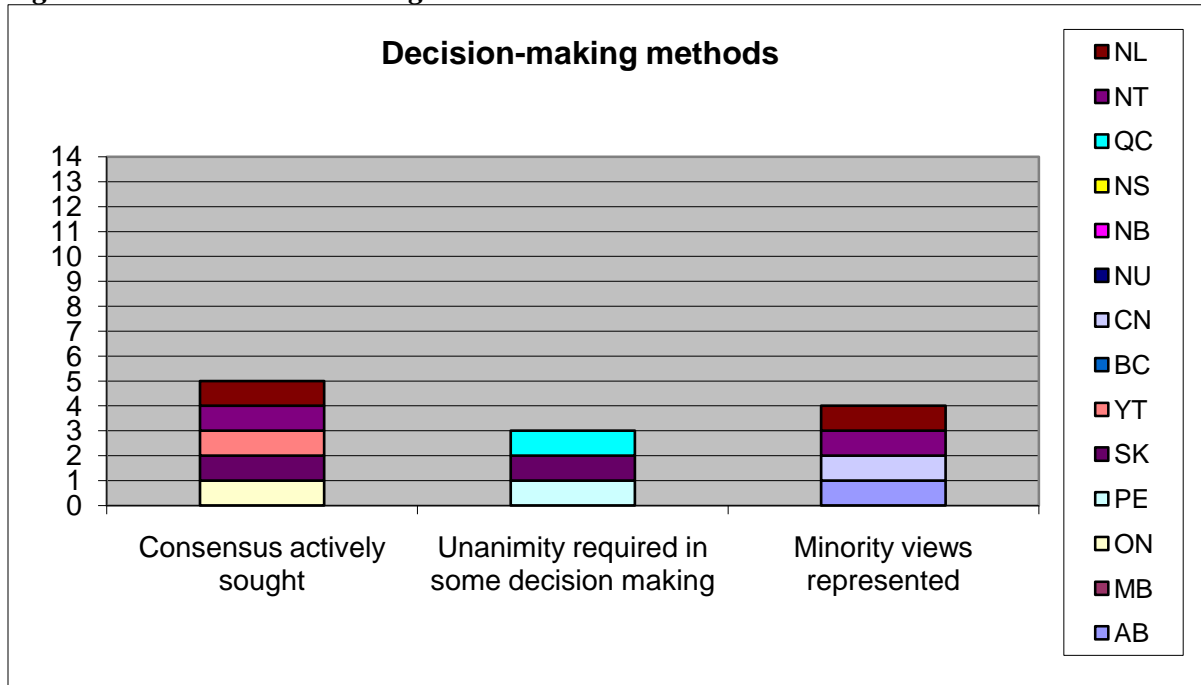
	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q12a (power)	1	0	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1
Q12b (practice)	1	na	0	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	1	1	na	0.5	1

### 13. Committee strives for some consensus in its reports

Reference was made above to the desirability of a bi-partisan climate within the committee. In some countries, there is an invariable rule that recommendations must be concurred in by all members of the PAC; this is the case in India, for example. In Australia and the United Kingdom, there are very strong conventions of PACs striving for unanimity in their conclusions, with very few instances of divisions or conclusions being recorded (McGee, 2002). Such consensus strengthens committee recommendations – and increases the probability of government acceptance.

The majority of PACs reported that a simple majority of Members was all that was required to issue a report; nine of the 14 PACs reported this to be the case (British Columbia, federal, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon). Four PACs reported that this was not the case, because super majorities are required (Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Yukon). In Alberta neither a simple majority nor a super majority is required in their reports. In Quebec unanimity is required in all its decisions. In Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan unanimity is required in at least some decision-making (see figure 6).

**Figure 6: PAC decision-making methods**



**Result Question 13**

**Requirement: “Committee strives for some consensus in its reports”**

1 = Compliance with requirement

0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement

0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 22: Consensus**

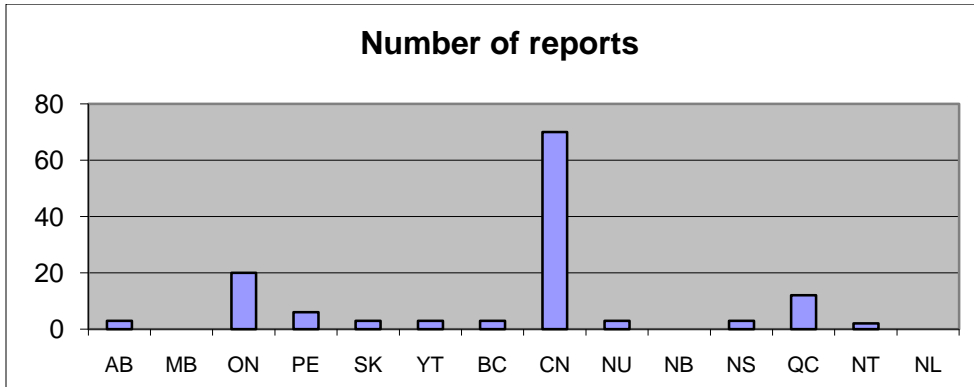
	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q13	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

**14. The Committee issues formal substantive reports to parliament at least annually**

McGee (2002) notes there is wide variation of PAC reporting within the Commonwealth. In some cases, PAC issues only one report each year to Parliament on all work on which it has been engaged during that time. In others, PACs report to the legislature as they see fit, and their reports can deal with a number of issues or can relate to a single investigation the PAC warrants it important enough to communicate to the House. Stapenhurst et al (2005) highlight the importance of reporting publicly while KPMG (2006) note that in Australia regular reporting is supplemented by media releases and internet reporting.

