



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 22 – November 24, 2009



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-sixth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

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Mr. Kim Trew, Deputy Chair
Regina Coronation Park

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Mr. Michael Chisholm
Cut Knife-Turtleford

Mr. Wayne Elhard
Cypress Hills

Ms. Deb Higgins
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

[The committee met at 16:00.]

**Bill No. 99 — *The Emergency 911 System
Amendment Act, 2009***

Clause 1

The Chair: — Well good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen and committee members. We are here as committee members referring to Bill No. 99, *The Emergency 911 System Amendment Act, 2009*. This is what we will be considering: Bill No. 99, clause 1, short title.

By practice, the committee normally holds a general debate during the consideration of clause 1, so before we begin I'd like to welcome the minister and ask him to introduce his officials and say some opening remarks if he so wishes.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss Bill 99. On my immediate left is the deputy minister, Al Hilton. On my right is Duane McKay, the fire commissioner. Behind me to my left is Jason Rumancik, legislative officer. And beside him is Rob Nicolay, my chief of staff.

And I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to speak about Bill 99, *The Emergency 911 System Amendment Act*. The reason we are proposing amendments to *The Emergency 911 System Act* is twofold. First as Ministry of CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing], the new legislation will give our ministry the authority to operate and maintain the network. And secondly, an amendment to the Act will integrate the new radio system into the 911 system.

Prior to amending *The Emergency 911 System Act*, the legislation described the Sask 911 system as a province-wide telephone system. This amendment will recognize that the provincial public safety telecommunications network — or the PPSTN for short, and I'll be using the short version of that when it comes up — to ensure that this is part of the 911 system. And therefore all of the authorities currently in the Act will extend to the PPSTN as part of the Sask 911 system.

By including the PPSTN as part of the 911 system, this will strengthen the 911 emergency communication system in rural and northern communities and provide a stronger, more reliable connection between dispatch and emergency service providers. The enhanced system will provide for interoperability links between fire services, police services, many government ministries, and other emergency responders.

The PPSTN is in the final phases of construction and will replace the SaskTel FleetNet system which is scheduled to be wound down by the end of 2010. With the ministry's plan to migrate users onto the new system as early as spring of 2010, the amendment is necessary so that we have the legislative authority to operate the PPSTN system to migrate system users in early 2010.

I want to emphasize the importance of our provincial interest in the new system and the need to place responsibility of the system within our ministry. I believe this is necessary as the

PPSTN will be used by public safety users for public safety purposes, and the operation of the network directly aligns with the ministry's public safety mandate.

The benefits for all users will be a stronger, more reliable connection between dispatch and emergency service providers. The obligation for our ministry is to provide an affordable province-wide radio system. Building a new system that is designed for the public safety community and constructed to consider coverage, capacity, availability, and reliability comes with a cost. Maintaining a sound, effective public safety radio telecommunications system over the long term will achieve an important obligation — the safety and security of Saskatchewan citizens.

Beginning in 2002, government has already invested significantly in this system — more than \$130 million. And this ministry has provided oversight on all phases of this important public safety project. Government will have demonstrated to the people of Saskatchewan it is accountable by providing our ministry with the authority to operate the network and allow us to ensure that this valuable public safety tool will aid all of our dedicated and professional public safety responders, resulting in an increase in the safety and security of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Chair, that's my opening remarks.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there some questions? Mr. Trew.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister and officials, I appreciate the opening remarks. And just for the record, appreciate the two, I'll call them props that you have — the map of Saskatchewan off to the right that I believe shows coverage. Yellow is coverage. And I'll get back to that as we do it. And the prop on the left shows the PPSTN radio and repeater sites. Or are they all called repeater sites? Go ahead, Minister. Just let's get that straight. They are all called repeater sites, are they?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — No. They're towers and repeater sites.

Mr. Trew: — Okay. Can you give me, I'm not looking for a great deal of detail. What's the difference between a tower and a repeater site?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — They're basically one and the same, but there's a tower and a repeater at each site. And I would ask Mr. McKay to give you a technical answer, if you'd like a more technical answer on that.

Mr. Trew: — Well would I, if I drove by one, would I see any difference? Would I know the difference between a tower and a repeater?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — No.

