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## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, October 25, 2016**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Kevin Sorenson**



## Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

• (1605)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC)):** Good afternoon, everyone. This is meeting 29. We're going to go public and deal with one item of committee business in regard to the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees. I will invite Ms. Mendès to bring forward a motion, which we have discussed.

Ms. Mendès, if there's anything else you want to add, feel free.

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As an introduction to why this motion is here, I became aware of the existence of the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees through my last meeting with the Commonwealth association, and I thought it would be extremely useful and relevant to our committee to be a member of this association, so I brought it to you.

The motion is:

That the Committee join the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC) and mandate the Chair and the Clerk to take the necessary measures to this end.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mendès.

Mr. Christopherson.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** I don't want to let this go by without something on the record in terms of its importance.

Colleagues will know that we just attended the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees. One thing I just found out recently, Chair, and you were there at the same time, is that there are now five or six regional umbrella groups of public accounts committees, but our Canadian one was actually the first in the world. We were the first ones to grab the disparate public accounts committees from our provinces, our territories, and our national government and bring them all together to review best practices, to set standards, to share information.

I think most members who went this year, and that was the majority of the committee—it was one of the best turnouts we've had, by the way; I was very impressed with our group. I think everybody understands there was a lot to be gained from it.

I won't go on at great length, but it excites the hell out of me because it's the Commonwealth now. The beauty of this is it gets us one more step to ultimately being at a UN level, where we would

actually start to set the gold standard of the best practices worldwide for all public accounts committees. That would allow each of our regional organizations, like our national one, to adopt those as we see fit, and that sets a standard then for Canada. Then each of us in our jurisdiction, whether it's territorial, provincial, or federal, would be shooting for those, and we'd have a bit of a benchmark where we can start comparing how we're doing.

In terms of the world of public accounts and auditor general-public accounts systems, as I call them, because the two are linked, its time is coming. It's here now, as more and more former dictatorship and authoritarian regimes are trying to become democracies. We call them emerging democracies. We know that once we get a free and fair election that reflects the political will of the people, the next thing an emerging democracy needs is the independent auditor general with sufficient funding and a public accounts committee that knows what it's doing to work in concert to hold the government to account.

Frankly, we don't brag enough about the fact that the biggest tax fighter and waste fighter is actually this committee, because the Auditor General is single-handedly the most important person for keeping all of government on their toes and accountable.

I'll end it there. I just wanted the Hansard to reflect in our time, as we're joining this, that we're very enthusiastic about it. It's an excellent move on the part of the Commonwealth, and Canada should be proud of the fact that as the world moves to more of these umbrella organizations, we were indeed the first in the world, decades ago, to recognize the importance of coming together and setting best practices and standards.

I want to thank Madam Mendès for the leadership role she has played in this. She is the one who brought it to our attention. It would have come here eventually, but she short-circuited that process, and got it to us. With the efficiency of our chair, we've been able to get in a position where at the end of this vote, hopefully, we will become the latest official members of that organization, and we can start to play the important role that Canada plays.

We have arguably, if not.... We always fight with Australia, but we give the U.K., being the top...and then Australia and I fight about who's second and third. But this will give us that opportunity to show on the world stage some of the things we have been able to do that we're proud of, and it will let us identify where we can improve.

Thank you.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Christopherson.

Most of you were on the committee a month ago when we saw auditors general and officers from countries—Vietnam and many of the African countries—for a period of time here to learn the Canadian system. Similarly, public accounts committees or their equivalents in other countries recognize Canada, the U.K., Australia, and many of the countries. I think this then reflects that we want to continue being influential with those countries, making a difference where and when we can.

Does anyone else want to comment before we call the vote?

We are ready for the question, then.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** May the record show that it is unanimous.

Thank you very much, all.

We will now suspend and go in camera and we will take up our study of report 1.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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