



# **Standing Committee on Communication**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

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**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION  
2001**

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Prince Albert Carlton

Carolyn Jones, Vice-Chair  
Saskatoon Meewasin

Dan D'Autremont  
Cannington

Doreen Eagles  
Estevan

Rod Gantefoer  
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Debbie Higgins  
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Peter Prebble  
Saskatoon Greystone

Andrew Thomson  
Regina South

Brad Wall  
Swift Current

The committee met at 09:05.

**The Chair:** — Well, with that, good morning to everybody who is on the Standing Committee on Communication, all the members and the officials who are here today. I especially want to welcome Deb Higgins, who is the new member to this committee, replacing Kim Trew.

And I want to just briefly outline the mandate and the responsibility of the committee. The committee has in the past taken on three responsibilities. First of all, to — not necessarily first of all, but in any order — to consider matters pertaining to the electronic broadcasting of the legislative procedures. Gary Ward will be joining us later.

Also to consider matters pertaining to the operations of the Legislative Library, Marian Powell is here. And to consider the record retention and disposal schedules as recommended by the Public Documents Committee constituted under the Saskatchewan Archives Act.

And with us today is our two members of that committee — Trevor Powell and Don Herperger. The other members of the committee . . . pardon me, I don't have the other names of the committee. Perhaps Trevor, you could enlighten us on that.

**Mr. Powell:** — Certainly. We're actually, I'm the Chair of the Public Documents Committee under statute, and Don is secretary to the committee. The committee itself consists of officials from the Department of Justice, Finance, the Legislative Library, and an individual from another department . . . an official from another department. In this case it's the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training — something like that — and that person has a knowledge in the area of automated systems.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. We will come back and deal with that in a moment. There's one procedural thing that we should go through and that is to elect a Vice-Chair to the committee. The committee members have the agenda before them so first, perhaps, before we even deal with the election of Vice-Chair, we'll go through the agenda. Four items — election of Vice-Chair; consideration of the retention and disposal schedule, no. 344 and 345; agenda item 3, review of the Legislative Library annual report ending March 31, 2000; and agenda item, legislative broadcast issues.

Are there any additions to the agenda or any suggestions? If not, we'll proceed with the election of Vice-Chair and the nominations are open for the position of Vice-Chair.

**Mr. Thomson:** — I nominate Ms. Jones.

**The Chair:** — It has been moved by Mr. Thomson that Ms. Jones be nominated. Are there any further nominations? If not, would somebody move nominations cease. Moved by Mr. D'Autremont. Seconder? Ms. Higgins. Those in favour of the motion that nominations cease? That motion is carried, thank you. And I congratulate you on being elected Vice-Chair, Ms. Jones . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Double duty; double pay.

We'll then proceed to consideration of retention and disposal

schedule no. 344 and 345, and I'll turn it over to Trevor Powell.

**Mr. Powell:** — What you have before you are operational record schedules and these govern records that are created and maintained by the department or agency involved. They are different from routine administrative records produced by government and they are, as I say, peculiar to the agency involved.

The two that we have before you are the operational records systems schedule 344, governing the records of the private investigators and security guards program of the Department of Justice law enforcement branch.

And the other one is the records for the Farm Tenure Arbitration Board.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you. I guess the question I have dealing with both of 344 and 345, in the documents are there any private names discussed or any concerns with privacy?

**Mr. Powell:** — All records have names of individuals in them when they're created, over a period of time. So I mean I would have to say yes there are but certainly it's . . . in these particular instances, I mean they are records of the department and they are peculiar to that department. Whether or not they have any historical value and whether or not they'll ever reach the archives is debatable. They're not key records that we would see of long-term historical importance.

At the archives we . . . obviously we have records from government and from private organizations and they all contain information about individuals — often just references to names, other times case files, that kind of thing. And we certainly are well aware of the concerns expressed in legislation and elsewhere regarding privacy. There's always a fine balance between the public right to know and the privacy of the individual, and we have to balance that out. And we have to follow the law just like anyone else.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. If there aren't any other questions, the motion that is recommended is that the . . . would read as follows:

That the retention and disposal schedule of no. 344 of sessional paper no. 140 of the second session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Moved by Ms. Jones. Is the committee ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Motion is carried.

