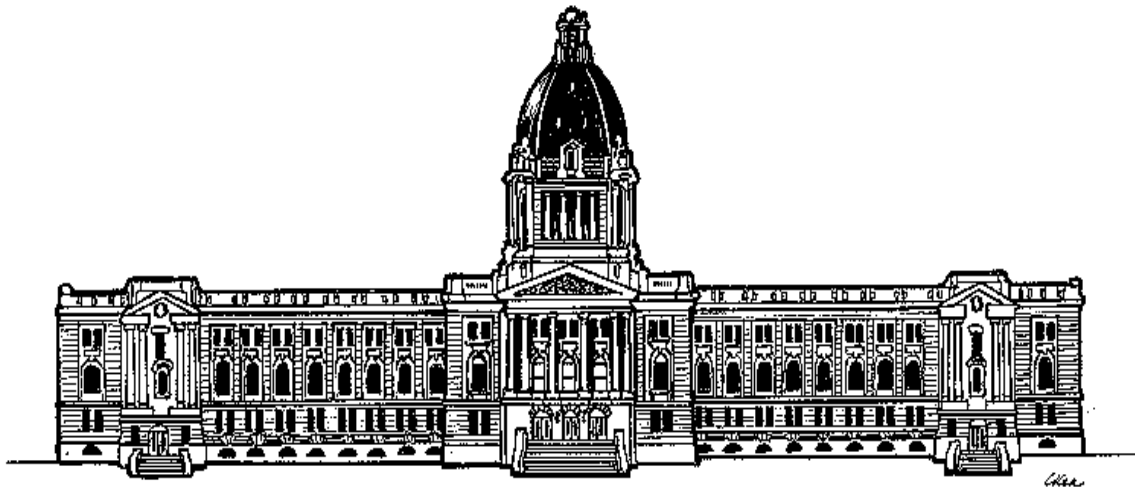




Standing Committee on Communication

Hansard Verbatim Report

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Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-fourth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION
2000**

Hon. Ron Osika, Chair
Melville

Kim Trew, Vice-Chair
Regina Coronation Park

Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Rod Gantefer
Melfort-Tisdale

Carolyn Jones
Saskatoon Meewasin

Peter Prebble
Saskatoon Greystone

Andrew Thomson
Regina South

Brad Wall
Swift Current

The committee met at 9:30 a.m.

The Chair: — Good morning, everybody. I'd like to call our Communication Committee meeting to order if I may, and welcome everybody that's here this morning. There are new members to the committee that I would like to welcome. Mr. D'Autremont, of course, is not a new member to the committee. I want to point that out for sure, just so I don't include him in the new member list.

Ms. Eagles, Doreen, welcome to the committee. Ms. Jones, Carolyn. Mr. Prebble is not here this morning, oh there he is, yes, by golly, I didn't see him earlier. It's Mr. Gantfoer I didn't see that was here, who is also on our committee. Mr. Thomson, Mr. Trew, and Mr. Wall.

I also like to welcome our visitors that are here as well, and that's Mr. Trevor Powell and Mr. Don Herperger — you'll be hearing from them later on. Marian Powell, who is our Legislative Library director; Ihor Sywanyk and Gary Ward from our broadcasting services. And we'll hear from all these people later on. Our Clerk, as you know, Greg; my assistant, Margaret Kleisinger; and Sandra from the Clerk's office as well. And Kerry Bond has just joined us as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, what I'd like to do first of all is just outline to you the committee's responsibility and mandate. This committee's primary function is to review a record disposal schedules that have been submitted to the Saskatchewan Archives Board — and that is the provincial Archives — by the various government departments and agencies. These schedules determine the maximum length of time that records must be retained before a department can make a request to Archives for their disposal.

The staff of the Archives Board are called to appear as witnesses here before the committee, and the committee is also empowered to consider any matters relating to televising and radio broadcasting of legislative proceedings, and any matters relating to the Legislative Library as well. So in regards to the latter, the Legislative Librarian and her staff appear as witnesses before the committee, and we will be hearing from Ms. Powell a little later on.

Now the first order of business that the committee has is to elect a Vice-Chair, and I would open the floor for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Communication Committee.

Mr. Thomson: — I would nominate Mr. Kim Trew.

The Chair: — Mr. Trew has been nominated. Any other nominations? If not I'll call for . . . that nominations cease. Would somebody move that nominations cease? Ms. Jones. All those in favour? Carried.

Mr. Trew: — I would sincerely like to thank my mother, Mr. Speaker, and my nominator. There's many things I thank my mother for; this is not one of them, but I thank the committee for their trust.

The Chair: — The acceptance speeches aren't till later in . . .

Mr. Trew: — Sorry.

The Chair: — Okay. That's right. The motion before the committee moved by Mr. Thomson and seconded by Ms. Jones . . .

A Member: — We don't need a seconder.

The Chair: — We don't need a seconder, I'm sorry . . .

