



Standing Committee on Communication

Hansard Verbatim Report

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION
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The committee met at 09:08.

The Chair: — Well good morning everybody. Welcome to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Communication. We have a quorum so we can proceed.

We have on our agenda, which you've received previously, three main items: first of all, the consideration of retention and disposal schedule; secondly, a review of the Legislative Library annual report; and third, legislative broadcasting issues.

I would invite, first of all, our Provincial Archivist, Trevor Powell, who is here with Lenora Toth, to give us a overview of the retention and disposal schedule and then their recommendations.

Mr. Powell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before we get into the actual schedules, I thought it might be useful to just go through the process that's followed in bringing these schedules forward from departments and agencies throughout the government.

First of all, the schedule begins, the process begins in the department or agency or Crown corporation and whereby the agency contacts us or we might be talking to the agency and our staff will work with people in the department — it might be a branch, it might be a division, it might be the entire agency itself — in developing a schedule. And of course, it's based on what has been done in the past but also because these records are peculiar to the departments and agencies involved, we always have to take that kind of thing into consideration.

It goes through a process in the department and is approved there. It's vetted by their lawyer, and then it goes to the Public Documents Committee, and it's presented to the Public Documents Committee. This is a group of individuals and you'll see on the first schedule 346, at the bottom of each schedule, the officials who are involved in it. There is someone from the Department of Justice. There is someone from the Department of Finance, and also another agency — in this case the Department of Learning, where we have an individual who has expertise in electronic records. There's also the Legislative Librarian and myself involved in the committee.

We review the schedules that have come forward with departmental officials. They appear before the committee. And we go through them and changes are made in some cases. In other cases they're approved because they have the required period of time, official retention period of time for the various records attached to each schedule.

Once the Public Documents Committee has approved the schedule, it then goes to the minister, our minister, Joanne Crofford, who tabled it in the House and it comes to this committee. This is part of the process. This process is set out in The Archives Act and this is sort of the . . . these are the recommendations from the Public Documents Committee and we're there now asking that you look through these schedules and give them due consideration. Once you have approved it, the report goes back to the Assembly, it's concurred in, and then the schedules have the authority and can be used by departments.

Now there's still a further process of accountability. Once that is done, then departments contact us if they wish to destroy records under the schedule. We look at what's involved, we look at various aspects, and then decide whether the records are to come to the archives or whether they are to be disposed of.

And that's basically the process. We're looking at possibly one to two per cent of all the records created by government will come to the archives. The rest, over a period of time, will be disposed of. It's just like any large corporation; this is the same process.

This process is used across Canada and in other countries as a means of accountability for information created by executive government and it's worked quite well. It's been in operation in this province since the '40s.

Maybe with that . . . I can maybe further add that the retention periods that are set down here are minimum retention periods. The department or agency if they feel they must keep something for a longer period of time, they're certainly . . . can do so. As I say these retention periods have been vetted by lawyers and others in departments, and as well as on the Public Documents Committee.

And so maybe with that little preamble, I'll turn it over to Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Are there any comments or questions from any of the members?

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Powell. Just looking at this very first one for example where, under the fleet management general, where it says SO, which is superseded or obsolete plus six years. Is that what it means?

Mr. Powell: — Yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — Has that time in this recommendation already expired? Or if we would agree with the recommendation of it being disposed of, it would be held for six years from this point.

Mr. Powell: — No, what this does is, is basically it's a retention period. So whenever. . . For example we'll use statistics no. 3 on the first primary, it would be kept . . . it would be — this is for statistics whenever they are created over the next number of years — they must be kept for six years. And then they can . . . after that period they've served that minimum retention period, they can be disposed of. And once again, the department contacts us and we decide whether or not we would have it go to the archives or it can be disposed of.

Mr. Gantefer: — So as I understand the recommendation no. 346, is that the documents included be disposed of as indicated. So does that mean they'd be disposed of after the six years?

Mr. Powell: — Yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — Or they have already completed the six years?

Mr. Powell: — Some might have completed the six years, some might be . . . there might be, for example, records in a particular agency that have been around since — I don't know, say the '70s, when it was first created. And they've never had a schedule so the records are still sitting there in a warehouse or in the agency itself and have yet to be disposed of.

But this will give them authority, not only for those records that have already been around for a long period of time and should have been disposed of a number of years ago, but it will also cover those records that are . . . the same type of record that's created in the future.

Mr. Gantefer: — So if we support this recommendation, then again just looking at this primary on statistics, all documents that fall into that category are to be kept for six years and after that, they can be disposed of?

Mr. Powell: — That's right.

Mr. Gantefer: — We don't have to go through this exercise every time?

Mr. Powell: — No, no.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you.

Mr. Powell: — Good question. As I say, it's a process of accountability for the information created, and it sets down a guideline for agencies to follow in dealing with this particular type of record.

Mr. Gantefer: — Now when in using, say primary 1,000, where you have like, projects, where it says superseded or obsolete plus six years. How is the determination made about superseded or obsolete?

Mr. Powell: — That's up to the agency itself but usually if it's . . . it would . . . once the project is completed, and it's no longer of any value, then they would keep it, ensure that it's kept for this retention period.

Mr. Gantefer: — So they start the clock ticking then for the six years when they determine that it's superseded or obsolete?

Mr. Powell: — It's just like policies. A policy might be in force for 10 years and they might suddenly change the policy. And once again, that same type of process comes into place.

Mr. Gantefer: — Okay.

The Chair: — Members, the way we will handle this is we will go through each one of these. And we require . . . a motion is required for each of these schedules, starting with 346. And I'll provide for time for each question or for each schedule if you wish. But the motion before us at this . . . would be:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 346 of sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Do we have a mover? Mr. Gantefer. Those in favour? Any opposed? Motion is carried.

We'll proceed to no. 347. Any comments or questions? Mr. Prebble.

Mr. Prebble: — . . . and that is with respect to whether on the first page, in terms of records that are related to tracking biological diversity, climate change, environmental protection, in disposing of these are we diminishing our ability to look over time in this province about what is happening in these areas? This is an area where tracking is extremely important.