The average number of reports per year for all responding PACs is 12 (there are no data available for New Brunswick, Manitoba and Newfoundland & Labrador). However, there is significant variation in the data, driven by the Canadian Parliament with a reported 70 annual recommendations. The PAC issuing the fewest number of reports was the Northwest Territories (2). Some variation in the data can be explained by a difference in assembly rules and standing orders. For instance Malloy (2004, page 168) reports that Alberta’s PAC is not mandated to make reports to parliament. Other PACs, like Ontario’s, produce reports regularly.

**Figure 7: Number of reports per year**



There is no data available for MAN and NFL

**Result Question 14**

**Requirement: “The Committee issues formal substantive reports to parliament at least annually”**

- 1 = Compliance with requirement
- 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement
- 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 23: Substantive Reports to Parliament**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q13	1	Na	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	na

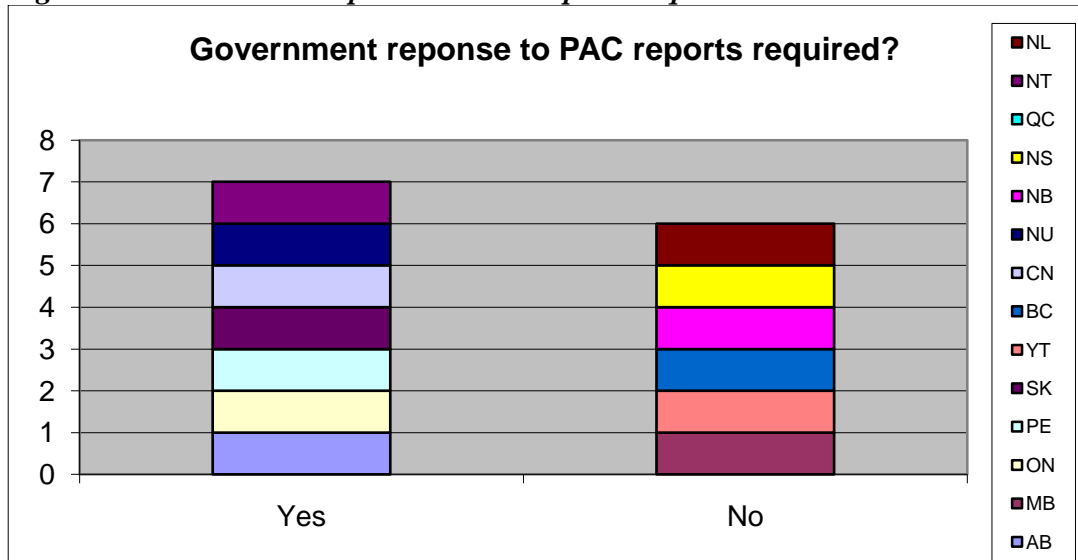
**15. The Committee has established a procedure with the government for following up its recommendations and is informed about what, if any, action has been taken**

The PAC is accountable to, and reports to, Parliament. However, it is the government which is responsible for responding to committee recommendations (KPMG, 2006). While the majority of committee recommendations involve issues of general public and financial administration, it is generally the responsibility of the minister to respond. A general problem around the Commonwealth is government recalcitrance and lack of responsiveness to PAC recommendations (Wehner, 2003). Ascertaining what action has been taken in response to PAC recommendations is an important aspect of measuring a PAC’s effectiveness (McGee, 2002).

The majority (seven) of PACs reported that the government did have to respond to their reports/recommendation (Alberta, federal, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan). The average time frame for a government response is reported to be 4 months. The government has most time to respond in Alberta (5 months), while in Prince Edward Island a response must be made within 3 months. In Alberta, Canadian Parliament, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Saskatchewan the government there is a standard formal format for response in place. Prince Edward Island has a more informal and less standardized procedure. Alberta, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Yukon, British Columbia, Canada, Nunavut, and Quebec reported having at least one follow-up hearing for its recommendations. Newfoundland & Labrador, Northwest Territories, and Nova Scotia have no such follow-up mechanisms (there is no data for Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick).

In British Colombia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Yukon the government is not required to respond to PAC reports.

**Figure 8: Government response to PAC reports required?**



*There is no data available for Quebec*

**Result Question 15**

**Requirement: “The Committee has established a procedure with the government for following up its recommendations and is informed about what, if any, action has been taken”**

1 = Compliance with requirement  
 0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement  
 0 = Non-compliance with requirement

**Table 24: Government Responses Required**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
<i>14a (required)</i>	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	na	1	0
<i>14b (procedure)</i>	1	0	1	0.5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	na	1	0

## 16. The Committee uses the Auditor as an expert advisor

As noted above, the Auditor-General has been described as the “friend, philosopher and guide” of the PAC. A key question, therefore, is to what extent the committee taps into the expertise and knowledge of the Auditor General and his/her staff.