Mr. Trew: — I'm seeing both of you saying no. That's good. I didn't want to get hung up on that. My opening comment was really to thank you for those, and I'll come back to them in the questioning.

I wanted to open, Mr. Chair, I wanted to open by asking about the urgency of passing this Bill. I know the minister spoke to that in his opening remarks. There's a number of ways I can get at the question, but why the urgency in the fall of 2009? Why not spring of 2009 or spring of 2010 or 2011? Can you speak to that, Minister. Thanks.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes, I sure can. The urgency right now is to be able to migrate to the new system starting as early as spring of next year.

As I'm sure most people are aware, FleetNet will be decommissioned by December of 2010. And it's very difficult right now to get parts for FleetNet. And so in order to integrate into the new system, legislation needs to be passed so that we can go forward with getting the purchase of radios, agreements to be signed. And if that is delayed, then at some point the whole thing will be delayed, and there's a very strong feeling it could compromise public safety.

And so that's why the urgency to get it passed now, so we can continue to move forward and migrate into the new system as it comes online. And the fear is if we don't do that now, if everything is backed up and delayed, that public safety could be compromised. And I don't think any of us really want to see public safety compromised.

Mr. Trew: — No, we certainly don't. Mr. Chair, what does it cost to run FleetNet in the last 12 months or the last budget year, whichever is easier for you to give? And of course the other side is, what is going to be the cost of running the new 911 system? I'm talking the global cost, the provincial cost, FleetNet versus the new system.

Mr. McKay: — The costs of running FleetNet are a little bit hard to determine at this point because SaskTel is taking a loss in terms of running the system. They've reduced their monthly charges to the users, based on the condition that FleetNet is in at this particular point. So it's difficult to say what the actual costs are. We would have to go to SaskTel to get those.

Currently though, we would assume that they would be very comparable to what the new system will be in terms of the impact on users, as well as sort of the operating expenses for that month or for a particular year. Our budgets are estimated in the 4 to \$5 million range per year for the operating of the system.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. The 4 to 5 million is the cost to the ministry of maintaining the emergency 911 system province-wide?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — We're just trying to clarify what your question really meant. If you're looking at a total operating cost for the new system once we have the new system in, the PPSTN system, that I can't give you a cost in total today because cabinet has made some decisions, and I will be making an announcement tomorrow on some of the costings. And so I don't want to pre-empt that today with what some of the implications are, and the cost. So I can't give you a total cost of operating the system today.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Chair, Minister, I'm sorry. We've got

to get something nailed down better than that. We are very much cognizant of the fact that we need the PPSTN to replace the older FleetNet system. We've been told for a number of years now that the FleetNet system will collapse at some point. Now we could debate whether it's, you know, this week or next year or if it would in fact run for a number of years after that. I'm not even trying to go there.

But we do need to have some better cost than, I can't give you anything today. We're being asked to pass a Bill, and we're wanting to pass the Bill. I mean, make no mistake about it. We want the public safety to be the first feature, but we're not interested in a blank cheque.

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I can give the member a number of figures here if he wishes. The operating cost per year of search and rescue chapters, SARSAV [Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers], is \$64,800. Municipal fire services, \$1.728 million. Municipal police services, \$216,000. Other public safety service agencies is \$476,280. Mobile crisis units, \$15,120. Provincial ministries, agencies, and Crowns, \$871,560. Health and emergency medical services, 1.404 million. RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] - contracted municipal policing, \$102,600. RCMP-provided policing, small municipalities, \$164,160.

And that's why I was trying to relate to what your question really was getting at: what it's going to cost the ministry. These are other agencies that are involved in this also. So a total cost, operating cost for the year out of all those that I've just given you is \$5,042,520. And I don't know if that's the figure, number you were looking for, but that is the operating cost per year.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. I've got something to work with, Minister. You've given me some numbers for a host of organizations that will be using the PPSTN. Not to pick on it but the largest, I think, was the one and a half million. Was that the RCMP?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Municipal fire services.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Municipal fire services, one and a half million dollars. The \$5.042 million that is encompassed in the total of those numbers that you gave me, that's believed to be the operating cost of PPSTN for a 12-month period? That's outside the cost of construction? That's just the annual operating cost? Or does that cost include some amortization of the cost of building?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Straight operating cost.