Mr. Powell: — We talked to the department about that, and in fact this particular department, a lot of its records are kept longer than many other departments because they were concerned about that very issue.

And they feel that they have adequate protection here with respect to maintaining the record and ensuring that there is a view of the . . . a long period of time. But that's interesting because that was one of the discussions held with officials from this department.

Mr. Prebble: — Now in this regard then, what's happening? Is it only some of the file that's being discarded? Or like how does this work? Does the department and the Archives Board work together to kind of pick out what needs to be retained?

Mr. Powell: — Yes. Usually we'll . . . if it's something, well for example, we're probably looking . . . are you looking at 15000 - 50, is that the . . .

Mr. Prebble: — Yes, I'm looking at . . .

Mr. Powell: — Yes, ecosystem management project files, yes. Something like that, it immediately rings a bell with us that it's something. And I think the department . . . would be something that they would like to see go to the archives as well. And it would be certainly one that we would be reviewing for coming to the archives just by its very nature.

Mr. Prebble: — Right. I have some reservations about signing off on this one, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Powell: — You think the retention period is too short?

Mr. Prebble: — I think the retention period is too short. I don't think we really know what we're getting into yet with respect to issues like climate change. We don't even know what records we might for sure want to keep. Therefore I'm . . . I mean I'm sure that a lot of these records we don't need, if you know what I'm saying, but I don't . . . I'm not sure that . . .

Mr. Powell: — Yes. Well for example, one above it — general — something like that. Yes.

Mr. Prebble: — So I'm not worried at all about the policy and procedure or the general. It's the third one that I'm concerned about.

Mr. Powell: — Of course this being superseded or obsolete, that could be a long period of time. That could be 20 years, it could be 50 years, and then 6 years thereafter. So what this does is it does allow for the longer period of time.

But if you have a suggestion as to . . .

Mr. Prebble: — Well I'd like the committee to send a message to the department on this. This is the only reason I'm holding it up, not because I think that everything in here needs to be kept.

But I think that the department and the Archives Board need to know that the committee is concerned that there be great care taken with respect to maintaining information on hand that will allow us to look at what's happening on this file over an extended period of time. Therefore a lot of care should be taken with respect to what's disposed of.

Mr. Powell: — So are you basically agreeing with the retention period but asking that a letter go to the department indicating the concern of the committee. Would that be the . . .

Mr. Prebble: — I think that would be adequate.

The Chair: — Mr. Prebble, what we could do is indicate in the report that a recommendation that this particular schedule be either changed or brought to higher profile or attention or whatever . . . (inaudible) . . . satisfied.

Mr. Prebble: — Yes. Well I'd like to see either a longer retention period or a special effort made between the Archives Board and the department to take a lot of care about what records we may want to have around 20, 30 years from now.

The landscape of the province and the climate of the province are changing very quickly and we may not even be clear on what we wished we would have kept.

The Chair: — Have we got agreement on that, committee members?

Ms. Jones: — Well it seems to me that the policy and procedure in the general aren't at issue, but perhaps we could change 15000 - 50 to designation P, for permanent.

The Chair: — Do you have any comment on that, Mr. Powell? What would be the effect of that, just for clarification?

Mr. Powell: — It means you keep it forever. It means you keep it forever — that there can be no . . . I mean if there are things in those particular files that can be gotten rid of or are not really important, it's still . . . you keep it. That's what permanent means — you keep it forever. It's like board minutes. You keep it forever.

Ms. Jones: — Is there another, more appropriate length of time?

Mr. Prebble: — Well maybe we could just change it to 20 years, Mr. Chair, or something like that. And that'll give us a . . . We don't want to bog . . . Go ahead, Dan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How many files are we talking about and how much space would need to be allocated for the additional retention?

Mr. Powell: — I'm sorry, Mr. D'Autremont, I don't know the answer to that question. We can certainly get in touch with the

department and ask them what we're looking at in this kind of record.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Maybe we need to know that kind of information before we make this determination. I mean if we're looking at a mountain of documents that need to be stored, maybe we need to consider this a little more deeply.

Mr. Addley: — Perhaps a compromise to this so that we can do our work better is to approve the policy procedure general and then leave the ecosystem till next year, as is, so that a further report could be developed as to the quantity and a little bit more fleshed out proposal on that one line.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. But as I understand it, I think that, and in our earlier questions, that superseded or obsolete has to be declared before any timeline cuts in. And I would think that the department would be sensitive to material that they need for these kinds of considerations, that they're not going to declare it superseded or obsolete if it's appropriate to keep it for 20 years.

So I think we've got to have some confidence in the department's own internal sensitivity about what material needs to be kept before it's declared in the first instance, superseded or obsolete. So that it doesn't say when you get the document, six years later it's gone. It's after they declare they has no more useful purpose to it then they still have to keep it for another six years, as I understand, as a safety valve.

And if it gives more comfort, I noticed on 15030 in this same section, that there are two sections there that have, superseded or obsolete plus 10 years. Perhaps that would be an additional measure of comfort that virtually forces the department, after they in their own good judgment declare it to be obsolete, forces them to keep it for another decade. And I would certainly consider that. But to make it either permanent or the 20 years after they've declared it obsolete already, I think perhaps is excessive.

Mr. Powell: — That's a good compromise. I'm sure the department could live with that. At the same time I think it might be useful if a letter or something did go from the committee to just indicate the sensitivity of these particular kinds of records and the importance of keeping them.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, I think that Mr. Gantefoer's suggestion is a good one and I would move:

That we amend the six years to ten in the case of ecosystem management project files and that a letter go to the department from the committee asking that they take great care to ensure that records are kept that will allow a historical analysis of changes with respect to biological diversity and climate change.

The Chair: — Are we agreed upon that? On that amendment? Then the question to consider is that the retention and disposal schedule no. 347 of sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature, as amended, be adopted.

We have a comment from . . . Just want to pause for a moment before I put the question to make sure that the committee is not

exceeding its powers.