That Mr. Kim Trew be elected to preside as Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Communication.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion? Carried.

Okay then, we'll move right along with our business. I've introduced the officials to you. We have for consideration on your agenda, consideration of retention and disposal schedules, sessional paper no. 219, and under that, part A, schedule no. 341, capital pension plan. I'd appreciate if Mr. Don Herperger from Saskatchewan Archives would give us an overview . . . or Mr. Powell, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Mr. Powell: — I thought since many of you are new members to this committee that I should devote my remarks to outlining the process in place for preparing and approving the retention and disposal schedules before you as well as explaining what records scheduling is all about.

The Archives Act established a system of accountability for information, in whatever form, created and maintained and disposed of by the Government of Saskatchewan. It uses the records for retention and disposal schedules as a means of governing the disposition of all records. The records schedules provide a description of the operational records of a department or branch of a department and establish a minimum retention period for each type of record or record series.

Emphasis is placed on minimum because that is the mandatory period for how long a record must be retained by a particular department. They can retain it for a longer period of time.

Record retention periods are established by determining the administrative, fiscal, legal, and archival value of a record and our information management staff work closely with departmental officials to establish the values and retention periods. The draft is then reviewed by legal counsel and then signed-off by the deputy or permanent head of the department or agency.

Schedules then go to the public documents committee which consists of the Provincial Archivist as Chair, officials from Justice, Finance, and one other department, and the Legislative Librarian. Officials appear before committee and provide information and explanations.

The schedules, once they are approved by the public documents committee, are then sent to our minister who tables them in the House for review by this committee. Following your review and approval, schedules are returned to the Assembly and given the authority under which a department or agency can use them to maintain and dispose of their operational records.

Having gone through this process there is a further level of accountability for departments wishing to dispose of inactive records, and this is where the Archives plays another role.

Departments submit requests for disposal of records, and our staff review and ensure, first of all, that the records have served their mandatory retention period, and then decide on which records should be transferred to the Archives for permanent retention or which ones are to be destroyed.

It's a job that we take very seriously in that the records that we are dealing with are unique. It's not like a library where you, if you'd lose a book, you can in most cases replace it by buying it. But so the records that we deal with are unique, and we take our job very seriously and ensure that those records which have permanent value are retained by the Archives for permanent retention.

And those records which do not serve any further purpose to the department or to the Archives are destroyed.

At this point I think we could move towards the three schedules that are before you which have been reviewed by the Public Documents Committee and are here for your consideration.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Powell. Any questions with respect to the recommendations before you?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question related to file no. 342. It deals with prescription drugs. How long will these records be kept, and who would have access to them once they're in the Archives?

Mr. Powell: — First of all, what you have here . . . at this point we haven't determined in many instances whether records would come to the Archives — that's a later process. But right now you have the retention period as I set out — the period of time that they're in the department — and in most cases it's a short period of time.

Just quickly looking through this I would say just offhand that we probably would not . . . they would not end up in the Archives. They would be destroyed after they have served their mandatory retention period.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, that was my concern with the question of who would have access is that some of this is personal information dealing with people's health.

Mr. Powell: — Right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And I'm just concerned about the privacy of it.

Mr. Powell: — You'll be aware that I think last year you were involved in passing a Bill in the House dealing with health information protection Act, and that governs any records which would come to the Archives as well . . . That the protection of the individual is paramount.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Powell. Just a general comment for members. We have to pass individual motions on each of nos. 341, 342, and 343, but by all means questions may be

asked in general about any or each of these motions. So you're welcome to, after having studied these diligently over the last few days, ask any questions that may jump out at you.

If there are no further questions . . .

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I move acceptance of schedule 341.

The Chair: — The question before the committee is a motion moved by Carolyn Jones:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 341 of sessional paper no. 219 of the first session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Is the committee ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I would move:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 342 of sessional paper no. 219 of the first session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

The Chair: — It has been moved by Mr. Wall, Mr. Brad Wall:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 342 of sessional paper no. 219 of the first session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this motion?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Mr. Prebble: — I have a third motion. Just before I move it, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair, I just want to be clear when we're passing the . . . when we're approving disposal where basically we're approving giving the Archives Board the discretion to decide what's saved and what's lost. We're not approving destruction of all records, right?

Mr. Powell: — That's correct.

Mr. Prebble: — So you would use your judgment about what needs to be retired?

Mr. Powell: — Our staff would go out to the department involved and review the records with them, and then we determine, based on previous transfers to the Archives, oh just on a variety of factors, just whether those records should end up in the Archives.

Mr. Prebble: — A number of areas here in 343 that would definitely be deserving of archive. I look at treaty land entitlement. It's going to be an important area for records, long-term records, to be maintained. And lands research would be another area that would be a priority.

Mr. Powell: — We've also had fairly long retention period as well within the agency. So they obviously are well aware that these records are important to them and we've already been discussing it with them, you know.