Mr. Trew: — Okay thank you, straight operating cost. So that number will change some over the years, but with it being five million today, it's not unreasonable to expect it to be in the range of 4 to \$6 million three years from now, in the absence of a change in the service. You know, if you were to bring in one or more other organizations into it, that would affect the operation. But if the operation remained essentially as it is, the cost should remain in the \$5 million range, plus or minus inflation and that sort of thing. Am I accurate in that?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes. I think your assessment is fairly accurate. It's very difficult to predict the future and what's going to happen, but I think it's a fair assessment. I mean, if you look at the cost today and . . . It depends on a number of items — more users, less users, operating costs, maintenance. So for a general statement, you've given plus or minus that, I would say you're fairly accurate with that. When I say fairly accurate, I sure can't give you a definitive answer what it's going to cost in out years.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, thank you for that. What I'm really looking for is — and I think you've given it to me, just to sort of tie the bow on it — there's no known changes of significance in the operating cost that your ministry knows of at this point.

You know, sometimes there's a low buy-in when you're starting an operation, and the vendor would like you to buy in cheap. And then, you have a series of sharply escalating costs as the service rolls out. But I'm not expecting the answer to be yes. In fact I'm expecting the answer to be no; what we see is what we get.

The question is simply, is there a known escalator clause or escalating costs of operating this?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — You know, I can't think of anything that would be an escalating clause. There's always the unforeseen, inflation. There's a number of issues that . . . Who knows the unknown? Does a tower replacement come under operating costs, or is that new capital expenditure? And so it's a question that if you want to ballpark, no, there's no escalating clause that's anticipated for the overall operation of the system.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Chair, Minister, again I thank you. I'm satisfied with that answer.

In your remarks, you talked of \$130 million having been spent on this, the PPSTN, over the previous relatively short number of years, but a number of years. That's 130 million having been spent to date. Now that would be on development and organization and, I presume, setting up the towers and repeaters that are already in place. My question would be, are they all in place or is there more work to be done on towers and repeaters? What's the balance to be spent? And is it all over the next six months, twelve months, or some other time frame?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — All of the . . . Yes. The \$130 million goes back, as you explained, and the cost of putting up towers and repeaters. And all of the tower repeaters are in place at this point in time although they're not all operational at this point in time. So there's work to be done to get them operational, but they are in situ. So there's work that is progressing.

And by March, again what we're looking at is having everything operational by the end of March of this year. Again looking at possibilities of delay, if you ask me at the end of March why we're not up and running, I mean, delays can happen. We're operating in the North. There's colder temperatures sometimes in the North.

And so I would say our goal right now is to have it all, the

towers and repeaters, up and operating by the end of March of next year.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Chair, is the by March the details that are being done to get it operational, are those costs included in the 130 million, or are they additional to the 130 million that's been spent?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — They're included in the 130 million.

Mr. Trew: — They're included.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, thank you for that. I've had some concerns raised to me about the operational cost of the new PPSTN system in that for . . . volunteer fire departments is really the critical part because I'd like a description of how this works. If there are 12 of us who are volunteer firefighters in, I'll say, Meyronne because it came up in a conversation earlier today . . . not in this context, it was just the town was mentioned, not because of anything to do with firefighting or anything like that. But say there's 12 volunteer firefighters in the hamlet of or village of Meyronne. Do we all have a hand-held device? And if so how is that paid for? Can you describe what would happen in a place like that?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well I've heard from potential users of the system, proposed users of the system, that they were looking at what costs that they might have to incur to be part of it. We have, in the ministry, gone to great lengths to ensure that it was going to be workable for users. And I will say for a lot of the smaller operators, be it firefighters or predominantly firefighters . . . That was what I was referring to earlier. I went to cabinet with some proposals, and that's what I will be announcing tomorrow, how this will work with our users.

Specifically to answer your question, if the small, volunteer firefighter . . . Everybody might want to have a radio. It's not practical. We look at the costs. And this is where I've heard from some of the users or will be users, is the base costs are — of the radio — are fairly significant although not a great deal more if you took inflation into account from what the FleetNet radios cost a number of years ago.