With respect to 345, the recommended motion is:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 345 of sessional paper no. 140 of the second session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Could I have a mover for that? Mr. Wall. Is everybody in

favour of the motion?

**Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Motion is carried.

Thank you very much then, Mr. Powell, for coming, and thank you for doing this work on behalf of the legislature of Saskatchewan.

Our next item on the agenda will be the review of the Legislative Library annual report ending March 31. Copies of the report have been distributed to the members of the committee. I invite Marian Powell to perhaps give us a brief outline of some of her work.

**Ms. Powell:** — Indeed, I'm pleased to do that and I appreciate the opportunity to bring the library annual report to the committee. This report actually covers two years — fiscal years 1999-2000 and 1998-99. And as you'll note from the transmittal letter at the beginning, we were very much in this period preoccupied with space. This coincides with the major first phases of the Legislative Building restoration project and it had a very great impact on the library even before it began.

As a result of the need to reinforce the foundations . . . As is often the case libraries are located in basements, as were we. And over the period of the two years, every office in the library moved at least once — except my own — and a couple of them twice, and we moved the full collection no more than three times in order to accommodate moves out of the building, installation of mobile shelving, which was a very great boon as its approval coincided with the need to remove our stack area from the Legislative Building.

So you'll notice in the highlights there's a lot of reference to space, collection, and staff moves. But of course we did not forget our clients, and I must congratulate the staff for their great efforts to maintain a high quality of service during all of this disruption to all of our clients. It wasn't without some considerable effort that that was achieved.

Also during the time the Legislative Assembly did a major classification review, which of course the library participated in as well. It took a lot of staff effort and input to describe their present work, to work with the consultants to have them adequately classified, and that pretty much took a lot of time as well.

Probably the more interesting part of the report though relates to the new things that are happening. And a couple of new things that have really grown over this period have to do with electronic resources, and I know this is of interest to members.

The library had launched its Web page just at the beginning of this period. And the fiscal year '99-2000 is the first year we have complete statistics for a full fiscal year. And we're very interested to see that in that year the library pages on the Legislative Assembly Web site received 31,000 page visits in that fiscal year. That tells us there's a fair bit of interest in what we've listed on our Web site. And I'm sure members will have looked at this as well.

We have put up a number of publications to make them broadly available: the monthly checklist of government publications of the province of Saskatchewan; new books in the library for individuals who access our collection; and as well, a new thing which will happen with this report is that this report will be going up on our Web site. So we're quite excited about this because this will be the first time that the annual report will be published on the Web site as well as in paper.

It is certainly our intention to reduce the number of paper copies that are distributed and that will contribute to some savings in printing. We can't discontinue it completely because we do know that there are some individuals that still need paper and can't solely rely on the Internet.

The other electronic issue I thought I would bring to your attention is a new co-operative effort in the province for province-wide licences to commercial databases. Throughout the province we each subscribe to a variety of commercial fee-based databases of information. And over this period the Multi-Type Library Board has worked with the various library sectors in the province to come together and share the costs of province-wide access.

Two major databases were acquired at this period and the Legislative Library is a funding partner of this project. The first database was essentially an American source of full-text serial information with a wide variety of sources — academic, public, health, etc. The second one is a Canadian product of Canadian newspaper and magazine articles. And both of these are now available across the province through every public library to everyone in the province. And the fees that we pay by going together are significantly less.

In terms of our work for members, it's been a terrific boon for us. It's greatly expanded the kind of information we can get on short notice. The fact that the full article in most cases is there, makes it very much easier to meet the time demands that committees and members have.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Do members have any comments, questions, or queries of Ms. Powell?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — I subscribe to your subscription service and I find it very useful.

