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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

1st Session
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Wednesday 5 December 2018

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Mercredi 5 décembre 2018

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Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Wednesday 5 December 2018

Mercredi 5 décembre 2018

The committee met at 1304 in room 151.

TELEVISION BROADCAST SYSTEM

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Good afternoon. The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will now come to order.

I welcome back Michael Donofrio, director of broadcasting and recording services, who is here today to provide the committee with information and recommendations on how to update the assembly's television guidelines and to provide recommendations on how to improve the television broadcast system. Do you want to take it away?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair and committee, for having me back. As Madam Chair just mentioned, in asking me to come back you asked me to give some recommendations on how to update the television guidelines and some recommendations on how we can improve the television broadcast system.

The television guidelines have been in place since broadcasting started in 1986, so a lot of the language is outdated due to some outdated technology. The recommended changes are really just to get us the language to reflect what it is we're actually doing.

I sent out a copy of what the current guidelines are marked in red and crossing out some of the language I was talking about taking out and then putting in green what I recommend putting in.

I don't know how you want us to proceed: whether you just want to ask questions about that, whether you want to go through some of them, or how you want to—

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): I would just address this to the committee. What would you like to do? Would you like to ask questions on the television guideline recommendations?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I think so.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. Who would like to go first?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I can commence.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Mr. Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: First of all, thank you very much for that tour. I must say it was absolutely fascinating and very enlightening, not even just for the actual pieces that we visited when it came to the television broadcasting system but just for the history of the place. I'm still trying to find the door that brought us up on to the roof, because that was amazing.

Could you explain a little bit more about the sixth camera in the chamber? We didn't actually speak about that when we were there. Some of these ideas—I think they're great ideas, quite frankly, most of them. Although I did have a question about why someone would have to be steamed, but—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Sorry. Did I make a spelling mistake in there?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Sorry about that.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm just bugging you. But in all seriousness, what would the sixth camera add, do you think, to the dimensions that we're talking about currently? How would it change the structure and what would it add?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: What we're missing without the sixth camera there really has to do more with special days—when there is a throne speech, when there is a budget, for example. We don't have a camera behind the Speaker to get people entering the chamber, so when the Lieutenant Governor comes into the chamber, we have to pick her up with a side camera. A lot of times when she's moving, people will stand up and give her applause. Heads might get in the way and you don't get a great shot. This gives a much better angle and a head-on shot of anybody walking in.

When people are sitting on the floor, it's able to get shots of the guests on the floor, of their faces, reaction-type shots.

Now that the first Monday of every month we have a choir that comes in to sing the national anthem, it would give us a much better angle to get shots of the choir.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Okay.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: It just gives us a camera that we don't have right now. We're still able to get those shots. They just don't look as nice, and sometimes, as I mentioned, people get in the way because they stand up where our cameras currently are.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: You're talking about—even I think yesterday we had a choir, and the angle is from kind of the bottom up, so we don't really get—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes. The angle is off to the side, and it's looking—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes. You never really get it straight. Okay.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: —whereas the camera, if it was behind the Speaker, it would be much more of a frontal shot.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I think of the federal Senate, when they have the procedure of the Black Rod. The

holder of the Black Rod comes and knocks on the door and then they enter. I watched it live for the throne speech and you can see him or her walking straight into the chamber. You couldn't do that in this case, could you?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: What we have been doing lately when it comes to special shoots like that is, we have been adding a camera. It's a temporary camera. It takes a little bit of time to run the cable to get it in there, and it usually, then, is only in for that one day.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Right.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: So the last throne speech, the last budget, we had asked permission to put that camera in. It has been granted and we put that camera in. This would just give us the ability to have something in there permanently and not have to run something separately every single time.

The other advantage to it as well is that, as you saw from the tour we gave you, all of our cameras work on the same system, so that the control system is able to control every single one of those cameras. When we run a secondary camera in, we actually have to run in a second control system, so now the operators are actually operating two camera control systems just so they can operate that one camera.

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Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Okay. Then, secondly—maybe this is the role of the committee—I'm just wondering what the cost of these implementations is: the sixth camera and things like that.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I can definitely go through that. In terms of the sixth camera, we're actually lucky enough that we currently own a camera and lens, and that's the most expensive part of it. We actually have one that we're using as a backup now, but it sits on the shelf unless we need it as a backup. So we would be able to utilize that camera and lens and save a good bit of money there.