Repeat the motion. Can I have a mover for this motion:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 347, as amended, of sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Ms. Jones: — Yes, I'll move . . .

The Chair: — Ms. Jones. All in favour? The motion is carried.

Proceed to 348. If there aren't any comments, the motion would be:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 348 of sessional paper 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Do I have a mover? Mr. D'Autremont. Is the committee in favour of the motion? The motion is carried.

Go to 349. Similar motion with respect to schedule no. 349 of sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Do I have a mover? Ms. Jones?

Ms. Jones: — Oh sure. I was trying to get . . .

The Chair: — Moved by Ms. Jones. Is the committee in favour? The motion is carried.

The next one is fish and wildlife branch no. 350. The motion would be:

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 350 of the sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Addley. Is the committee in favour? Is the committee agreed? Agreed. The motion is carried.

Final one is 351 with respect to Saskatchewan Learning, post-secondary division. Do you have a question on it?

Mr. Prebble: — I do have a question and it relates to contaminants and contaminated sites.

The Chair: — Revert to the material on 350.

Mr. Prebble: — I notice we've got 25 years on contaminated sites so obviously some thought's been given to this but . . .

Mr. Powell: — . . . superseded or obsolete — that's the file itself so . . .

Mr. Prebble: — I don't have confidence in departments to ensure that things that might be embarrassing won't be considered superseded or obsolete, and this is an area where there tends to be embarrassment.

Mr. Powell: — Okay.

Mr. Prebble: — You know, just to use an example, we're now dealing with problems from the 1960s at the old Federated Co-op site in Saskatoon where we're looking at contamination and where there is going to be all kinds of records with respect to pumping contaminants deep underground. I don't want those records to be destroyed. And I'm sure there would be some people at some point in government who would love to get rid of them.

So I don't want to see . . . I don't want to see matters related to contaminated sites discarded quickly. And I don't have confidence in the department, at all times, not to do this. In fact there may even be instructions given to destroy certain records. And I don't think we can be certain about this because we assume that there's no politics associated with the maintenance of these records — that's not the case.

Mr. Powell: — So what are you recommending?

Mr. Prebble: — Well I think matters related to contaminants and contaminated sites should be maintained for a least 100 years. Because we assume that this information won't be needed by future generations that may decide they want to clean this stuff up or may not know what's there. So I think this is again something that the Archives Board and SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) should work together on with great care because one can't assume that this information won't be useful to a future set of legislators.

Mr. Powell: — Or departments.

Mr. Prebble: — Or departments, yes. No I think . . . And as I say, I do generally have a good deal of confidence in the ability of staff to make decisions about what records to maintain and what not to, but I think that one can't be certain that there won't be direction given to avoid embarrassment and it may be given at a political level, it may have nothing to do with staff at all.

So I think there needs to be very careful policy around this. Anyway that's my comment, Mr. Chair, and I would move, that we:

That these be moved into the 100-year category on contaminated sites.

The Chair: — Well members what we've done, for better or for worse, that the motion on the 350 has been carried. I opened it up for a matter of discussion. I understand, Mr. Prebble, that what you want to do is have more than just make comment on it, so in order to reconsider the motion I think I would need the unanimous consent of the committee. Are you requesting that then?

Mr. Prebble: — I'll request that, Mr. Chair, with apologies to the committee because I was . . . I wasn't keeping careful enough track of the number we were dealing with here.

The Chair: — Do we have unanimous consent of the committee to revert back? I see heads nodding all around. So, Mr. Prebble, you've received your consent. We go back to reconsider schedule no. 350. And we await your specific amendment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — We notice that there is one, 12380 - 03 has a 50-year retention rate, as an example.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chairman, I'll move that on page . . . Well maybe I'll go by number:

That 10040 - 55 . . .

Dan, you're recommending 50 years?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well we have an example already here of 50, so . . .

Mr. Prebble: —

. . . be changed from 25 to 50 years.

The Chair: — From 25 to 50.

The motion . . . Are there any others that you want considered at the same . . . in the same motion, Mr. Prebble? Or shall we just vote on this one?

Mr. Prebble: — I'll maybe let other colleagues make other comments. But I'll just leave mine to this one. It's the contaminated sites that I think, think we're concern about.

The Chair: — Well we can always take another motion. So let us . . . let's vote this one off — 10040 - 55 to be changed to . . . from a plus-25 years to a plus-50 years. Those in favour? That's agreed. The motion's carried.

Any others?

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chair, I'd also like to see a change in the species-at-risk file, 11145 - 04, maybe to 25 years.

The Chair: — Could you give us that number again, please?

Mr. Prebble: — 11145 - 04.

The Chair: — Species at risk changed to?

Mr. Prebble: — I'll move that be changed to 25 years.

The Chair: — Twenty-five years. Another amendment then, schedule no. 11145 - 04, species at risk, be changed from an additional 10 years to an additional 25 years after obsolescence.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt that amendment?

Agreed. Motion is carried.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Sorry, I didn't . . . If you look at, there's the sections 11135, 45, 50 are all three categories which have subsections of species at risk. Is it Mr. Prebble's intention to change all three of them or are you singling out plants?

Mr. Prebble: — Actually, thanks for doing that, Rod. I had in . . . in flipping through these fairly quickly, I should have made it more general. I'd like to make it more general and not just do it for plants.

Ms. Jones: — So we've got animals, plants and herptiles.

Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Chair, maybe I'll amend that motion to cover all species at risk in this. Do you want all the numbers in the motion?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Two more motions that cover . . .

Mr. Prebble: — Okay. Two more motions that cover all of it. Thank you.

The Chair: — I think it would simplify it to do that. So do you want to go back to 11125 which is fish and invertebrates, species at risk, to 25 years? Include also then birds, 11130 - 04 up to 25 years. That's species at risk for birds.

And then we have mammals — 11135 - 04, species at risk — mammals, from 10 years to 25 years. And we've already done the plants.

Then we would also want in the motion 11150 - 04, species at risk, herptiles . . .