I'm just wondering though if that . . . I get a paper copy. Would it be possible to receive that by e-mail and then be able to access the articles that I find interesting, again by clicking on them to go into your reference library or wherever they're at to retrieve them?

**Ms. Powell:** — At this time it is certainly possible with some services to provide them to you electronically. And again with some of the services, depending on the package that you personally receive, yes we could provide the full text. It's not a blanket situation yet. Things are still evolving.

I guess one of the most important improvements that have happened in the last calendar year is that the four daily Saskatchewan newspapers are now available electronically. And that has never been the case before.

So in the library we are seriously investigating how we can best work with that new resource and provide electronic information to members as much as they would wish to receive it.

**The Chair:** — Are there any other comments or questions?

Well, thank you very much, members. Thank you very much, Marian, for coming and for being available to respond and to give us an outline of your accomplishments over the last year.

Next item on the agenda is the legislative broadcasting issues. And I welcome Gary Ward. Gary you might want to just start by introducing your other officials, your crew that's with you.

And I know that some of the material that you've been dealing with, you have been reporting with on an ongoing basis. And I do have some copies of your report to the Standing Committee on Communications which the Speaker's office received on November 2, 2001 which I would now like to have distributed.

Perhaps we could start though . . . Gary if you have a few comments.

**Mr. Ward:** — Good morning to members. Kerry Bond is with me from Broadcast Services. Kerry is one of our technicians.

I just wanted to say that I provided a report to the committee following the directions from the last committee meeting which we have acted on since this report was submitted to the Speaker's office. And I assume you all have copies of that.

The Speaker after that sent out a memorandum on May 14 describing what has taken place as a result of these actions with the committee's request. That is that now we've changed our method of distribution by bypassing SaskTel, as I had talked about the last time we met, and we purchased a digital microwave transmitter. And so we . . . our signal goes directly over to SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) and is uplinked from there.

So the uplink is still the same. It's still with SCN which it was before, but instead of paying SaskTel a carrying fee to get it over to them so it can be uplinked, we just have one . . . just a one-price agreement with SCN for \$160,000 per year for unlimited time on the satellite.

Presently we're just providing the live proceedings of the House and we're playing back the proceedings up to approximately three and a half hours per day — as much as we can get in before the House starts again. We're playing that in-house and we're sending it out on our network. Not all of the locations are carrying it. For instance, Access Communications in Regina doesn't carry it because they have the Home Shopping Network that is on when we're not on live.

Our signal is being provided on the SCN network. That is to say the replay of the statements by members and question period is being provided on SCN on all of their locations in the province. And it's also being provided on the direct-to-home services which are the two satellite services — StarChoice and ExpressVu. This takes place at midnight and at approximately 7:30 in the morning, prior to the beginning of their programming day. So it's run twice.

**The Chair:** — Any comments or questions?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Is it possible to run the full daily broadcast on SCN? It's great that we're getting question period out there twice but what about the rest of the broadcast? Is it possible to run that without any additional cost?

**Mr. Ward:** — The only problem with running . . . you mean like after midnight and between . . . The only problem with it is their recording facility. They don't have the capability . . . I think that's correct, isn't it, Kerry? Yes, they're recording on a hard drive which we're also doing now for our replay. But they don't have enough space on there to record the whole day.

I've asked them about that before but they just don't have that equipment. And I think probably it's the state of the technology. The technology's available but it's quite expensive. I mean for a couple of hundred thousand dollars you can get the technology to run a television station 24 hours a day. But if you want to just do it for our purposes, I mean it's quite a lot of money to put out just for, you know, that short amount of time.

**Mr. Wall:** — I don't have a question really, Mr. Speaker, but just a comment to you and your staff.

I want to congratulate you. I know when we talked about this, I guess it was probably a year ago at the committee level, there was really a hope that we could expand service to many people who simply can't access it at this point. And with the proliferation of these small dishes, this is a good start.