We found that Canadian PACs were split. In six jurisdictions, the committee considers the Auditor General a witness, called to give testimony. Alberta, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, federal, Nunavut, New Brunswick and Newfoundland & Labrador reported having the Auditor General as a witness to the committee. While the relationship between the Auditor General and the PAC in these instances may be cordial, it is arms-length. Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories predominantly use the Auditor General as an advisor to the committee (see Table 25). The Auditor General briefs the committee in camera and participates in hearings by questioning witnesses (with the Chair’s permission). The Auditor-General also helps the PAC in the drafting of its report on the matter under inquiry. This is consistent with Balls (1963, page 24) who reported that the Auditor General attended each session of the federal PAC and works closely with the committee. The AG briefs the Chair before each session, attends each session and elaborates on the points covered by his annual report, and assists the Members when necessary.

*Table 25: During hearings the AG is a witness or advisor to the committee*

AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
w	a	a	w	A	a	w	w	w	w	a		a	w

### Result Question 16

**Requirement: “In all its deliberations, the Committee uses the Auditor as an expert advisor”**

1 = Compliance with requirement

0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement

0 = Non-compliance with requirement

*Table 26: Auditor General as an Expert Advisor*

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q16	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0

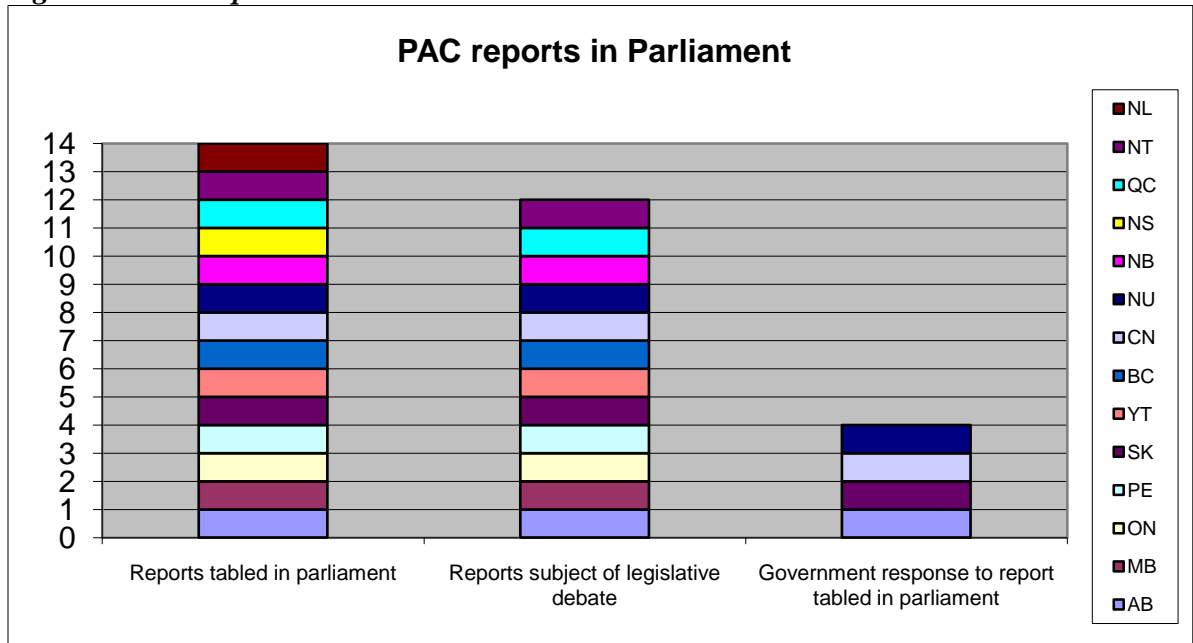
### 17. Parliaments hold an annual debate on the work of the Committee

Debating PAC reports – and government responses to them - in Parliament can reinforce the probability that government will take action to noted failures in financial and other matters. The CPA Study Group argued that “...the work of the PAC is of such critical importance in maintaining the integrity of a country’s public sector that an annual debate on its work would appear essential. This would be a minimum acknowledgement from the Parliament that it takes seriously the need to ensure that the country’s public sector is functioning properly and in the wider public interest.” (McGee, 2002, pages 80-81).

Every single PAC tables its reports in its respective legislature (see figure 8). The majority of PACs (no data for Quebec) reported that their reports are required to be the subject of legislative debate. Only 2 PACs reported no such requirement (Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia).

New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Yukon reported no requirement for the government response to be tabled in Parliament (no data available for British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Ontario).

**Figure 8: PAC reports in Parliament**



**Result Question 17**

**Requirement: “Parliaments hold an annual debate on the work of the Committee”**

1 = Compliance with requirement

0.5 = Partial compliance with requirement

0 = Non-compliance with requirement

***Table 27: Parliaments Hold on Annual Debate on PAC Work***

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
Q17	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	na	1	0

**Results**

The results of the requirements for an ideal committee are presented in Annex 2. Simply adding the results makes it possible to rank PACs according to the total score of points in the previous section. However, because the survey was not completed by some, there are missing data. To deal with this issue, we construct another ranking based on the average score (which equals the total score divided by the number of answered questions): see Table 28<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 28: Final Ranking Ideal Committee**

Ranking	Total	Average
1	ON/SK	ON/SK
2		
3	PE	PE
4	Federal	NT
5	NT	Federal
6	AB	AB/QC
7	YT/NS	
8		NL
9	NL	YT/NS
10	BC/NU/NB	
11		NU/NB
12		
13	QC	BC
14	MB	MB

---

<sup>3</sup> We realize that these rankings are somewhat arbitrary, as each of the criteria is treated equally, but they at least give a first approximation of overall relative compliance. The first five ranks and the last rank remain about the same, but in between some PACs shift. This is mainly caused by Quebec and Manitoba, where the most missing data occurred (see Annex 2).