Ms. Toth: — . . . general snakes, crocodiles, anything in that line is a herptile.

The Chair: — Crawly, crawly things.

Ms. Toth: — Yes, crawling things.

The Chair: — So moved by Mr. Prebble that we move for all of those specified from 10 year additional to 25 years. Is the committee agreed? Agreed.

Are we ready then to proceed once again with the main motion moved by Mr. Addley?

That the retention and disposal schedule no. 350, as amended, of sessional paper 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Motion's carried.

Final one. Sask Learning, post-secondary division. I'll allow members a few moments just to thumb through the schedules — 351.

Mr. Addley: — What is the rationale for keeping . . . (inaudible) . . . 75 years . . . pardon me, 23100 - 70, and then 23100 - 55.

The Chair: — I take that to be a general question. Has anybody got a response to that? Yes.

Ms. Toth: — . . . the department felt that they needed to be retained for longer than the average lifespan during which time the client may potentially reapply. And that was their rationale.

Any time the client might potentially reapply; they feel they need the record. So they want to ensure that they had records longer than the average lifespan.

Mr. Gantefer: — . . . so apply for a student loan.

Ms. Toth: — That's . . . they're going to check the record and see if she paid up last time.

Ms. Jones: — Just in case they defaulted 75 years ago?

Ms. Toth: — Yes. It was raised with the department and they were very concerned that they keep these records for longer than the average lifespan.

The Chair: — Could I have a mover for the motion:

That retention and disposal schedule no. 351 of sessional paper no. 124 of the third session of the twenty-fourth legislature be adopted.

Ms. Jones. Is it agreed? Motion is carried.

Well we've completed the first item on the agenda and thank you very much, Mr. Powell and Ms. Toth, for your assistance in this manner and for the diligent work that you've put in over the year to prepare these schedules and to work on the committee. And pass on our thank you to the entire committee for the work that they've done because it does require some concentration and some organization to do all this and it's certainly appreciated.

Mr. Powell: — I'll pass that on to the staff and others on the committee. And I'd just like to thank the committee for the questions and the comments that you had for us, and obviously there are a number of issues here that you are interested in and came up with some ways of resolving the situation. So thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you. And now I want to welcome to the table librarian Marian Powell and assistant Pat Kolesar. Members, you have before you also a report which has been circulated, Saskatchewan Legislative Library for the period ending March 31, 2001. And I would ask Ms. Powell for any comments she may have to make.

Ms. Powell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I won't take a lot of your time. I know you have a short deadline for your meeting this morning and more issues to consider, but I appreciate the opportunity to draw the year's achievements and issues to the attention of the committee.

We've summarized the highlights of the report year on the letter of transmittal, if you want to refer to that just inside the front cover of the report. I will be referring to some of the data in the annual report.

One of the most important indicators of our service is that it continues to see increased demand. And in this particular report year, we've seen increased demand for services provided to MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) — yourselves — and to your staff, your constituency office staff, as well as to legislative staff and committees.

This is very important to us. It is our primary responsibility and all of our work goes into serving these needs.

Of particular significance in this growth has been the 37 per cent increase to the Clerk's office area and service to committees, and this is principally the impact of the special committees that were meeting during the course of this particular year. We found a great increase in demand during that time.

Equally, our current awareness services which are the most popular of our services amongst the members . . . We have 90 per cent of the members subscribe to something; many to all of our on-line and paper services, and those continue to grow each year. And in the period under review, we had increases in the newspaper clipping service of 36 per cent in registration, 25 per cent for on-line information, and a huge rise in the new book alert of 86 per cent. So there was a lot of increased interest. It, to us, indicates that we must be finding the right mix of information for the individual members.

These are the services that are profiled. The library staff meet with the individual member and determine his or her particular interests, so that only that material goes to them and not a lot of unnecessary information and it's always, since it's inception, been very popular and highly subscribed.

In terms of other events which may or may not have been as visible to the House and to the members, we have seen in the past fiscal year two important collections donated to the Legislative Library. The first one — the Dr. Morris Shumiatcher law collection. Dr. Shumiatcher has had a long involvement in Saskatchewan and a very important Western legal career and his private law collection was donated to the library.

It's an amazing personal legal collection and goes a long way to fill important gaps in our own law collection, a great many legal serials. It amounts to approximately 790 linear feet of books and will be incorporated into the collection over the next few years because it will take quite a lot of staff time. We were very grateful to receive that.

At the same time last year, the Provincial Library was dispersing a great deal of their book collection acquired over many, many years and offering Saskatchewan libraries an opportunity to take those over. And we identified approximately 5,600 items that were unique that we did not have in our collection but would be useful for members and for the House. And it included things like 2,000 reels of microfilm, about 500 books — many local histories — and so we were very grateful to be able to take that opportunity.

Now the end result of that is of course we're now going to have a space problem, and so we're directing our future attentions to a review and weeding of the existing collection. Those two collections amount for the normal growth in our library of about 10 years. So that really does move up the bar in terms of when we have to be considering some space requirements. But they are wonderful enhancements to the collection.

In terms of the collection itself, during this year we had some important action on the issue of physical security of collections. It was during this period that the sprinkler systems were installed here in the Legislative Building. And as I've been quoted as saying, I'd really rather see it burn because water

recovery is awful but they didn't take me seriously.

However when we were doing the upgrades we were able to develop certain areas with special protection. So where the bulk of the collection is housed in this building — up in the reference room on the second floor and in our new stack area down here in the basement — they have a special kind of protection. They've installed double pre-active sprinkler systems so that they are dry pipe — there's no water sitting overhead.

If an alarm goes off it has to be two, so it's a double pre-active. You have to have two alarms before the water will even move into the pipe and it gives an opportunity to secure the collection from accidental sprinkling which we would like to discourage.

In terms of future concerns, I've mentioned the space that's going to come up.

In our annual report for this period we also drew attention to the fact that as our Act requires that we receive copies on deposit of all Saskatchewan government publications, we are encountering a difficulty with electronic publications and we're working at various avenues trying to address the present and future availability of electronic-borne publications.