And I can tell you, it's anecdotal, but I can't believe how many people . . . I'm a little worried, frankly, about how many people are watching this in the mornings now. I'm getting a lot of comments, so thank you for your work in that regard.

**Mr. Ward:** — Thank you.

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you. I know that we've asked the question before; I'm not sure if it's in this committee or in another. But we're still very concerned in Saskatoon that we're located up on channel 73. And I'm wondering what the answer to that is; why we can't be relocated at a lower level, and what our options are for negotiating that.

**Mr. Ward:** — Unfortunately that is entirely at the discretion of the cable company. They have the final decision in that respect. And in a way, I'm sort of grateful that we're on a clear channel up there as opposed to here where we're not. I mean, we have this impaired channel that is . . . in some parts of the city it's virtually impossible to make out what's being said or, you know, what's going on.

And I've asked the Access Communications in Regina to move us off the channel 2 because at least we'd have a nice, clear channel. We've had complaints. Recently I discussed it with Mr. Speaker. Some of the media are complaining about the quality of our picture. Well I suspect they may be recording off of Access Communications' signal. So, you know, if we had a clear channel, they wouldn't have that problem.

**Ms. Jones:** — So the closer you are to competing channels, the less likely you are to get a clear picture, is that it?

**Mr. Ward:** — No, it's just that they . . . in the case of Regina, they have . . . channel 2 is the off-air signal. If you didn't have cable TV your antenna would provide . . . on channel 2 would give you CKTV. So that's an off-air signal that interferes with the cable channel 2.

**Ms. Jones:** — I see.

**Mr. Ward:** — So, you know, it causes ghosting in the picture and very poor reception generally.

But as far as Saskatoon, they have full discretion in that matter. We have no power over that at all.

**Ms. Jones:** — It's unfortunate. I think if people could flip by it, they'd be more likely to stop on it. But that's a very remote location up in 73.

**Mr. Ward:** — Unless there's some way of publicizing it. And again, we've encouraged cable companies to publicize on our behalf because it is their channel. But we can't make them do that either.

**Mr. Thomson:** — I am interested, as we move more and more to expanded programming, if we have the ability to look at doing additional educational programming. I watch — it's probably more of a state of my social life — but I do watch some CPAC (Cable Public Affairs Channel) and notice that they have a fair number of different programs that try and explain what's going on in parliament, whether it's committee hearings which obviously we'll have now with the Health Care Committee. But additional programs — they have one called *Backbenchers* which is a fascinating opportunity to drive around with members through their ridings, and they replay historical pieces about the parliament.

Have we thought at all about doing this or working with possibly the university to have some of the School of Journalism students perhaps prepare these kind of pieces, or is it just a case that we don't have enough air time?

**Mr. Ward:** — Well we in fact do have educational material that we have paid for, the legislature has been a part of, in partnership . . . the *Lisa Visits the Legislature*. There was a sequel to that. I think altogether there's five — five of these? — and there are several vignettes as well. And most of these pieces are 45 minutes long. The vignettes, I'm not sure how long they are. But we have approval from all of the shareholders, the stakeholders in these productions to let us play them on our channel. All we need is the facilities to do it.

You know, we have recently purchased a, it's called a TVOne digital recorder, and this is how we've been playing back the daily sessions. But unfortunately this piece of equipment wasn't quite ready for the market and it shouldn't have been released. We've had problems with it, and occasionally you may have noticed that we haven't been able to play the daily proceedings because there's been problems with it.

But that's how we plan on replaying all of these educational programs. As far as having journalism students produce informational programs, I'd be happy to promote that, but I'm not sure how we would finance it.

**Mr. Thomson:** — I understand. I just thought I would ask that. Nothing puts me in a good mood like watching question period at 7:30 in the morning again. But I do think it has been a real improvement and you've done very, very good work with limited resources obviously. And I want to congratulate you on that.