## **Section 4**

Using the indicators and benchmarks suggested by Stapenhurst et al., we now move to the second question: how does Canadian PAC performance measure up?

Very few committees publish reports dealing with their own performance. According to this survey, no PAC has a mechanism in place to measure its performance (no data for Quebec). No PAC has ever obtained external assistance in reviewing its practices and procedures (no data for Ontario and Quebec). However, one example of good practice in PAC reporting and performance measurement can be found in Box 2.

At present there is no international standard setting process for legislative functions such as oversight and control of the public purse. Nonetheless, it would appear that a comprehensive framework for assessing PAC performance would encompass several different dimensions or types of information. The suggested indicators are summarized in Box 3. Each will be considered in turn. Beyond these indicators, there is a question whether the PAC is actually dealing with important issues such as the root causes rather than the symptoms of problems.

### **Box 2: Quebec**

The Committee on Public Administration (CPA) in Quebec has 6 government and 4 opposition members, with an opposition chair. The CPA took over from the former PAC in 1997 with new responsibilities that stressed administrative, non-partisan action as well as review of the Auditor General's reports. The CPA reports twice a year.

In 2002, the Chair of the Committee started an informal review of the first five years of the committee's work by asking six key questions:

1. Could the CPA make the distinction between political and administrative aspects in the management of departments and agencies?
2. Could senior public servants testify without getting their political masters into hot water?
3. Could a bipartisan approach work in the CPA given the highly partisan nature of the legislature?
4. Does the legislature permit the CAP to hold timely public accountability sessions with departments?
5. Will the CPA be able to review the many new performance reports that departments are required to produce each year?
6. Has the CPA ensured that its recommendations and the government's action plans to deal with them are followed up effectively?

The Chair of the Committee presented this framework for a PAC scorecard at the 2002 meeting of all Canadian public accounts committees. He has made his own preliminary personal assessment of his committee's score for each question/criterion, and he is planning to involve the committee in a more formal assessment in the next few months. The results could be presented to the legislature.

*Source: Stapenhurst, Sahgal, Woodley and Pelizzo (2005), page 22*

One way of measuring PAC performance is to compare the committee’s ‘input’ and its ‘output’. Such an exercise is technically difficult, but we provide an initial and tentative analysis in Annex 3, to provide a point of departure for further research and analysis.

***PACs role as provider of information for public and media***

Malloy (2004, page 176) argues that one should not expect parliamentary committees to have direct and immediate effects on legislation or other government activities: “With some exceptions, PAC reports themselves do not seem to make governments quake in their boots. Committees cannot compel government action on anything. While written committee reports and recommendations can be important and influential, committees’ effectiveness should not be measured by this aspect alone.” Malloy goes on by stating that the role of PACs is to provide for a discussion forum for public and government related issues. “It is their ability to publicly examine issues and place information before the public and media that is most valuable. Committees provide additional public and visible pressure on governments to change or account for their actions. Effective legislative committees recognize and focus on this role. Thus, one of the outcomes of a public accounts committee can be enhanced public awareness of government programs.” The importance of public awareness is echoed by the fact that PAC chairs often see media headlines as a success (CCAF-FCVI, 2006, page 12).

Table 29 shows that most PACs have mechanisms in place to increase public awareness of PAC reports and inquiry outcomes. Only two PACs (Manitoba and New Brunswick) do not have such mechanisms. The most commonly used examples of such a mechanism are press releases, press conferences, media interviews, and publishing reports. Using the PACs website is another often used response, and the British Columbia PAC uses its website as the only mechanism for public awareness. Northwest Territories uses radio, television and webcasting efforts as well. Although most PACs have mechanisms for public awareness, only Newfoundland & Labrador has a formal communication strategy. Even the national PAC does not have such a strategy.

The interaction between PACs and the media is fruitful in most cases: a PAC hearing often leads to media publicity, except for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Yukon.

***Table 29: Public awareness***

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL
PAC hearing leads to media publicity		v	v	v			v	Na	v	v	na	v	na	na
Mechanism for public awareness	v		v	v	v	v	v	V	v		v	v	v	v
Communication strategy?														v

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this paper, two questions have been considered: i) how do Canadian PACs compare with the 17 attributes proposed by Stapenhurst et al. that make an ideal PAC? and ii) how do Canadian PACs compare to the benchmarks proposed by Stapenhurst et al. regarding “potential indicators or benchmarks that can be used when examining PAC performance”?

Regarding the first question, the paper has assessed all Canadian PACs on each of these points, and has ranked them to performance accordingly. The best performing PACs are Ontario, and Saskatchewan, followed by Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories and the federal. The least performing PACs are Manitoba, New Brunswick, and British Columbia. Results for Quebec are biased because of missing information.