There are a variety of efforts within the Saskatchewan government and we're working with them on that. But as the only depository library for Saskatchewan publications, it is a very great concern for, again, future that these publications do not appear one day on the Web and disappear for good the next. And that's a future issue for us as well.

And I think that pretty much covers the major aspects of the year, and I'd welcome any comments or questions.

The Chair: — This is the members' opportunity to ask questions or make any comments on operations of the library.

Mr. Addley: — I have three points and they're not related so I'll just throw them out and then you can deal with them as you wish.

The first is just to say thanks and I'm sure all members would say the work that is provided is fantastic. And I know I personally have appreciated it and I'm sure all other members would as well. That's the first point.

The second point is, I do appreciate the package that I do receive but I always feel slightly guilty that there's so many trees that have given their life so that I can be informed. And I'm wondering if there's any plans to . . . or capabilities to provide that in an electronic form?

Because I find I skim most of it and then there's usually about 10 per cent that I, you know, actually need and the rest goes into the recycling. And if it is was by electronic I could just, you know, delete it and print off the parts that I want. That's the second point.

And the third point is, the information that's provided to us around the CPA, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, is very good material. I just have one complaint — and that it

usually comes too late. We're packed up, ready to go, and then I'm on my way to the event; and then two weeks after the event I'm reading the material thinking, gee if I'd of had this two weeks before, it would have been quite helpful.

So those are my three points. So if you could answer the second and third, I'd appreciate that.

Ms. Powell: — Absolutely. Well I thank you very much for your kind comments. I know that the staff will greatly appreciate them.

In terms of providing electronic news clipping service — yes indeed, we are in range of being able to do that now. Approximately 17 MLAs are now set up on a . . . it is still a print service but it is based on an electronic system. And our next plan is to move directly into the electronic.

We are actually in a position to offer it now, and we're looking for some pilot — we'll write you down — we're looking for members who are interested in a pilot project. Because it isn't as easy as it sounds, but now we're glad to say it is possible.

Presently what is happening is we have a mixed situation here where we're still doing a manual newspaper clipping service, but we're gradually moving, over the course of this year, all the members to running their profiles electronically and producing paper if they want it. We can forward it electronically on e-mail if they want that, but it's a bit problematic and we're working out the bugs on that. And we do have the potential to offer the member his own account that he could electronically go in and look at it every day.

So we're looking for a pilot on that one because we don't know the issues yet. We haven't tried it out with any members but we will definitely note your interest and put you on the list.

Your third question — CPA — it's a very good comment. We're very much aware of the delay in getting the material to you. And there's a variety of factors there. Some of them are somewhat less in our control. We frequently get very short notice of the agendas. Many, many of the conferences tend to send out their agendas with their subject matter quite late.

For example, we just this past week received notice for three conferences that take place — two in July and one in August. And given the fact that we have to put together these packages for, in some cases, a large number of delegates with their special interests, we do try and contact you to find if you're more interested in some topics than others. It does mean that we're really running to make your departure dates. And we certainly do what we can to find out the topics as soon as we can. But that is a problem, and it's a standard problem that we do find.

Mr. Addley: — Well just a suggestion, because I'm actually one of the people going to the Maritimes in July. And I know I had the tentative agenda months ago. And what will happen is in the next few weeks I'll get the final agenda. And you know the tentative agenda was 80 per cent accurate and then there's just about you know 10 to 20 per cent difference. But even if we worked off the tentative agenda would be . . . I think, would be more useful to have 80 per cent early enough than 100 per

cent too late.

Ms. Powell: — Yes, absolutely I agree. And we'll make an effort to ensure that we receive the tentative agenda from the Clerk's office. I expect they're probably waiting for the final one to give it to us. And we'll follow up on that; we appreciate that.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, the material is excellent.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'm disappointed to learn that Mr. Addley didn't study his CPA stuff while sitting in Sault Ste. Marie or on the drive back.

The library staff does an excellent job in preparing the information, both on a daily basis and for the CPA events. And I would just like to thank them for that.

Ms. Powell: — Thank you very much on behalf of the staff.

The Chair: — Well in that case, did you have a comment, Mr. Prebble?

Mr. Prebble: — . . . I'd just add that I think it's a first-class service and one of the great privileges of being elected — is the services we get from the library, thank you.

The Chair: — It's a good thing to have a library system as we do have and we appreciate the work being put into it on a regular basis. And as you've heard from the committee, we all want to be able to promote the continued concept of libraries.

And I notice that even our Lieutenant Governor in the neighbouring province of Alberta has made it her mission to promote libraries to everybody. So thank you very much for bringing the report to us.

Now I'd like us to proceed to a third item, legislative broadcasting issues. And I'd ask members . . . the representatives from our broadcast services to be joined with the people from SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network) so we can deal with this issue all . . . we've got about a half an hour and it probably will take us that long. But if we have everybody at the table at once, might just be able to deal with it in a more comprehensive manner.

Welcome first of all to Gary Ward, and Gary has got with him today his backup people Ihor Sywanyk and Kerry Bond. And welcome also to the table, David Debono, who is the president and CEO (chief executive officer) of SCN and David Stanchuk, who is manager of technology.

Gary, we'll let you go to it.

Mr. Ward: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, members. I think you all have a copy of our report to the committee. It's presented in two parts; the first part just being a summary of the state of the branch regarding issues with respect to equipment, and our initiatives with our transition from analog to digital.

And if you have any questions on that I'll . . . I'd like to answer those now so we can get on with the second part which deals

with the reason that SCN is with us today. And that's to discuss the impending increase in the cost of distribution.

The Chair: — So any questions about the past so we can get into the future here? Being none, I think you can proceed, Mr. Ward.

Mr. Ward: — Okay. All right. On part two, the background here. I think it's important to begin with noting that our distribution costs — at least I have a list from 1984 here — averages about \$198,000 per year.

This past year we were fortunate that we made a deal with SCN to distribute our signal for us for \$160,000. That gave us a 24-hour channel, three months of which . . . three to four months of which we're able to use with the coverage of the legislative proceedings.