**Mr. Ward:** — Thank you. Okay if I could just mention . . . I forgot to mention this is that we've actually had a call out to both caucuses now for biographies, and that's something we really would like to do is members' biographies according to a standard format. And I've looked at the Web site biographies and while they're good, they're not according to a format. So I think, you know, if we could just get the caucuses to agree on a standard format for biographies, then we could . . . it would be printed biographies, but we would just run these on our channel between sessions, along with a picture of the member so . . .

**The Chair:** — Thanks for getting that little bit of advertising in because I know you've been looking for those biographies for some time. Are there any further questions or comments?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — How is the Internet streaming working, Gary?

**Mr. Ward:** — I'm sorry.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — How is the Internet streaming working? Are you getting lots of feedback on that?

**Mr. Ward:** — Yes, we are. And if you'd like to get the detail on that, I could have Mr. Barnabe from systems branch address it.

**The Chair:** — We'd welcome Mr. Barnabe to the mike.

**Mr. Barnabe:** — Okay. Mr. Chairman, actually I've prepared a small report here that I can distribute, give you a quick status of how that's going. I'll just quickly go over the history of our streaming project. There's been some interest over the last few years and a request by members about what could we do to get our legislative channel essentially put on the Internet.

So over the winter we prepared a B-budget item that was approved for this year. The B-budget item was to put together a pilot prototype or what have you, to try to understand what the interest would be in providing the service.

We didn't expect our funding until the summer, as you all know, and since then we have received the funding and also an interest to try to bring the service to bear as soon as possible. So we worked quickly, and thanks to a submission from SaskTel to help us provide the service, we were able to put the service on-line as of May 14. So we've had it running since then.

When we put together our small project plan for this project, we split it up into two phases. One being let's try to . . . phase one being try to get a basic service up as quick as possible and try to collect some utilization information from that; see what the interest would be; see what the, essentially what the audience would be.

Phase two would be after phase one. Phase one was to last the

course of the current session.

Afterwards we would look at statistics we collected during that and find out what it would cost to put this on as a permanent service.

Some of the issues that may come out of that, is do we want to actually provide the service in-house or do we want to outsource it. One of the reasons we may have to outsource is just the size of the Internet connection we would require to handle umpteen users that would want to connect.

Now at the time we really didn't know what that would be. I've included some basic statistics on page 2 there. During the month of May we had an average of about 63 users connecting per day. In June to date that's up about 20 per cent to 73 users, so we're quite anxious to see how, if this increases. Once we have . . .

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — It will be a big update in July.

**Mr. Barnabe:** — Yes, we hope . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, another interesting statistic there is the average connect time which appears to be 25 minutes, which also appears to be the length of question period.

So in our discussions with the other provinces, for example Manitoba, they only put the Internet streaming, like the video, they only do video instrument streaming only during question period. Everything else outside of that is just an audio-only type situation, which is for the period.

So we will look at all those numbers at the end of session. We will try to anticipate what those costs will be and then we'll produce a report and recommendations on where we should go from there.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Since question period is perhaps the item of interest, are you archiving the daily question period so that it could be accessed at a later date?

**Mr. Barnabe:** — No, we're not archiving currently but we will look at that in our cost estimates. If it is that that is the most interesting part of an, what we call an on-demand service — I want to be able to call up question period you know at 3 o'clock in the morning, depending on your situation — then we'll definitely look at that.

**The Chair:** — Any further comments or questions? Well, thank you very much. This is a sort of an interesting and developing field and it's interesting to watch how it is developing, and certainly appreciate the work that everybody that was associated with that project in expanding it did to get it tested out this spring. I think it's appreciated much by all members.

So thank you very much, Gary, as well.

You're receiving then a proposal for adoption. That is the second report of the Standing Committee on Communications. I will just leave you a moment to read it and then I recommend the following motion:

That the draft second report of the Standing Committee on

Communications be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Is there a mover? Mr. D'Autremont. Those in favour of the motion? Okay, the motion's carried.

Is there any other business or any other items? If not, the committee will adjourn.

I thank you all for your attendance and for your very efficient work.

The committee adjourned at 09:39.