So that's one of the items that we have looked at and addressed, and that will be the announcement tomorrow related to the PPSTN, which I know is kind of integrated. But we're really looking at today is the 911 portion, the Bill related to 911. And so I would anticipate your next question. While PPSTN is part of this, that's all one conglomerate if you wish. But the announcement will come tomorrow about how we're going to look at the affordability of this. And I don't want to pre-empt that today because what we're looking at today is the Bill and the issues within the Bill which basically looks at 911 coming under the auspices of CPSP.

Mr. Trew: — That's correct. And we will make our best determination that when we make the switchover to the FleetNet system coming under your ministry, Minister, that it's in fact workable because there's no point in having a

Rolls-Royce system if we've got a Volkswagen or a small Chevrolet budget.

You know, you're making the right noises about having an announcement tomorrow, and I very much look forward to that. I'm not trying to get hung up on that announcement, so I'm not trying to create a wedge between us on this. We're both clearly interested in public safety, in having the 911 system up and operating. But again it comes back to how usable the entire system is.

Currently what's the situation, Minister, with small town volunteer fire departments? Do they have . . . In my example, would the dozen firefighters, volunteer firefighters, have a FleetNet radio currently?

Mr. McKay: — There's a variety of configurations in the fire service ranging from, as you've described, all the firefighters carrying FleetNet radios, which we would consider extreme, and down to perhaps one FleetNet radio which is used for intercommunications amongst other fire departments or their regional dispatch, whatever might be occurring there.

[16:30]

So somewhere in the middle of that is probably where we need to be in terms of the operational needs that will be required by fire departments. So we don't anticipate tactical operations to be on the radio system at all times.

A number of systems already exist in the local fire departments. It might be a private VHF [very high frequency] radio system, and so they'll use those radios for all of their tactical operations. And then they'll use the PPSTN, or presently the FleetNet system, to communicate more broadly when multiple fire departments are responding or they have to communicate with their regional dispatch or other agencies. And that's what the system is designed to do, not to hear every communication that might happen at a particular incident.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Thank you for that. In the rollout of the new system, tell me how that's going to happen. Does it all have to happen one day? Or is the overlap, does that cause any grief for any of the organizations that are on the emergency 911 system? I guess sort of a supplementary to that is, is it better to have a short transition period, or does that not particularly matter? Please describe the transition from FleetNet to the new system.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well I think you probably understand some of this, which has happened over a period of time, where the FleetNet wasn't providing the services required to the satisfaction of some of the users. And back a number of probably years ago, it was the RCMP were the ones that were really looking at getting a new system. And that's when they started into discussions with SaskPower.

And so when the system is being established and brought forward, a migration plan was also being implemented. And at some point a number of years ago, or three or four years ago, CPSP was brought into this to manage the system with the numbers of users. So saying that doing it all at once, the RCMP have in some instances already migrated to the new system. So

they're using the new system right now, again with the limitations being as we said. Some of the repeaters are not operational yet. So there's restrictions in areas, obviously, at this point in time, and again another reason why to go forward with this as soon as practicable. There is a migration plan so when users and radios become available and users get onto the plan, they would migrate at that time.

So flicking a switch and switching everybody from FleetNet over is not practicable, and it's not what we're looking at. We're looking at a migration starting as . . . already started if you wish, but then starting it as soon as we can into the new year with other agencies. Because right now, as I understand, it's only the RCMP and SaskPower have some on there right now.

But now we want to get the other users migrating to it. Again when radios, you just don't go to the local store and buy them. They're special radios, so you've got to order them in advance, and all of these things have to happen and it takes some time. And that's why the importance of having this Bill passed now so this could be actually done in rolling it out.

Mr. Trew: — Good. Thank you, Minister. So I'm anxious to know what happens for a member of the public who calls 911. Let's assume for a moment that we pass this Bill five minutes from now and this is November. Don't get too excited. But let's assume that for right now. What happens in January? You know, give you a couple of months. What happens to a member of the public that dials 911? Will they notice any difference at all?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — No.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Just for the record, the minister beat the light, and the answer was no. And I appreciate that, Minister. I really do, because again there's a great deal of confidence in the emergency 911 system. And we want . . . It's in all of our interests, all million souls in Saskatchewan, to continue having that faith in the emergency system that has been in place now for quite a number of years, and clearly the desire is to have it continue.