The rest of it, unfortunately, we have no way of filling up because we don't have any other programming other than to play some educational videos of the legislative process, etc., and biographies of members which we've introduced this session. But other than that, for the other nine months of the year, or eight months of the year, we've got colour bars running on our channel. So unless there's committees meeting intermittently, you know, throughout the rest of the year, then we really have nothing else to cover.

This year, which Mr. Debono will explain, there's an increase in the costs of distribution. The options listed on here . . . but I'm . . . I think maybe if I could turn it over to David to explain this increase in cost first, so any questions would be more relevant after that.

Mr. Debono: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for having us here today. Our current technology solution for SCN utilizes a satellite transponder which is essentially part of a satellite that's operated by Telesat Canada. On that satellite we currently slice it . . . slice up the capacity for different uses.

The main signals that go on that satellite right now are SCN's broadcast network, which is available throughout the province to home viewers. We also have four channels for distance learning which — on our E-Learning Network — which link provinces' high schools and universities and colleges to roughly 200 sites across the province. And we use . . . We now, as of last summer, use part of the space for CommunityNet to bring high-speed Internet access to northern and rural parts of the province. And we've been able, because we still had some capacity left over, to put a 24/7/365 essentially around the clock, full-time channel for the legislature up, filling out the excess capacity. But some changes are happening in costs and in terms of contracts terminating that are going to affect that ability.

Our contract with Telesat Canada terminates at the end of this year, December 31. And the satellite that we are on will be pulled out of commission next year. It was originally scheduled to be out of service in the first quarter and it looks like it might be available to us till next summer. But nonetheless, our contract expires at the end of the year.

The current cost estimates for moving over to the new satellite

provided by Telesat would be about a 50 per cent increase in cost to SCN and that would roughly equate from about a million and a half dollars a year to around 2.2 or \$2.3 million a year in costs. And this may not be feasible given the fact that SCN's operating grant from the province has been decreasing over the years and is projected by Treasury Board that will have significant decreases in upcoming years.

So going forward, it looks like the best opportunity for the province as a whole to secure satellite time for SCN and for its original focus on the education and broadcast network area will be to not control our own transponder because the costs are going to be substantial to do that in the long term.

We have been working with a number of outside suppliers and at this time it appears that the best solution for SCN going forward may be to work with one of the DTH satellite providers —and DTH is the direct-to-home satellite providers and you'll know them as Star Choice or ExpressVu — and to piggyback on their system as opposed to running it ourselves.

And by doing that, we will be able to hopefully maintain our current cost of operation as opposed to increasing it by 50 per cent. But what it will mean is we will not have a lot of the excess capacity to have on standby basis for alternative uses for the province. And we will have the ability to increase our satellite time but on a pay-as-you-go basis.

So the first approach is to maintain what we've currently been providing to the province as best we can, given limited budgets. That would mean a couple of different scenarios for the legislature network.

To put into some sort of idea of what the market rate would be for what the legislature is currently receiving from SCN, we're charging roughly, I think, \$160,000 a year plus a maintenance fee and the market rate would be closer to \$500,000 a year if they went out on their own and wanted to have a full-time channel from one of the commercial providers.

In reality, the situation is that we're not broadcasting on the legislature network around the clock, 12 months of the year. So one situation that could decrease that cost would be to only provide service for the legislature when it is actually in session. And we've, so far, we've been able to negotiate a situation where with \$100,000 starting base plus \$30,000 per month maximum for the months that the legislature is in session, and if the average is four months, four to five months . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . three to four, you know, we could be somewhere in the \$220 to \$250,000 range versus the current 170 range.

That would accommodate the current proceedings that are offered on the network but would not allow the channel to be available around the clock. But would be available at a rate of \$500, as low as \$500 an hour for additional events.

The disadvantage beyond those months that we confirm we needed for sure is that if you wanted to suddenly turn on the satellite and have it available on a moment's notice, it may not be possible. There would be, hopefully, we would be able to accommodate that through the supplier but it would more likely be possible if there was a least a month or more notice on those

types of events.

So the question is: is the flexibility could be reduced for the legislature channel but we . . . SCN cannot, given its limited budgets and resources, offer excess capacity because it will not be controlling the transponder, or will likely not be controlling its transponder in the future.

The Chair: — Is there anything else you want to add to that at this time, Gary, or should we open up to questions?

Mr. Ward: — I don't whether . . . David, did you mention that the time on the satellite would max out \$30,000 per month, which amounts to about 60 hours at \$500 an hour? So it's not really that bad a cost. For instance, if you decided, with the new committee initiative that's being talked about, if, you know, we decided that we had to meet intersessionally for committees, we could book a month at a reasonable cost. So I think that's significant too.

Mr. Debono: — And if that was during one of the months you were actually in session, it would already be part of that maximum \$30,000 figure. So as long as it's during those months, you can sort of have as much as you want during that period. If you wanted to add another month, there's two ways of going — either \$500 an hour or a \$30,000 cap. And it's actually . . . the rate that we've been able to negotiate so far is I think better than anything that you've been able to find on your own.

Mr. Addley: — . . . first just to thank you for the work that's being done, and for the good service that's provided, and the good deal obviously from the briefing note.

And I don't know if this is going to work, but from what I understand the legislature wants to just purchase what it needs. But given . . . we could have a fall session in very short notice, the channel may not be available to us because you know we weren't planning on having a legislative session, or fall session, until you know a couple of weeks before. And if you need a month lead time likely that won't be available.

Is it possible for the legislature to basically control it, you know 24/7/365, but then sell it back to SCN for its uses on an hourly basis or is that . . . sort of sublease or sub-sell?

Mr. Debono: — It actually wouldn't be SCN. I mean we would be . . . it would be flowing through us but the control is . . . actually what would be happening is, is that the Star Choices or ExpressVus of the world use those, the capacity for everything from pay-for-view movies to business television conferences or whatever. So it wouldn't actually be us saying you can't do it; it's another third party.