Mr. Prebble: — Of course. Thank you for that clarification. Mr. Chairman, I'm happy to move:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 343 of sessional paper no. 219 of the first session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

The Chair: — Will the committee accept the motion as read?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to move a motion respecting these schedules. And I guess in fairness to the committee and yourself, I'll read the motion and then I'd like to speak to it. The motion reads:

That this committee recommend to the Legislative Assembly in its next report that The Archives Act be amended so that retention and disposal schedules may be approved without reference to the Standing Committee on Communication.

That's the motion, Mr. Chair. And if I can speak to it. Mr. D'Autremont and I are the corporate memory in terms of elected officials at this committee. Both of us recall very long discussions about this very thing and I know that our expert witnesses put a lot of work into it.

Three years ago the committee recommended this happen, and the work was done and the recommendation came back and then there was — I'm not sure I want to describe it as sober second thought although I'm quick to say there was no alcohol or anything like that involved — but some committee members sort of got wet feet and said, no we have an obligation to study these schedules and make darn sure that we discharge our duties.

I can tell everyone, I've been on this committee . . . This year we've done our duty as well as it's ever been done. Frankly, we're not the experts. There's a very good Act in place; there's very good people hired whose expertise it is to know what should be kept, what should be destroyed, what should be archived; and there's legislation dealing with all of those things.

I guess I'm suggesting, Mr. Chair, that I don't think it serves a useful purpose any more for these schedules to come before the Standing Committee on Communication. Let's let the experts do their job. There's many, many things that as legislators we should focus our attention on. This is not one of them any more.

So, I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont, do you wish to speak to the . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, I agree with Mr. Trew that in large part we have people in place within Archives and within the library to deal with this in the proper manner. That this is not something that legislators should be dealing with.

The only concern I have is that politically sensitive matters need to be handled delicately when it comes to disposal or destruction of . . . You know, what may be sensitive today might not be sensitive tomorrow; what might not be sensitive today may be sensitive tomorrow. So I would hope that the people doing the determinations would keep that in mind when they're making their recommendations as to what should be disposed of and what should be archived.

You know what might not be interesting today or interesting, may have an impact 50 years from now or may have . . . you know some historian may want to know. And so I think we need to keep that in mind also. But I am certainly prepared to support the motion that the committee does no longer review this.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. D'Autremont. I'd like to read the motion to the committee now, moved by Mr. Trew:

That this committee recommend to the Legislative Assembly in its next report that The Archives Act be amended so that retention and disposal schedules may be approved without reference to the Standing Committee on Communication.

And if I may, I'd like to lend support to the motion and refer to a report from the Saskatchewan Archives Board, the *Strategy for the 21st Century: Final Report*, September 1998 which, having been reviewed by the specialists in records and information management, the recommendation on page 25 of that report and I'll quote:

We have recommended earlier that the current role of the legislature's Committee on Communication relative to the approval of schedules be eliminated.

And this in fact is not something that is new that the committee has been . . . has been brought to the committee's attention.

Mr. Prebble: — Just a comment, Mr. Speaker. You know, my preference would actually be to see you and those who follow you in your office be required to give final approval. I don't think we need the committee to do it.

I think however it should come to you for your review and in effect your safeguarding. And that would provide . . . that would mean that one member of the legislature, namely the Speaker, would scrutinize this and approve it.

The Chair: — It has been pointed out that the motion makes recommendations here that the Act be changed. And if in fact the wishes of the submission for changes include that recommendation that you just made, the motion does not preclude allowing to have that in the legislation when it is changed and there's an amendment. So it will be on the record.

Mr. Prebble: — That would be my suggestion about how we handle it. So that in effect we would be modifying the motion in a small way to provide for scrutiny by the Speaker.

The Speaker: — Any other comments on that?

Mr. Prebble: — Just a suggestion, I'm not making it as a motion.

Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to all committee members. I need to leave for another meeting on a matter that very much affects my constituency. So forgive me for leaving at this point.

The Chair: — Okay.

Ms. Jones: — Could it be noted instead of having to amend the motion that's before us, could it be noted and have that the drafting instructions for the amendment to the Act include referral to the Speaker. Would that satisfy it or do we need to go through an amendment to the motion?

Mr. D'Autremont: — I think to do that change you would need to put an amendment in on the motion, simply saying that we would hope that this would happen. If it's not a requirement of the motion or the Act, then it wouldn't be happening.

So I think if you want the Speaker to review it, then it would need to be a part of the motion, as an amendment.

Mr. Thomson: — The only other item I would like to give some consideration to is the idea that these decisions, when taken, would be transmitted to the legislature so we're aware of the action being taken. Archives are extremely important, I think, as Mr. D'Autremont has pointed out and obviously as we all understand, both today and in the future, and I think we should at least have some understanding of what is being deleted out of the Archives.

So I don't know that we need to amend the motion but I think certainly there should be some record of transmission to the legislative Chair of what is going to be removed.