Where the expense would come in would be in the robotic system, to get the robotics it would sit on that would work with our current robotic system. That is anywhere between about \$25,000 and \$40,000 to get that system.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: And for the development of apps, which I again think is a phenomenal idea—my perspective is streaming on Facebook, even. I think of the amount of people who do live streams on Facebook. If the Speaker's office was able to do something like that, or if the Legislature was, would it be possible to have those developed in-house? Or what would that look like? I know that apps can be very expensive, or relatively.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: We do have a small team in-house, but they're currently working on a lot of projects for the website. To get something done fairly quickly and also make sure that there are yearly updates, I would recommend hiring somebody to do it. It doesn't necessarily have to be a huge, big firm; it could even maybe be put out almost as a contract job for somebody who's recently out of college who knows how to build apps. I don't think it would be extremely expensive to build the app.

The good part about that is, once that expense is made—currently, as I mentioned last time, our streaming company—what we pay them for is unlimited bandwidth. It wouldn't cost us any more in bandwidth; it doesn't cost us

any more in staff or anything like that. Once it's built, there are no more additional costs, except, like I said, maybe a small yearly cost to make sure that the apps are updated.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Any other questions? Oh, sorry, MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thanks. Do you have an estimate of how much it would cost to build the app?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: The app is the one thing out of all of the suggestions I have that I don't really have a good costing for. The one thing I didn't want to do early on was to start talking to people, getting their hopes up to get costing on that when I wasn't really sure whether this was a place where anybody wanted to go. My original thought process was that if we were going to try to figure that out on our own, it would be trying to see if there are some other costs within our budget that we can reduce a little bit, and then I'll look toward that. But if that's something that the committee would like us to pursue, it's easy enough for us to go out and even get a ballpark of what it would cost to put together the app.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I assume it would have to go out for tender.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I'm assuming it would be over the amount that it would have to go out to tender, yes. But we would be able, at least with one or two companies, to get an idea of what it costs to build an app like that, roughly.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Do you have costs for the other items?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I do have pretty good costing for the other items, yes.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Would you be able to go through that with us?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I can, yes.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Mitas, a question?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you. Two questions—

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: He was in the middle of answering me.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Oh, I'm sorry; I thought you were finished. I apologize.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: No, it's okay.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: If we go from the top down, I mentioned the sixth camera in the chamber. For the equipment, it would probably be under \$40,000 to get the camera up and running. One bit of the cost, though, that I wouldn't know—and there would be a bit of a cost—would be making sure that above the Speaker, where we want to put the camera, we build some kind of an enclosure to hide it and to make it blend in with the rest of the chamber. I'm not sure what that kind of a cost would be. I know that we do have a member on staff who is a carpenter who does do work like that, but there would be an extra cost, obviously, to build a bit of an enclosure there.

As mentioned, I don't really have a great costing on the Apple TV or Android TV apps.

In terms of an additional committee room being broadcast-ready, one of the good things nowadays is that you can get some really good broadcast-quality equipment

for much cheaper than you used to be able to; say, for example, when this room was built. The cameras and robotics system in this room were fairly pricey. The control room at the time—stuff has come down. There are new cameras out on the market that I would suggest when building a new committee room, which are called PTZ cameras. They actually are a camera and robotic controller all in one. One of those cameras is about \$9,000, rather than having robotics, which are almost \$40,000 alone, and the camera and lens, which is another \$50,000 or \$60,000. Then you're talking almost \$100,000 per camera.

You can also get nowadays an all-in-one control room system, where you've got your switcher, you have your character generators and you have your audio all built into one compact system. If you add three cameras, tripods and one of those control room systems, you can get a full-out working control room with cameras for under \$90,000, and then you're all set to go.

A couple of the costs that I wouldn't quite have yet would be in terms of lighting, because you would need to light the rooms. It being a heritage building, you'd have to find out how the electrical is, whether it could handle it or whether some electrical work would have to be done, and then how you would build it in—something similar to this room, where it fits in. The lights themselves—probably around \$20,000 for the lights, possibly, but in terms of getting them up aesthetically, making them look good, and doing the electrical, I wouldn't have that cost.