Realistically if you know you're going to be in session for the month or once you sit, that's not a problem. It's more the, we want next . . . we want Tuesday just for three hours is the problem. But if you're saying, we're in session, we've now said there's going to be a fall session, that's not a problem because they'll be freeing up you know for the month, right.

But it would be more of a problem if you said you know on August 21 that you know we want to have . . . on August 22 we want to be on air. Right. Those sort of situations, they need

more lead time. And even then, probably you know 8 out of 10 times they could accommodate, but if it's a period of where you're going in session for the fall when you weren't expecting to, as long as there was you know some notice, I don't think that would be a problem. Or it might . . . you may lose you know . . . you may not be able to get that first day, but we'd be fine after that or something.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much. I'm a little confused on . . . as I understand what we have now, the service goes out on cable network when the legislature is sitting, is that correct?

Mr. Ward: — Yes. On certain cable locations, yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — But by and large with fairly extensive provincial coverage.

Mr. Ward: — One hundred and twelve locations, I believe, yes.

Mr. Gantefer: — So what's proposed here as I understand it will be the direct to home on a Star Choice satellite. Would that mean that you'd need the Star Choice system in order to receive it?

Mr. Debono: — No, I'm sorry, I should have clarified. What we use the satellite for is essentially to get it to the cable companies' head ends which essentially would be at those actual locations — 112 sites currently across the province. There's local cable operators. They may be big operators or smaller mom and pop operators but essentially they would have a satellite receive box.

So this would not actually be available on the direct-to-home viewers. They would be scrambled and only available to the cable companies. But we don't have direct hard-wired lines to the 112 sites so the most cost-effective way to get the signal to the cable companies' head ends where they send it to the viewers is by satellite. So this is not for distribution on the direct-to-home systems for home viewers.

Mr. Gantefer: — Would that be a possibility though, if it's on the Star Choice satellite? And what would that cost to add it as an option for those same four months or five months, if you're using the Star Choice satellite on the Star Choice direct home system?

Mr. Debono: — We have had conversations with both Star Choice and ExpressVu, and both are open to the possibility but they are reluctant to make a firm contractual commitment to doing that. But it's certainly possible that it might be available, but they're not willing to guarantee that at this time. We would hopefully pursue that possibility that it could be now be available to more viewers than it currently is because it's already on the satellite. It simply would mean opening it up. The problem is, is that it may not be a signal that's of interest.

When a DTH signal provider provides signals, they're providing to the whole country and they're generally only interested in providing those signals that are of interest to the whole country, that are unscrambled or available. So they may have to restrict those geographically, which may be possible but they're not committing to it. But it's certainly been part of our

discussions and we would certainly raise that as something that we would like to do.

If we're on the bird already it would be great if everyone with a DTH dish . . . We'd either be either, or. It wouldn't be both companies because they're competitors, but at least you would have the potential to reach more audience.

Mr. Gantefer: — Well I believe on Star Choice there's like the BC legislature and the Ontario legislature, maybe now, and there is certainly CPAC (Cable Public Affairs Channel). Is there any possibilities of making arrangements with CPAC or some of those things to access the systems? And it just strikes me as that . . . as I go around the country I see more and more of these small satellite dishes in . . . not just in rural locations because that's almost exclusively where it is in the rural, but even in urban cities you just see an awful lot of these satellite dishes these days.

So if there is a possibility of increasing the audience, that might be an important consideration.

Mr. Debono: — Well again we would certainly pursue that with either of those possible suppliers. And I think you're quite correct in saying that there's certainly people out there that want to see it and we'll try to make that available.

Mr. Gantefer: — On the Internet high-speed streaming, I guess it doesn't matter if it's high-speed or if it's dial-up, it's available on the Internet, the quality of the signal is much better on high-speed than it would be on the dial-up network by the nature of video streaming.

Is there any feedback as to how many people are accessing the system through the Internet or do you get any kind of statistic from that?

Mr. Debono: — Actually Guy Barnabe from information services is here and that's under his department, the statistics regarding the . . .

The Chair: — . . . perhaps you could help us understand this entire system here. Did you get the question or do you want it repeated?

Mr. Barnabe: — Yes, we can obtain statistics from the company that's distributing the signal for us. And what we're looking at currently is we've had on average a maximum concurrent use of about 46 people on a daily basis.

Now the problem with that is it's a very hard, pretty hard to explain some of the statistics, because some people may only come on for 5 or 10 minutes. Chances are they come on during question period. And so they also have unique . . . how many unique visitors visit the site. And then they also include how many times the site is accessed. And so it's really hard to glean from the numbers how many people usually stay on-line for the entire session.

The other problem we've noticed with statistics is a lot of the unique visitors are listed as a gateway such as CommunityNet. And we can't really see what happens behind CommunityNet, how many people are actually coming through that single

gateway to access the service. So we're cautious of that when we talk about statistics.

But probably the statistic that the distribution company's most interested in is how many people or how many what we call total bytes — which is actually the unit of measurement of information that goes out their servers — that is the one single statistic they use to bill us on. And we budget approximately 25 gigabytes a month for the service, and the invoicing has been around that number. And so that's probably our most important statistic.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That was somewhat along the line that I was interested in. But on the SCN broadcast, are . . . is not the legislature already broadcast to Star Choice and/or perhaps Bell ExpressVu later on at night?

Mr. Debono: — Currently, SCN's broadcast network replays the question period late in the evening on primary SCN network. So this is not the same as the dedicated legislative network — sort of, you know, best of or whatever. And that service is still something that SCN will, you know, continue to provide to its best ability and to work within its schedule. And that is available to all of SCN's viewers, which would be Star Choice, ExpressVu, and all cable companies.

So that actually probably the widest audience potential is in that recap mode. So you would not be losing that in any way.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And that is rebroadcast also early in the morning prior to 8 o'clock, is it not?

Mr. Debono: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I was interested in your comments about the CommunityNet downloads utilizing SCN Internet connections to northern Saskatchewan. How does that work? Do you . . . Is it both up and down Internet connections, or is it simply a download connection with a dial-up upload? Or how is that working?