The Chair: — We're just putting together an amendment to the motion that would lend support to what the discussion has been around the table. But who would . . . it was suggested that now it would be related to the Speaker as the final authority for having accepted. Is there a need to report it to the Assembly through the Speaker's office? Is that the intent of the motion . . . or the amendment?

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Chairman, I cannot speak for the cant of the amendment because it was not something that I'm privy to. What we are in danger of doing here is taking a complex procedure, trying to simply it, and making an even more complex procedure. Frankly I've come to the conclusion and am now going to urge that we not amend it. We either pass the motion or defeat it. If we defeat it, then we're doomed to reviewing the good work that's done by the Archives and the librarians, it seems to me, in perpetuity.

I mean, there's no rocket scinty to this. There's some very good training that's required. There's some . . . some

knowledge needed to know what should be archived and what should not. I don't have that knowledge and nor do I have that training. Nor I should even pretend to have it.

So I'm going to stop speaking to this . . . or this particular matter. I'm just urging all committee members, let's deal with it but let's not create an octopus when what we had was a giraffe.

The Chair: — I'm sorry, would it suffice then to merely have a requirement to have it tabled in the Assembly when . . . those reports tabled in the Assembly?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Perhaps if I may ask our officials, when you prepare a list or files for deletion or archiving, who has access to that list after it's prepared, and is there any restriction to that list?

Mr. Powell: — Are you referring to this schedule?

Mr. D'Autremont: — To any of the schedules. So you've gone through the files of the Department of Justice and you've said, these are the ones that need to be archived, these are the ones that need to be deleted. Now who has access to the list of what those files are?

Mr. Powell: — We do.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Does anybody else have access?

Mr. Powell: — No.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So now if I came to you and said, can I have a list of . . . the same sort of information that you provide on this schedule — what is being deleted, what isn't being deleted — would anybody have access to that, other than yourselves?

Mr. Powell: — No.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So there'd be no way to know then whether files had been or had not been deleted without making some sort of a special request — an order from the legislature . . .

Mr. Powell: — Freedom of information.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Freedom of information to determine that. Okay, freedom of information. If we . . .

Mr. Powell: — I mean we have to justify ourselves in making these decisions. I mean somewhere down the road they might be required for legal action or whatever. And we have to . . . it has to be there in writing that we went through these, we made determination based on a variety of factors, and agreed that they should be destroyed.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What I'm looking for is . . .

Mr. Powell: — Or transferred to the Archives.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is there any reason why a report to the legislature would be needed if people who wanted access, who felt that I need to know whether all the files from the

Department of Justice have been deleted, if there was any opportunity for them to find out? And perhaps freedom of information is the way they could do that.

I'm just not sure what we're going to report to the legislature, that we've deleted all the . . .

Mr. Powell: — That would be very complex. I mean we . . . I don't . . . I think this year — Don could correct me — but I think we were dealing with 800 disposal requests from departments, which could be one page in length or 50 pages in length. And we . . . our people went through it, went over to the department, worked through the material with them, decided what should come to the Archives and what should not.

And then I signed off an order saying, dispose of these records or transfer the other records. That kind of thing. And that would be a fair amount of work.

Here we're dealing with schedules. These are the authority by which the department will determine. They'll go through these. They'll use these as a guideline to go through and determine whether or not they get rid of certain files once they've served the retention period, and that's it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I don't see what benefit there would be in reporting this to the legislature.

The Chair: — Mr. Thomson, I . . . had your hand up earlier, I'm sorry. Was there . . .

Mr. Thomson: — I'm prepared to accept the advice of our officials. I'm relatively ambivalent on this. But it seems to me that if we have this process in place, and it has been in the past deemed important enough to refer to a standing committee, and to all of a sudden absent the responsibility completely away from the legislature, does require some thought now. Clearly I've never served on this committee before and not . . . I'm thinking back as to what the report, the 1998 report for the future of the Archives said.

I guess I'm not overjoyed with this, but I'm inclined to support Mr. Trew and support Mr. D'Autremont and the officials if this is the direction we want to take.

Mr. Wall: — I think that the comments made by Mr. D'Autremont and Mr. Thomson are reasonable in terms of the potential for politically sensitive documents to have the input, I think, of elected people in this process.

And I would agree that, you know, if this is the process we've used now, to go completely away from that and remove any elected or political people from the process, I'm not sure I understand the rationale.

I also don't see how allowing the Speaker, as a representative of all of us elected officials, to sign off on the reports and for it to be reported to the legislature — I'm not sure I see how that makes the process clumsy. I still think it's streamlined. It doesn't have to come to this committee. It doesn't have to a part of the process. It simply requires that the Speaker and his successors are sort of, I think, a safeguard or a guardian at least on the political sensitive side of things — politically sensitive

side of things — in terms of documents and archives.

I think it's still a relatively smooth process and think we could quickly do an amendment to the motion and get her done.

The Chair: — Mr. Powell, do you have any comment with respect to the process?