Analyzing the compliance with requirements of individual questions shows that all PACs meet the requirements of the opposition chair, clerk, role and responsibilities, hearings open to the public, and finally an automatic reference of the AG report.

In general, most quick gains can come from improving the follow-up procedures after publishing a report (including a required government response, which will probably take time to institutionalize); trying to initiate own activities/inquiries; appointing the PAC for the length of the term of Parliament; initiating a steering committee to handle the PAC’s administrative issues; having more regular PAC meetings, and meeting more often with the Auditor General and using the AG as an expert advisor. Increasing the number of dedicated staff is a prominent issue for all provinces and territories, but this might have severe budgetary consequences.

Regarding the second question, the paper has shown that there is not a single PAC that has a mechanism in place to measure its performance (except for a self-initiated assessment of Quebec in 2002). In addition to that, no PAC has ever obtained external assistance in reviewing its practices and procedures. When we compare committee’s inputs (members and staff) and outputs (hearings, meetings, reports, and inquiries), we see first of all that there are large differences between jurisdictions. To overcome this, performance assessments should be a standardized, regular procedure of every PAC. The assessments can then be compared between jurisdictions, and best practices can be exchanged amongst PACs to improve overall functioning of all Canadian PACs and eliminate the differences in performance between them. Study trips can be a helpful tool to facilitate this learning exchange.

Other than that, we can conclude that a large number of members or staff does not necessarily result in more output per year. The question then remains as to the circumstances that make some committees and their staff more efficient than others. The implementation rate of recommendations is an important performance indicator as well. On average the implementation rate is above average, although again there are enormous differences between jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions however, do not have data on their implementation rate available. Analyzing the implementation rate should be part

of a regular assessment of PAC performance, as well as part of a standardized follow-up mechanism.

In exercising their role as a forum for discussion and communicate information to the public and the media the mechanisms used most are press releases, press conferences, media interviews (radio and television), the PAC website and publishing reports. However, there is only one PAC (Newfoundland & Labrador) that has a formal communication strategy. Other PACs can improve their relations with the public and the media by adopting a formal communication strategy, especially when PAC hearings do not immediately lead to media publicity (as is the case in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Yukon).

**References:**

Balls, Herbert 1963. "The Public Accounts Committee" Canadian Public Administration Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 15-34

CCAF-FCVI 2006. "Parliamentary Oversight – Committees and Relationships" Ottawa, Ontario

Gay, Oonagh and Barry Winetrobe, 2003. *Parliamentary Audit Scrutiny: Innovative and Effective? The Constitution Unit, School of Public Policy, University College London.* ISBN 1 903903 22X

Jacobs, Kerry., Jones, Kate. and Smith, David. "Public Accounts Committees in Australasia" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Hyatt Regency Chicago and the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, Chicago, IL, Aug 30, 2007

KPMG, 2006. "The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee: An Australian and New Zealand Perspective" Australia

Malloy, Jonathan 2004. "An Auditor's Best Friend? Standing Committees on Public Accounts" Canadian Public Administration Vol 47, No. 2, pp. 165-183

McGee, David 2002. "The Overseers: Public Accounts Committees and Public Spending" Pluto Press, London

McInnes, Simon 1977. "Improving legislative surveillance of provincial public expenditures: the performance of the Public Accounts Committees and Auditors General" Canadian Public Administration. Vol 20, No. 1, pp. 36-86

Messick, R.E., 2002. "Strengthening Legislatures: Implications from Industrial Countries". World Bank PREM Note (63).  
<http://www1.worldbank.org/prem/PREMNotes/premnote63.pdf>

Pelizzo, Riccardo and Rick Staphenurst, 2007. "A critical institution for Parliamentary Oversight". The Parliamentarian. Issue 2, pp. 131 – 133

Staphenurst, Rick, Vinod Sahgal, William Woodley and Riccardo Pelizzo, 2005. "Scrutinizing Public Expenditures: Assessing the Performance of Public Accounts Committees" Policy Research Working Paper # 3613. The World Bank

Wehner, Joachim 2003. "Principles and Patterns of Financial Scrutiny: Public Accounts Committees in the Commonwealth" Commonwealth and Comparative Politics Vol 41, No.3 pp. 21-36.

White, Graham, 2006. "Traditional Aboriginal Values in a Westminster Parliament: The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut" *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 pp 8-31

## **Annex 1: WBI PAC Survey - Questionnaire**

The following questionnaire is intended to capture details on the processes and working practices adopted by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The questionnaire has been structured into the following categories:

- Powers and responsibilities of the Public PAC
- Membership and leadership of the PAC
- Processes and working practices of the PAC in terms of:
  - Processes and practices adopted for setting the agenda of PAC meetings and inquiries
  - Initiating inquiries
  - Undertaking inquiries
  - Reporting findings and recommendations
  - Following-up on recommendations
  - Ensuring continuity in process
- Access to resources and support
- Relationships with other committees
- Evaluation of PAC performance

Please enclose any supplementary documentation that will assist in explaining the practices and processes adopted by the PAC.