Mr. Debono: — Well the way it's working currently — and this is a transition technology, and SCN has played a key role and I must commend Dave Stanchuk and the technology team at SCN for putting this together — we've come up with a technology solution to allow our existing satellite space to be sliced into different uses.

But the way it works right now is that you only are using the satellite for receiving and on the high-speed connection. You still have to have a phone line to make the request for the information. So it's not a true two-way system at this time, it's a one-way system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Download only.

Mr. Debono: — Yes. So you would still, in each of those communities require, you know, a phone link to initiate the request. Now most of the work, most of the signals in an Internet-type browsing sort of thing are heavy size on the download, so it's very effective.

But going forward, we've been working closely with ITO

(information technology office) on looking at two-way systems and we . . . there is the possibility of us sort of retrofitting our existing technology.

But it looks, looks in the future, there will be a number of players in the market providing this to . . . Like we did around 200 sites right now in our system. Telesat themselves and a number of other players are going to be offering two-way systems across the country. And we're on technology trials now for two different systems, one from Telesat and one from LinkSat. And they're out to two or three sites each; and going forward, that the solution for the province will likely be a two-way solution but it'll be a period of years before this transition happens.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you. Looking at some of the costs, I had come up with slightly different numbers and . . . than you have listed on the back here. I had come up with 380,000 versus the 460, so I'm not sure just what I . . . 160 plus the . . . I know, I subtracted 60,000 — that's what it was — to come up with the difference.

If we went with the 365-day service, we would have access then at all times to that service. So we would be like the Ontario channel and the BC (British Columbia) legislature channel where it would be sitting there blank all day long while they were out of session.

Mr. Debono: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — But then that would allow us the capability to broadcast our committees whenever we wanted to though.

Mr. Debono: — Yes. But you would still, in the other scenario where we're more pay as we go or month to month basis, you still have the ability to add. It's just that your starting dollars will be significantly less. But you . . . if you really wanted to change mid-year and say you wanted to go for the full year, the rate essentially is, on top of the \$100,000 back-haul fee of a starting amount, it will be \$30,000 a month for every month you want full-time access.

So you could commit at the beginning of the year \$460,000 or simply commit to, you know, an estimated, you know, four months . . . three, four months of being in session and then add on. And you'd end up with the same figure, but you wouldn't have to guarantee it . . .

Mr. D'Autremont: — Upfront.

Mr. Debono: — . . . in advance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes. The problem is though, with the first scenario is that you can't guarantee the broadcast availability on short notice.

Mr. Debono: — And again, more for the one-offs, I would say. So I'm saying if it was a committee session it would not be there. But if you're talking about the whole legislature being in session, that's sort of . . . You know it's not going to be for one day, then that's a different ball game.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I think on this, we're looking at broadcasting committees when they sit. We're also looking at having more committees doing more work, and therefore would be sitting more and available for broadcast. But those decisions have not yet been made and therefore it's hard to judge how much the committees are going to be utilized. Don't see any special committees coming out of this session, at least nothing that's come forward yet, so there would be very little use in that area.

And I would think that since we don't have the capabilities at present built in to do a lot of the committee broadcasting, that we go with the lower cost as a recommendation because we don't have the committee work. We have the work — we don't have the capabilities to broadcast at the present time.

Mr. Addley: — In consideration of time, I agree with Dan's suggestion.

And I guess a comment: if it's feasible, if, say, July 31 we do have a committee meeting for one day that we'd like to get broadcast, I mean, it can be recorded and then broadcast sometime in the next one, two, or three days as it's available. It's usually not time-sensitive, you know, within a day or two. So I agree with Dan's suggestion.

The Chair: — Additional comment, Mr. Gantefoer?

Mr. Gantefoer: — Just very briefly, what's the digital interactive video that SaskTel is talking about? That's the right price but . . .

Mr. Debono: — Yes. That's going to be another interesting option. I understand from your briefing note that that's being provided at no cost. Maybe you want to . . . (inaudible) . . . that.

Mr. Ward: — That's what I'm told. My contact at SaskTel has indicated that SaskTel would want to carry the legislative signal at virtually no cost to us. We used to have to pay to get our signal from here over to the SaskTel and it was \$20,000 a year. Now they're willing to take it for nothing so that they can have it. And of course they'll guarantee it in their basic service, which is good, but it's just that I don't know how many people are actually going to buy the SaskTel service when you can go out and buy a satellite dish for \$100, you know.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much, committee members. Our time is coming fast . . . quickly to a close. You've got your recommendations on record and this is sort of an ongoing issue. Do we have a deadline that you figure that we're going to have to make an ultimate decision on? Deadline date?

Mr. Debono: — We're currently in discussions with a number of the suppliers, and it's possible that by the end of the summer we may be in a situation where we're going to make a decision on a satellite provider. No firm deadline exists other than the end of the year one, but I think that probably the approach is going to be trying to lock this in sooner rather than later.

And I think a good indication now would be very helpful for us in knowing which way we should be approaching this. So you know if conceptually the idea that a 365, you know, 24/7 thing is not realistic at this time, that's helpful to us. We can always

move you to that if you decide to change your mind later, but instead of working on that basis now, it would be easier to know that we go more of a pay-as-you-go model.

The Chair: — No, I think you can take the comments that you've heard here today as a very general, fairly general guideline for . . .

Members of the committee, you've been just given a copy of a proposed report on the Standing Committee on Communications, a third report which would be presented to the Assembly. I'll give you a minute to just peruse that and the motion would be:

That the draft third report of the Standing Committee on Communications be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Graham Addley. Is it agreed? Motion's carried. Thank you.

Thank you all very much for your attendance to the meeting. Thank you people from SCN, Mr. Debono and Mr. Stanchuk, and also Gary and your crew, thank you very much for doing the work on this. It needs to be followed diligently because there's quite a few dollars attached, and ultimately will have to be approved, I guess, by the Board of Internal Economy as to which way we go. So thanks for keeping us up to date on it.

The meeting stands adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 10:30.