Mr. Powell: — Well I just want to — maybe it's more clarification — I just wanted to make sure what we're talking about here, if we're talking about the Speaker's involvement. Are we talking about the Speaker's involvement in signing off this — that is the schedules. I trust we're not talking about disposal requests as that is my job.

The Chair: — You'd mentioned a frightening number a little earlier of 800 a year so . . .

Mr. Powell: — Yes, those are record disposal requests, and it is my job to decide whether or not . . .

Mr. Wall: — I simply see the Speaker fulfilling the role that we just did, we just fulfilled this morning with respect to those motions.

Mr. Powell: — With respect to the schedules.

Mr. Wall: — Right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I would hope that the Speaker is too busy to repeat your job in entirety. And if this motion . . . an amendment was to be put forward on the motion to simply deal with the schedules as presented, there may be some value in it. I don't even know if there is a lot of value in it.

Mr. Speaker, there's no reason we couldn't come back and revisit this, if we accepted the motion or amended it in three years or something to determine whether or not the needs are being met, as far as the legislature and the members are concerned in dealing with this. So perhaps if we were to pass this motion and we could make a subsequent motion to revisit it in three years.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont, then what I'll propose to do here is read the amendment that's been proposed to the motion and then ask for a mover. And it reads:

That the motion be amended by adding the following words:

And further, that the government take into consideration when amending The Archives Act that provision be made that schedules continue to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, and that the Speaker to be the final authority on the approval of the schedules.

Do I have someone that would move that amendment?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, are these tabled in the legislature, or is presenting them to the committee is tabling them?

Mr. Powell: — They're tabled by a minister.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay.

Mr. Powell: — Then referred to this committee.

The Chair: — You've moved the amendment.

Mr. Wall: — That's right.

The Chair: — Mr. Wall.

Ms. Jones: — Then I'll second the motion.

The Chair: — Thank you. We don't need a seconder but I appreciate your support.

Will the committee take the amendment as read? Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the amendment to the motion?

Everybody in favour? Any opposed? None. Carried.

The main motion. Then the question is . . . Do you want me to read the main motion again as amended? Will you take it as read . . . having been read? Is it the pleasure of the committee then to adopt the motion?

All those in favour? Any opposed? Carried. Thank you.

I want to thank the officials very much — Mr. Powell, Mr. Herperger — for your advice and input.

Mr. Powell: — Thank you very much.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. I would like to make a motion that we revisit this item in three years.

The Chair: — The question before the committee is a motion put forward by Mr. D'Autremont:

That the committee revisit the review of schedules in three years.

Is it the pleasure of this committee to adopt that motion? Carried. Thank you.

Members, the next item on our agenda is the review of the Legislative Library report ending March 31, 1998. Ms. Marian Powell, our Legislative Librarian, is here.

And what I would like to do is, before we ask Ms. Powell to make any comments she may wish to make and then allow some questions, just highlight the fact that these reports are for the year ending March 1997, March 31, and March 31, 1998.

And there are some highlights of this report. You all have that report. There has been a significant increase by individual MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in the use of the current members' awareness programs that the Legislative Library offers; planning, training, and integration of Internet resources into work throughout the library as well, which also benefits our constituency offices; and the selection and installation of the new integrated library system, Voyageur, in conjunction with the RegLIN (Regina Library Information

Network) automation consortia.

There's some of the highlights. And I don't know if there's any need for me to walk through it. The mandate of the library, you'll be well aware, is to provide services to the Legislative Assembly. It retains traditional role to provide access to its unique resources to the public of Saskatchewan and the provincial public service as well.

So the main focus here, I expect, will be from members on behalf of MLAs and staff that avail themselves of the excellent facilities and services of our Legislative Library staff.

So with that, Ms. Powell, do you have any comments to make as an overview before members ask any questions they may?

Ms. Powell: — Yes, I think I could expand just briefly on a couple of areas.

One of the most significant events which happened in the period covered by this report was the approval by the Board of Internal Economy of the conversion of our major storage facility into mobile shelving.

Now it didn't actually get installed until the next period, so the following . . . This report only deals with the fact that it was very necessary and that it was approved. The report for the next period will give some details.

But I think in terms of milestones, in the last 10 years we've hit two really important ones. The first one, about eight years ago, was the automation of the Legislative Library collection through the RegLIN consortium that Mr. Speaker has referred to. And the second one was the installation of the mobile shelving.

We're a very old library. Our collection has existed since 1876. And it wasn't until 1999 that we had sensible, workable, accommodation arrangements for our collection. So we're now in the fortunate position, coming into the new century, that we have a good base upon which to improve our services to members.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Committee members, any questions?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I guess one of the areas of interest that is becoming more and more prevalent is Internet access. I wonder if you could give some indication as to just what kind of Internet access people have to the library?

Ms. Powell: — To the library? The library has part of its catalogue available on the Internet. And the reason I say part is again we're an old library, we have approximately 85,000 records on our catalogue system, but we own approximately 400,000 volumes. So you can see there's a significant gap between our historic collections and what is available electronically on the Internet.