I know one of my colleagues at least has some questions, but I have one final question. And it's like all of my questions so far, Minister, it's not a trick question. But I believe some other jurisdictions, I think you've talked of other jurisdictions having gone to the PPSTN system. And I'm just wondering what their experience, if you can give us a brief overview, has it all been good experience that they've had? Was there some start-up problems that you were able to avoid by talking to these jurisdictions that have had experience? I'd be interested in your comments. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — I've not heard of any problems, and I would ask officials if they have heard of any. But I'm just going to give you a little bit of a rundown on the system.

The new system will incorporate an APCO [Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International] P25 [Project 25] system, established as a North American standard for public radio systems. There's a number of provinces planning to move to the system. However, we're the first to

deploy the new system in Canada. So other jurisdictions in Canada have not used it as yet, or they're thinking of going to it. Alberta, Manitoba will be moving to a similar system in the near future. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI [Prince Edward Island] are currently engaged in the planning process.

I've been asked about this, if there's any issues with the system. And I've not heard of any. And I would ask Duane if he wants to comment any further because it's predominantly, like I suggest, it will be a North American standard system for public safety. And there's jurisdictions in the United States have already used it, and I'll ask Duane if he can comment on that. We had a technical expert one day briefing me on it, and I'll let Duane answer.

Mr. McKay: — Well I'm not a technical expert; I'm an operational expert. So it's important to understand that the P25 stands for Project 25. And APCO, which is the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, which is an association which is dedicated to the enhancement of public safety communications. So this would make up all 911 dispatch agencies as well as other dispatch agencies that are interested in public safety. They have committees. They have written a standard which is very similar to what we see in the cellphone industry. Certainly if everybody pulled their cellphone out, you would either have a BlackBerry, Motorola, a Nokia. It might be a variety of different radio systems or telephones, but they all operate on the system seamlessly.

Previous to the P25 standard, radio systems, if you put a Motorola system in, you could only use Motorola radios on it. If you put in an EF Johnson, only EF Johnson radios would work on that.

The standard allows multiple radios to operate on the same network, similar to cellphones. So this is radio systems catching up to the cellphone industry. And I can't get into the technical on how that actually operates, but what it does is it provides functionality that maybe one particular radio doesn't have. Now you can go find another radio that'll operate on a system that has the functionality that you require.

And it certainly does provide some competition when you're going to purchase radios because multiple vendors will have radios that could operate on the system. So the P25 is designed for interoperability, to allow interoperability, to allow some competition within the market, to allow us to reduce what one might describe as a very expensive public safety world because it's not commercial based. There's only a small number of people that use it, so there's some tremendous advantages to that system.

That standard is continuing to evolve, and that standard is now driving some of the technology in terms of making sure that public safety enjoys some of the benefits that we're seeing in some of the other technologies around the world with respect to communications. It is the standard in North America. And I guess in Saskatchewan, we're right on the cutting edge of that standard.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to defer. I know Ms. Higgins has some questions.

The Chair: — Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So a few quick questions, I guess. So basically what this legislation does is move the authority for 911 or move 911 into Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — We have the administration of 911 already. This is moving the authority, I guess would be the more direct way of saying we have the authority to operate it. We've been administering the system up till now, but gives us the operational authority to operate it.

Ms. Higgins: — So currently I guess when we look at this piece of legislation, when you move farther down the line with the PPSTN, will you need additional legislation, or no?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — No.

Ms. Higgins: — This would cover off everything?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes. This would cover the operational.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. Currently 911 is . . . And the cost of the call centres and point of whatever they're actually called, and I should know that, but is managed through, I believe, the fees. Well the fees are collected on our phone bills, the 59 cents or whatever it is a month. Will those fees end, stay the same, or increase with this change?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — The 911 account would come under the jurisdiction of CPSP. And how that will operate is part of the announcement that I will be making tomorrow in terms of how we look at the costing and how the user affordability issue . . . So to answer your question directly is, the 911 account will come under CPSP.