You are requested to return the completed questionnaire to Rick Stapenhurst at [fstapenhurst@worldbank.org](mailto:fstapenhurst@worldbank.org) and Mitchell O'Brien at [mobrien@worldbank.org](mailto:mobrien@worldbank.org) or to the following address:

**Mr Frederick Stapenhurst**  
**Senior Public Sector Management Specialist**  
**The World Bank**  
**1818 H street NW**  
**Mail stop: J4-403**  
**Washington, DC 20433 USA**

To assist the project team in incorporating your responses into the study, please provide your contact details below:

Legislature	
Contact & appointment	
Address:	
Phone:	
Fax:	
Email	

---

**POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

***Parliamentary Structure***

- 1 Please outline the structure of the current Parliament in terms of terms of the name and number of members of each house (where the Parliament has more than one house).

- 2 In addition to the PAC, what other types of Parliamentary Committees are currently in operation?

- 3 On what date was the last election held?

***Legislative base***

- 4 Under what authority does the PAC operate (eg, Parliamentary Committees Act, 19XX )?

**Public Accounts Committee right of access**

5 In examining the use of public monies, which organisations and/or officials does the committee have right of access to (ie, the right to examine accounts, contracts and / or financial management practices)?

Government agencies within the finance portfolio / ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Government agencies outside the finance portfolio / ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Statutory authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Government-owned corporations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Local government authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Parliament (ie, Parliament expenditure)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Parliamentarians expenditure (eg, parliamentary staff)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Government service providers (eg, outsourced activities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Government funded non-government organisations:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions

If yes, please describe:

Other private sector organisations:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
-------------------------------------	--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------	-----------------------

If yes, please describe:

For those organisations listed above for which a “Yes with Restrictions” response has been provided, please provide details.

**The functions and responsibilities of the Public Accounts Committee**

6 What are the PAC’s functions/powers (please provide additional detail to clarify if necessary):

**Accounts and operations:**

Examination of accounts and financial affairs:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Consideration of budget estimates (other than Audit Office)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Efficiency, economy and effectiveness of government policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Efficiency and economy of policy implementation (eg, value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Effectiveness of policy implementation (eg, delivery of outcomes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Undertake self initiated inquiries	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions

**Auditor-General Reports:**

Examination of Auditor-General compliance reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Examination of Auditor-General performance reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Refer matters to Auditor-General for investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions

**Auditor-General Operations:**

Selection of Auditor General	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Selects & Recommends	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approves selection
Removal of Auditor General	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommends removal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approves removal
Audit Office annual budget and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommends budget	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approves budget
Review / approve Audit Office fees	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes with restrictions
Determination of Audit Office priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approves priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sets priorities
Development of Audit Office annual plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consulted only	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approves Annual plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Assess Audit Office performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes with restrictions
Confer or exempt Auditor-General from certain legislated obligations	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes with restrictions
Approve appointment and removal of independent auditor of Audit Office	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes with restrictions
<b>Other responsibilities:</b>			
Other, please describe below	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes with restrictions

7 Which, if any, of the above powers are not enforced/applied in practice even when available (eg, assessment of government policy)? Why?

8 For those functions listed above for which a 'No' or "Yes with Restrictions" response has been provided, are other Parliamentary committees empowered to undertake these functions (eg, review of budget estimates by Senate Estimates Committees)?

**MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

***Appointment and representation of Public Accounts Committee members***

9 How many members are currently appointed to the PAC? Is the proportionate representativeness governed by legislation, standing order or other convention? If yes, please describe.

10 In what proportion does the current membership reflect government, opposition and minority parties? Is the proportionate representativeness governed by legislation, standing order or other convention? If yes, please describe.

11 Are members sourced from both chambers of Parliament (where relevant)? If yes, in what proportion are members representative of each chamber and is this governed by legislation, standing order or other convention?

12 Who has responsibility for the selection of PAC members?

13 For how long are PAC members appointed to serve on the committee? Is this consistent with the term of the Parliament? Is the term of office governed by legislation, standing order or other convention? If yes, please describe.

***Appointment, representation and role of the Public Accounts Committee Chair***

14 Is the current PAC Chair from the government, opposition or minority parties? Is this mandated or, if not, is this consistent with past practice?

15 Who has responsibility for the appointment of the PAC Chair?

16 What is the process for selection and appointment of the PAC Chair?

17 For how long is the PAC Chair appointed? Is this for the term of the Parliament?

18 Is the selection and term of appointment for the PAC Chair governed by legislation or other convention?

19 What responsibilities and powers does the PAC Chair have in addition to those afforded to other members?

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE -  
SETTING THE AGENDA**

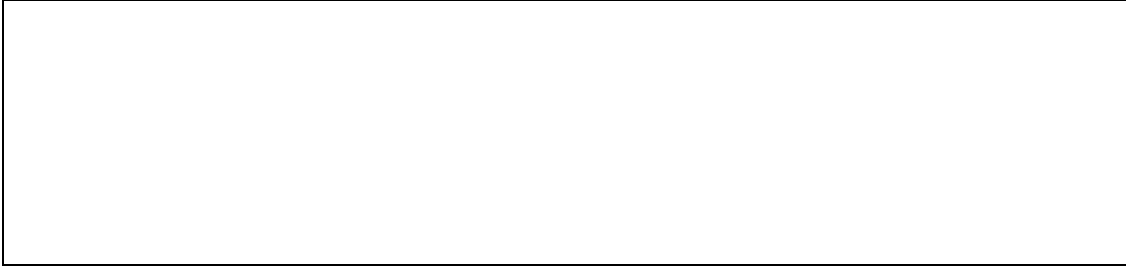
*Scheduling and frequency of meetings*

20 How often has the PAC met over the last three financial years:

	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>
PAC Meetings			
Subcommittee meetings (if applicable)			
Hearings			

21 How is the timing of PAC meetings determined?

22 What constitutes a quorum?



23 Does the PAC have a formal policy that details the regularity of meetings, notice of meetings, agenda structure, etc?

24 Are committee meetings (other than hearings) open to the public? If yes, under what circumstances is public access to meetings barred (in camera hearings)?