That's an area that in development to support members, we're identifying funds and staffing resources to continually augment what's available there.

In terms of the Internet presence . . . And perhaps I can just ask Sandra to distribute some documents for you; I'll just have her distribute the front page of our web site, on the Legislative Assembly's web site.

We make available to anyone who can dial in — and that includes the public, it includes people in constituency offices — a summary of our library services, our collection policy so that people know on what basis we choose our collections. We also have two important publications that are available electronically on our web site — the *Monthly Checklist of Saskatchewan Government Publications*, and the *New Books at the Library* that highlight our newest acquisitions, which people outside the legislature may borrow on interlibrary loan. Only members may borrow directly.

We're hoping in the future to enhance our web presence. One of the areas that we want to move into are more in the way of pathfinders on particular parliamentary issues and topics that will be readily available to members from their laptops, for example, and pull together, pulling together, links to both full text and other resources easily accessible to the members in areas of their interest.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How closely do you work with *Hansard* in maintaining the records and the verbatims of the House, both past . . . present and past.

Ms. Powell: — In terms of the web site? Is that . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes.

Ms. Powell: — The *Hansard* material goes directly to the web site, it doesn't come through us. What we have done is worked with them on some of the retroactive electronic conversion. You will probably be aware that *Hansard* is gradually adding more of the earlier years of the debates electronically onto the web site. And we of course, like the Archives, hold the copies. And where we can make available duplicates, they can cut them up and easily use them for input purposes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions or comments, committee members?

Mr. Thomson: — Could I just offer one comment, Mr. Chairman? And I wanted to say that I don't know how long the library's been offering this service, but I have found the material that's provided to MLAs who are attending conferences and seminars has been most useful and I want to thank you for that.

I've availed myself of your services twice I think in support and it is, I find, a very good kind of background briefing for members before we go. So I just want to congratulate your staff and encourage you to continue on with that. I think it's a very useful service.

Ms. Powell: — Thank you.

The Chair: — If I may just add to that, Mr. Thomson, as a footnote, I have heard it said that our members who attend those

such conferences are the envy of delegates from other jurisdictions, so it's again thanks to our Legislative Library staff.

Any other questions or comments or . . . If not, I want to thank you very much, Ms. Powell, for being here and I want to thank committee members for questions.

Ms. Powell: — Thank you very much to the members of the committee. And certainly we appreciate your input at any time. If you have some services you'd like to see that you're not currently receiving or if you have some ideas, please feel free to contact me or to contact the Members' Services Librarian. We'd be happy to talk to you at any time, and thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you again and we will report that your report has been reviewed by the committee. Thank you, Ms. Powell.

We'll move right on to our fourth agenda item and that's the report on status of television broadcasting system. Unfortunately Mr. Prebble had asked us to bring this to the committee on this particular meeting. He had to leave, however, I do believe that Mr. Ward has some report he would like to make to the committee members which may be of use and interest.

Do you want to introduce the gentlemen with you once again, Gary, please.

Mr. Ward: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you like them at the table with me? With me are my technical staff, Ihor Sywanyk and Kerry Bond.

I'd just like to say that I appeared before the committee at the request of the committee and had not prepared a report. I was prepared to answer questions on the state of broadcasting but I have provided for you an information package — has that been handed out? — and on it is the list of communities served by broadcast services. And they're broken down by constituency and shaded alternately white and grey so that you can identify your own constituency, or others; they're all together.

There is 113 of these communities and there's also an extra receiver in Yorkton at the Image Wireless head end from where they distribute their signal to the southern portion of the province. Also with your packages, the series of maps for distribution, that's a distribution area covered by wireless image cable. So anything that isn't listed on your constituency breakdown for communities, there's a whole bunch of other towns in there that are covered by Image Wireless.

I know some of the concerns about distribution is that it isn't wide enough and that we should be up on the direct home services. We've talked about the direct home services with different people, one of them being SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network), the chief engineer over there. And he's been trying to help us with that because SCN is providing service on those direct home services.

They're on those direct home services because the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) requires that they be there. The CRTC does not

require anyone to cover . . . to carry the legislative proceedings.

Mr. Prebble's concern, I understand one of his concerns, was that in Saskatoon that we're on channel 73, which is way, way up there and nobody knows we're there. But in fact Shaw Cable in Saskatoon and all of the other cable companies in the province have no requirement whatsoever to carry the legislative service. They do this just as a courtesy to us.

So to tell them that we have to be carried lower on the dial is just unreasonable because, you know, we can't tell them where to put us. If the CRTC on the other hand says that we want them down there, well that's a different matter.

So they're actually providing this service for us without any cost; and on the other hand we're providing this service to them without any cost.

The Chair: — Mr. Wall, you had a question on that?

Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to thank Mr. Ward for ordering these site maps in terms of quality of life because you've got Swift Current first there; I think that's pretty apropos, that.