Ms. Higgins: — Now you don't make bad news announcements. Like you haven't made any announcements of any spending cuts since the mid-term financial, so I'm assuming that my charges are going to go down on my phone bill tomorrow. Am I right?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — No.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay, we'll just leave that one aside. But I have to say that was a very touchy subject for many people when the charge was put on their phone bills. And if there is going to be a reliance . . . I mean I would almost think if you were taking jurisdiction for 911 within a government department, and it's dealing with public safety and being administered from the Ministry of Public Safety, I would think many citizens would expect there not to be a charge, that this would be something we pay taxes for as citizens of the province.

But that will be a discussion for after your announcement tomorrow. In the explanation on the legislation under clause 2(k), one of the points when it talks about an integrated system, talks about access to the 911 account. This is what raised concerns as to who manages the money and if the money still stays the same, for the purposes of strengthening the 911

emergency communication system and ensuring interoperability between those emergency service providers operating on the PPSTN. So what you're looking at then is an expanded phone service, or is it just an expanded wireless service that will all be integrated into 911? I mean currently now there's 911. There's FleetNet. Are you looking at a common system?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes, it's a total integrated system. That's the purpose of doing this together as one unit. It's an integrated PPSTN 911 system.

Ms. Higgins: — Now okay so that raises questions then as to charges on our phone bills, but I guess that'll be left for tomorrow.

So then will there — when you spoke of the P25 as not being a system but as being a standard that's met — will there be a requirement for municipalities right across the province, both professional organizations, one I'm thinking of fire and safety, across the province and rural, to access new hardware to be interoperable with the new system?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well that's the purchase of the radios to operate in the system. The FleetNet radios will not operate within this system. It's a new system like . . . so that is one of the, as we discussed earlier, that's one of the concerns that were raised by some of the users, was the cost of new radios. And I related earlier that the cost of the new radios were not significantly different than the FleetNet costs back a number of years ago. There is some but obviously these costs have gone up. But the costs of the radios have been a concern.

And also a concern that I have addressed with a lot of the users . . . if you have, which Mr. Trew alluded to earlier, if you've got nine volunteer firefighters in a small town, does everybody get one of these new, expensive radios? Well the answer is obviously no. I mean everybody would want one and like one, but it's not practical. So you look at it from an operational capability standpoint and how many do you really need? And that's one of the issues that we have looked at and are addressing.

But I guess it's human nature. If you're a volunteer firefighter, you could say, well I need one because I want one. But there comes a time when you have to be able to say, what's your operational requirement for it, and can you be called from your home via cellphone if you're a volunteer firefighter, or do you need an expensive radio to do it? And so anyway, new radios are required for the new system.

Ms. Higgins: — Well hopefully there will be some movement for the government to help municipalities replace the equipment.

But to move on to another issue, across the province there is SaskTel which has a network, and your maps look quite similar to what SaskTel's cellular coverage is. And I know there is a system of towers across the province — both SaskTel, SaskPower, and the RCMP. And some of the early discussions on the whole replacement of FleetNet was to really overlay a system using the basically structures that were already out

there, what would have to be added to it to make the system complete and integrated. So is that basically what we're looking at here, is maybe the addition of some other towers, some other spots around the province, but it will spread out the system?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes, that's exactly correct. We're using the infrastructure that is there and then adding more, as we explained earlier, where the coverage is required. So there are some new towers, repeaters, going up. And of course the towers that are being used, I mean, this is part of the overall capital cost, is putting the right equipment on the towers that are there, the existing towers.

Ms. Higgins: — Then will these towers also be available for use by SaskTel to put in place high-speed Internet in rural Saskatchewan? In northern Saskatchewan, there'll be multi-use towers I would hope.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Most of them are SaskTel towers right now.

Ms. Higgins: — Good, thank you very much. Mr. Minister, right at the beginning when my colleague was asking questions about cost and operating expenses, while you couldn't answer that question today, you gave a list of kind of the public service organizations that will utilize this system. And you gave as an example or what you gave in the list also was RCMP communications would be part of this. Will the RCMP communications be integrated into the 911 expanded version, or will it still be a separate communications network for the RCMP?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — It's a total integrated system. It's not chunked. It's a totally integrated system.