***Prioritising the workload***

25 Who determines the agenda for meetings, eg, chairperson, general membership, other arrangement?

26 How far into the future does the PAC's formal planning processes extend (eg, current years, Parliamentary term, three years)?

***Use of subcommittees***

27 Are subcommittees established to perform particular tasks? If yes, for what purposes have subcommittees generally been established, eg, particular subject areas, individual inquiries, administrative activities?

28 What are the current subcommittees?

29 Are these subcommittees established on a standing and / or ad-hoc basis?

30 What are the membership and quorum requirements for establishment of a subcommittee?

31 What is the relationship between the full PAC and each subcommittee in terms of decision-making and reporting?

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - INITIATING THE INQUIRY**

*Establishing the terms of reference*

32 Over the last three years, in what proportion have committee activities (inquiries and reports) been initiated by the following:

	%
Referred by Auditor-General	
Referred by Parliament	
Referred by Minister	
Initiated by Committee	
Other, please specify below:	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

33 What is the process for establishing the terms of reference for a PAC inquiry? Are other parties normally consulted in the process of determining the terms of reference (eg, Auditor-General, Ministers)?

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE -  
UNDERTAKING THE INQUIRY**

***Size, duration and number of inquiries***

34 How many inquiries has the PAC completed over the last three financial years (please indicate election year):

	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>
No of Reports released			

35 In recent years, what has been the average duration of PAC inquiries (as represented by the time lag between agreement of the terms of reference and release of the report and excluding scheduled annual inquiries such as consideration of budget estimates if applicable):

	<b>Please tick</b>
Less than 3 months	
3-6 months	
6-12 months	
Over 12 months	

36 On average, how many inquiries would the PAC have in progress at the same time:

	<b>Please tick</b>
0 to 3 inquiries	
4 to 6 inquiries	
6 to 9 inquiries	
Greater than 9 inquiries	

***Committee hearings***

37 Under what circumstances is public access to Committee hearings restricted?

**Access to witnesses and information**

38 What restrictions, if any, are placed on the committee rights to summon witnesses and / or call for information or documents?

39 What rights and privileges do witnesses have access to? Are these rights and privileges governed by legislation, standing order or other convention?

40 Who are normally summoned as witnesses to committee hearings?

Ministers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Departmental officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Auditor-General	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Statutory authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Government boards	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Interest groups / peak bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Academics / specialists	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Non-Government organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Government service providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Other, please describe below	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, normally	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, rarely	but	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE -  
REPORTING INQUIRY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Drafting the report findings and recommendations***

41 Who is responsible for the drafting of committee reports?

42 What processes are adopted to ensure the veracity of draft reports / recommendations prior to finalisation?

***Achieving consensus***

43 On what basis are PAC decisions reached? Is the PAC required to be unanimous in its decisions?

44 If unanimity in decision-making is not required, how are minority views presented (eg, by incorporation into the PAC report or by the issue of a separate minority report)?

***Reporting to Parliament***

45 How many reports has the Committee released over the last three financial years (please indicate election year):

	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>
No of Reports released			

46 Does the committee report directly to Parliament or does it report through a Minister or other intervening mechanism?

47 Are all PAC reports tabled in Parliament?

Yes       No

If no, under what circumstances would a PAC adopted report not be tabled in Parliament?

48 Can the PAC table reports out of session?

Yes

No

If yes, is this done in practice?

49 Are PAC reports subject to Parliamentary debate?

Yes

No

If yes, how frequently would Parliament debate committee reports?

**Reporting to the public**

50 For which meetings are Hansards recorded and available?

51 Are PAC reports / hearing transcripts freely available to the public?

Yes

No

52 Are PAC reports / hearing transcripts published on the internet?

Yes

No

53 What mechanisms does the PAC employ to raise public awareness of upcoming inquiries / reports (eg, media releases)?

54 What mechanisms does the PAC employ to inform the public of inquiry outcomes / recommendations (eg, media releases)?

55 Does the PAC have a formal communication strategy?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe.

***The annual report***

56 When is the committee's annual report issued in practice (excluding years influenced by elections): that is, how soon after the end of the financial year?

	<b>Please tick</b>
Within 3 months of year-end	
Within 3 to 6 months of year-end	
Within 12 months of year end	
Over 12 months	

57 What matters does the PAC address in its annual report (eg, PAC attendance, inquiries undertaken, performance measures, etc)?

---

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - FOLLOWING-UP ON INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Executive response***

58 Is the Executive required to formally respond to committee reports / recommendations?

Yes       No

If yes, is a timeframe for formal response mandated / adopted in practice?