But I also would like to make a comment. I wrote a letter . . . I think I wrote a letter to you, Mr. Speaker, on this particular issue. And my letter touched . . . and I think we spoke as well, Mr. Ward, and I think we were discussing specifically this SCN opportunity I think. And my understanding of it is through some sort of cursory research is that SCN certainly carried the legislative channel at its outset. Maybe that's wrong, but that was my understanding that at least part of the proceedings were carried through that network. They never were?

Mr. Ward: — No.

Mr. Wall: — All right. Well it came to my attention, and you've just confirmed it now, that indeed SCN is able to . . . is accessible from these direct, these little satellite dishes that are frankly all the rage.

I know in my community a lot of people are purchasing them and moving away from cable. And in my community people have access to the legislative channel if they have cable. But of course in other more rural areas, where there is no access, people are also moving towards this form of . . . you know, they're going to the direct TV or ExpressVu or whatever the particular products that are being marketed.

And some of this involves fairly subjective opinions but to the extent I think that SCN is under-utilized I think as a service by our citizens, my letter concentrated on really utilizing SCN in terms of the proceedings of the legislature and making it at least accessible.

People will obviously choose to watch or not watch and that's fine, and most will choose — most who have a life will choose — not to watch probably. But it should be accessible at least. And I think this committee should do whatever it can to ensure that if people choose to watch the legislative proceedings, Mr. Speaker, that they have that opportunity to do so.

And so I really believe that I would like to see the committee give some direction to the capable broadcast services staff and ask them to perhaps further investigate the opportunities that we would have with SCN.

We're talking about four months a year usually, and just have SCN allocate from, you know, the legislative hours, which also aren't that onerous until it gets towards the end of June I guess, and have them broadcast the legislative channel and at least give people the opportunity should they choose to tune us in.

The Chair: — Mr. Ward, we talked about this. Do you have any comments in response to Mr. Wall's presentation? Well before you do, and I'm sorry, there could be a motion from this committee — a recommendation put forward to the minister responsible for that area to further review the development of the type of process that we're talking about here. I think it's very valid. Do you have any comments?

Mr. Ward: — Yes I do, actually. First off, the access to this service is there with the image wireless communications which is a digital service which is every bit as good, in terms of quality, as the direct to home services. It is unfortunately limited by topography. If there is hills and valleys . . . they've done their best to overcome that and that's why you have site maps. And there's areas outside of those that do not receive it.

But with this service, by and large, we're covering probably 90 per cent of the population — if not more — of the province in terms of access to our signal, which is a huge increase from what we were just a few years ago where we covered . . . we went to eight locations in the province.

But we have talked with SCN and what I'm suggesting to them, if in the event that SCN is able to uplink our signal themselves, rather than the way it is now which is via SaskTel . . . SaskTel uplinks our signal to the satellite transponder that is owned by SCN. If we can go directly to SCN, they have indicated to me that they would provide us with a full-time channel for an approximate cost of what we are paying now to SaskTel for an hourly rate.

In other words, if we're . . . right now we're spending \$367 an hour for an uplink for SaskTel's service. If we went directly to SCN it may cost us a few thousand dollars more, but not very much more, to have a 24-hour presence on the satellite in which case we would propose that we do things like run a series of biographies of members, of tapes of the legislative building, as you are all aware that we have. Things like that. Rebroadcast of the proceedings, a regular rebroadcast of the daily question period.

SCN has also indicated that they would provide a complete rebroadcast of the proceedings. And I know this sounds useless but their programming day currently ends at midnight and they have indicated that they would be willing to run a complete rebroadcast of the proceedings after midnight. I mean there still is an audience there after that. I mean when you consider that the 1:30 to 5 o'clock portion of the proceedings, who's home to watch it? But there are people home after midnight, and many people are sitting up watching television after that time.

So there's another accessibility. That is on the SCN channel.

That's their main broadcast channel outside of their educational programming.

Mr. Wall: — I really think, Mr. Ward, too that . . . and that's very interesting. I think that's something that should be pursued, is my personal opinion. I think too that, you know, live broadcasts on SCN — and I'm not criticizing SCN programs — I think recognizing the fact that there is not a big audience out there for it as it exists now. And so at least we could provide this service.

I should also point out, I think that SCN is viewed by people . . . people can access it from across the country I think. And so here we have the opportunity, I guess for our expatriates if they're . . . also maybe don't have a lot to do, to tune in and find out what's happening here. And also people that are just simply just interested in Saskatchewan politics and I think there are a few of those people around as well.

But I think SCN is available to the rest of the country, and it's something that we should pursue. If there's some interest on the part of my colleagues on the committee, I would be happy to move a motion.

The Chair: — And that would be acceptable, Mr. Wall. A motion to recommend that SCN devise or do an uplink or I'm not sure. Perhaps, Mr. Ward, you could help us out with the wording of the connection to SCN for broader broadcast services.