Ms. Higgins: — So who has authority then? Would this be through the ministry for maintenance, operation . . . And I'm questioning or I guess I'm kind of wondering if there may be some jurisdictional disputes over who gets what. I'm not quite sure — not unless we get into the very technical details — about how it works, and I don't know whether I would absorb all those or not. But I know the RCMP was on a separate frequency for, I mean, the priority of their calls and I'm sure 911 and some of the safety issues. So they wouldn't all be operating on the same frequency, would they? It would be different but all integrated.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Definitely not.

Ms. Higgins: — I know. Here we have two non-technical people trying to explain this. I know. It's not working well, is it?

Mr. Hilton: — The basic governance principles underlying the governance agreement, that we would sign once we have the legislative authority, defines roles and responsibilities. And the operating costs that the minister referred to earlier would not include the operating costs of the provincial police service. It would include the costs associated with the policing in municipalities that the RCMP do through contract with municipalities. And part of the governance arrangement will involve protocols between the various public safety users that will govern how people can access different channels or bands

on the system and how they talk to each other.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. Now here we go with another technical question being asked by a non-technical person. Is the system purely a, oh God, I guess it would be a wireless system accessible either by phone or a radio? Or will it be . . . I mean in the explanation that you gave about it being a P25 standard. So will there be a variety of phone, cellphone, radio use that will be doable with this new system?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — I think this might . . . I'm not sure where you're going with this, but the figure that I have is there could be 7,000 users at a time on this system, and I don't know if that kind of is where you're going or what you wanted to hear on this. And that's on radio. So I don't know if that's what you wanted to hear, but from a technical perspective, I think, it's 7,000 users that could be on it at one time. If you want more technical, I'll let Duane answer that.

Ms. Higgins: — I think you and I have just about technicalized this whole operation out. But anyway, just one last question: will the operating costs be covered by the users on a cost-recovery basis?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — That's again one of the items that I will be releasing tomorrow, and I hope you can wait tomorrow for that bit of information. We want to make it affordable for the users. And we've had some extensive consultations, and we've looked at it from a number of different avenues of how we can do this, but our goal is to make it affordable for the users the best way that we can.

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Chair, I think that's the end of my questions for sure, and I want to thank the minister and his officials for being here this afternoon to answer questions.

This system has been a long time coming, and it has been a concern for many years that FleetNet was reaching the end of its days. And I don't know whether . . . well I'm sure the minister now truly appreciates the size of the province of Saskatchewan and how our population is spread over a great distance and the challenges that it gives, not only for communications but also for public safety and health care. I mean, heavens, the list goes on and on. But this is something that many people have worked on and been waiting for, so we look forward to the announcements and moving ahead with the replacement. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Mr. Trew, did you have any other questions?

Mr. Trew: — No thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I know I'd signalled to you I might have one additional, but no. At this point, we'd be delighted to vote the Bill off.

The Chair: — Thank you. *An Act to amend The Emergency 911 System Act*, clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows . . . Is that agreed . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh okay. This Act may be cited as *The Emergency 911 System Amendment Act, 2009*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — I would ask one of the members to move that the committee report Bill No. 99, without amendment.

Mr. Chisholm: — I would so move, without amendment.

The Chair: — Without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Did you have some closing remarks?

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Yes, Mr. Chair, thank you. And I'd like to thank the members for the questions. I'd like to thank my officials for being here and helping out, some technical questions that I know might leave some thoughts. But if we really wanted to get into technical, I know I could provide some very deep technical stuff for the members following. But I would like to thank the members of the committee. And again thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Trew.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My first words are of thanks to you for your chairmanship. And to the minister and his officials, my colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow, and committee members, I think we've done some good work today passing the emergency 911 Bill. And I look forward to this serving the people of Saskatchewan for a good long time into the future.

So again I want to close by thanking the minister and his officials for the work that they have done and that I know you will continue to do on this file.

The Chair: — Thank you. I ask a member to move that this committee do now adjourn.

Mr. Brkich: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Brkich. Carried. This committee now stands adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 17:00.]