59 What is the process for responding to PAC recommendations (eg, whole of government response through Finance Minister, through relevant portfolio Ministers, etc)?

60 Are responses required to be tabled in Parliament?

Yes

No

***Monitoring implementation***

61 What processes are in place to monitor and follow-up implementation of government responses to committee recommendations (eg, designated subcommittee, through Auditor-General, formal reporting mechanism, etc)?

---

**PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE -  
CONTINUITY IN PROCESS**

***Transitioning arrangements for new Public Accounts Committees***

62 How does the PAC ensure continuity of proceedings across Parliamentary terms and changes in Government (for example, inquiries still in progress when an election is called)?

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SUPPORT**

*Continuing education of Public Accounts Committee members*

63 Do newly appointed PAC members receive orientation training in PAC practices and procedures?

Yes       No

If yes, please describe.

64 What types of capacity building and continuing education training do PAC members receive? From whom is the training received?

*Secretariat staffing and facilities*

65 How many staff (full-time equivalent) are available to the committee on an ongoing basis? Are any staff members employed under permanent positions or are they contracted for the term of the PAC?

66 What proportion of current ongoing staff resources are:

	<b>Number of staff</b>
Dedicated PAC staff	
Committee staff shared with other committees	
Staff provided by government department	
Staff provided by Auditor-General	
Other, please specify.	
<b>Total</b>	

67 What are the roles of the Secretariat staff (eg, research officer) and how many staff serve in each role?

68 Is the committee provided with additional staff for specific reviews / inquiries?

Yes       No

If yes, from where are these staff sourced and what is their role?

69 What training do staff receive in relation to committee processes and practices?

70 What training do staff receive in relation to broader public sector developments / reforms?

***Access to external support***

71 In addition to committee members, who else would normally be expected to attend committee meetings (eg, representative from Finance Ministry, Auditor-General representative)?

72 What involvement does the Auditor-General's staff normally have in the ongoing business of the PAC?

73 What involvement does the Auditor-General's staff normally have in specific PAC inquiries / hearings?

74 Does the committee use external advisors / experts to assist in the conduct of specific committee inquiries and writing of reports (other than in a witness capacity)?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide examples.

***Public Accounts Committee Member Allowances***

75 Do members receive allowances for serving on the committee? If so, do the allowances differ from that provided for serving on other parliamentary committees?

***Funding and expenditure***

76 How is the PAC funded (eg, separately appropriated by Parliament or inclusion in the appropriation funding for a Parliamentary agency)?

77 How is the amount of PAC funding determined?

78 What is the role of the PAC in developing and approving its annual budget?

79 What was PAC expenditure for 2003-04 and 2002-03 (please indicate whether this is measured in cash or accrual terms)?

	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
PAC member serving allowances		
PAC travel and other allowances		
Secretariat Staffing		
Administrative costs (including consultants, advertising, printing, etc)		
<b>Total</b>		

80 Does the committee receive any funding from independent sources?

Yes       No

If yes, please describe.

---

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COMMITTEES**

***Relationship with other Parliamentary Committees***

81 Are other parliamentary committees involved in scrutinising audit reports? If yes, under what circumstances?

82 Do PAC members sit as a PAC member on other Parliamentary Committees?

 Yes No

If yes, please provide examples.

***Relationship with Public Accounts Committees within other Governments***

83 What interaction does the PAC have with PACs in other national and international jurisdictions (eg, visiting delegations, secondments)?

84 Does the PAC have protocols in place for communicating with other PACs where identified concerns / developments have cross-jurisdictional relevance?

---

**EVALUATION OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE**

***Monitoring and reporting of performance***

85 Does the committee adopt a formal mechanism for measuring its performance? If yes, please describe, including key performance measures used (eg, percentage of committee recommendations accepted)?

86 If yes, how are the performance results reported, and to whom (eg, inclusion in annual report to Parliament)?

***Independent review***

87 Has the PAC obtained external assistance in reviewing its practices and procedures?

 Yes No

If yes, please describe including whether this is done on a regular basis.

**Annex 2: Total Scores**

	AB	MB	ON	PE	SK	YT	BC	CN	NU	NB	NS	QC	NT	NL	Total	na	Average
1a	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	10	0	0.71
1b	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	11.5	0	0.82
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	na	1	1	1	na	1	12	2	1.00
3	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.50
4a	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	na	0	1	0	1	4	1	0.31
4b	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	10	0	0.71
4c	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	0	1.00
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	0	1.00
6	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	8	0	0.57
7a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	0	1.00
7b	1	na	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13	1	1.00
8	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	7	0	0.50
9a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	13.5	0	0.96
9b	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	11.5	0	0.82
10a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	0	1.00
10b	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	8	0	0.57
11a	1	0	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	10.5	0	0.75
11b	1	na	0	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	1	1	na	0.5	1	6.5	2	0.54
12	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13	0	0.93
13	1	na	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	na	11	2	0.92
14	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	na	1	0	7	1	0.54
14b	1	0	1	0.5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	na	1	0	6.5	1	0.50
15	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6	0	0.43
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	na	1	0	11	1	0.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16.5</b>			
na	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	1	0			
Average	0.73	0.62	0.90	0.83	0.90	0.71	0.67	0.77	0.70	0.70	0.71	0.73	0.78	0.72			