Ms. Jones: — I question whether or not a motion is even necessary. I mean, I think what Mr. Ward has explained is that they're exploring other options and new ways of dealing with things. And I'm not sure we need to prod him too much to make that happen.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, perhaps what we need is to ask Mr. Ward to come forward with a proposal as to what would need to be done, what kind of service could be provided, and what kind of costs would be associated with that. And then this committee could either accept or reject. If it was to accept, then it could send a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy asking that this be funded.

Mr. Trew: — Yes. I agree with everything that has been said and certainly what the spirit of Mr. Wall's comments are, of opening up the broadcast services, as Mr. Ward has pointed out. We hugely — I say we, collectively — the Legislative Assembly in our various committees and ministers and whoever it's required to open it up, it has been opened up.

Are there further opportunities to make the proceedings even more accessible in an easier manner? Well that's I think what the committee is challenging Mr. Ward to continue to increase that access. I think you've got very clear indication, as does, Mr. Speaker.

My concern with us moving a motion is where does the funding come from? This committee has no funding attached to it. So I'm not so sure that we have any legislative right to be demanding. Clearly we're on record saying let's look for as many opportunities as we can to expand in as reasonable a manner as we can. I think that's where we're best to leave it for

now.

But, again, I just want to finish by indicating clear support I think from all committee members to what Mr. Ward was . . . or Mr. Wall was speaking about. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Trew. Is that satisfactory, Mr. Wall? Okay. Then we'll leave it at that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Ward has talked about that he's working with SCN to try and develop something. Perhaps he could continue that and then report back to this committee as to what would be needed and what kind of costs would be associated with that kind of service.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. Trew: — And if there is some opportunity for the committee to facilitate the expansion of services obviously.

Mr. D'Autremont: — You have to keep in mind that all of this is not working in isolation. We have a Special Committee on Rules that is looking at possible changes within the House, different uses for communications within the House, such as the use of full-time computers and access.

And I think that it needs to be all tied in together at some point into one large package to provide better access to the public. Certainly there are large parts of Saskatchewan that do not get access to what's going on in the House on a daily basis, they have to rely on the media. And I think they should have an opportunity like those that already have it to have a direct, intimate knowledge of exactly how government is working.

The Chair: — Good point. Any final comments?

Mr. Ward: — Yes, just with regard to Mr. Wall's concern about the full utilization of SCN, their product. I think that considering that TV Ontario evidently carries the question period from Queen's Park, maybe that's something that they could be convinced to do.

But if you're going to do that, if you wanted it live, then the legislature would have to be willing to have the question period at a regular time, not when it is convenient. It would have to start at say 2 o'clock because you have to schedule programming on television. You can't just put it on when it's convenient. It has to be at a certain time.

So I mean that's a stumbling block as far as your procedures, I'm sure.

Mr. D'Autremont: — We can agree with that when we're government but not when we're opposition.

Mr. Thomson: — That'll be a long time before that happens.

The Chair: — Okay. I want to thank you very much, Gary, and then again it was expressed here earlier the appreciation for your efforts on your behalf and your very competent and capable technical staff.

And we want to thank you for your services in broadcasting the

Legislative Assembly proceedings and your continuing efforts to make sure that people out in rural Saskatchewan see exactly what their hon. members that they've sent here are doing on their behalf. So I express that appreciation on behalf of the committee. Thank you.

Committee members, what I'd like to do at this point is read to you a draft report. I'm sorry it's not prepared in such a fashion that I can distribute it to you, but I'll read it so that . . . get your approval; perhaps once I've read it, to forward it on to the Assembly.

And the first report — Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Communication, presented the first report of the said committee which is as follows: your committee has considered the recommendations of the public documents committee under The Archives Act contained in retention and disposal schedules comprising sessional paper no. 219, including schedule no. 341, Capital Pension Plan; schedule 342, Saskatchewan Health drug plan and extended benefits; schedule no. 343, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, lands branch; this first session of the twenty-fourth legislature, and referred to the committee by the Assembly on May 9, 2000.

Your committee recommends to the Assembly that the recommendation of the public documents committee on schedules No. 341, 342, and 343 be accepted.

Your committee considered the issue of its role in the review of approval of retention of disposal schedules and makes the following recommendations — and those recommendations will be such as were passed by the committee through the motions presented.

The ending of the report will then go on to say: your committee reviewed the report of the Legislative Library for the period ended March 31, 1998, as well reviewed issues related to the broadcast of the legislative proceedings.

Committee members, would that meet with your approval if we prepared that report and presented it as our first report from the Committee on Communication? Okay. Then I would propose a motion:

That the draft first report of the Standing Committee on Communication be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Do I have a mover? Mr. D'Autremont. All those in favour. Carried.

Now I would entertain . . . unless there is something else that committee members want to bring forward, I would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wall, thank you. This committee then stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

Thank you very, very much for your input. And I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

The committee adjourned at 10:40 a.m.