Those are one-time costs. There would be some yearly costs that would go into this because it would have some impact on staff. Broadcast and recording, for example, would most likely have to hire about two full-time staff to make that happen. You would also need simultaneous interpretation, so Hansard tells me that they would need to hire about one full-time staffer and two freelancers, who would be sessional and in a couple of days a week.

Come 2020, we have to keep in mind that when it goes on the web it will have to be captioned, so there would be some captioning costs in there. Currently, we're at about \$125 an hour for captioning.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Okay—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I'm sorry.

To go down the list again—adding an additional camera, too, for travel committees: As I mentioned, we would use PTZ cameras there. They're about \$9,000 each, so if you added one, it would be \$9,000. The controller is at about \$3,000. Then you get a little switcher and a switching system. Again, you're talking another \$3,000 or \$4,000, so it's not a great expense. If you do a really simple one, you're probably talking about \$20,000; if you go much more complex with, again, almost an all-in-one system and one person operating, you can get upwards of maybe \$50,000 for that.

In terms of bodies, we wouldn't have to hire any extra bodies for that. You would need to send an extra body on the travel committee to help out with the work, but we have people on staff who would be able to do that, so there wouldn't be extra bodies there. There's already translation

in the travel committees, so there wouldn't be any extra bodies for that.

In terms of the streaming capabilities, the cellular bonding technology that I was talking about to make sure that the stream was much more reliable, this would almost be a two-fold system, like I talked about before. Not only would it help for the travel committees, to make the travel committee stream much better and also of a really good quality for television, it also would help as a backup transmission for our everyday signal. As I mentioned before, we have one line that goes out. If that somehow gets severed or something happens to it, there is no real backup. This system would give us a quick backup to go to, and we wouldn't lose our signal going out to the cable companies. It could also be used in our COOP plan, so if anything were ever to happen to the chamber and we had to move to another location and set up a whole new chamber, this would give us the ability to actually broadcast anywhere, straight out. For all of that, you would get the equipment plus about 1,400 gigabytes' worth of cell data a year for under \$3,000 a month, and then when they upgraded any of the equipment, they would just replace it with the latest equipment as well.

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In terms of if we just were to televise the travel committees without adding any cameras, there really wouldn't be any cost at all to that. If we were relying on the same technology that we are using today, with the one camera and using the Internet that's supplied by the hotels—we currently do that now, and it goes out on the Web. The only difference would be, like I showed you last time, putting together a little bit of a graphic on TV to show everybody that this is actually a Web broadcast, to prepare them for the fact that the quality isn't exactly the same as you're used to on TV and there be won't a lot of cameras changing. But we could put it on TV without any cost at all.

The last one: the committee being held during a House recess—for example, this one or public accounts—that normally happens. There would be no cost to that either. We already currently have the staff for that too.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Mitas.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Number 16 says that we're going to archive all material and keep it indefinitely. Can we specify that it would be on the Legislative Assembly website? Currently, afternoons are not archived on there, so it's very difficult for us and our offices to find things after the date—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: What I'll say about that is, that is a long-term plan. What we are doing right now, which will be helpful to all of your offices, is, we are currently implementing a media asset management system. That media asset management system will be in-house. Everything that is back at the Archives of Ontario will be brought into that system. That will take a few years, but once the system is up and running, everything from that point on will automatically be ingested into that system. It will have metadata ingested into the system. The plan is to then be able to give access to your offices so you'll be able to, even as it's coming in, search it, watch it and even download it yourself—make a little clip and download it yourself right away.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: So it still wouldn't be public?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: That part wouldn't be public. When we put out the tender, when we did research on this, we made it part of the tender that it does have to have that ability, to be able to work with our website, to be attached to our website at some point so that the public can go in and just search on it. It would talk to the system, it would be able to see it, and they would be able to get it. So that is a secondary plan—once the system comes in, we know that it's working, we've all tried it out, we've worked out all of the bugs, everyone is happy with the way it is—then it's to talk about next steps and how we integrate that with the public-facing websites that the public has access to.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: So when you say "archive," you just mean "in the internal system"?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I just mean the internal system.

With the television guidelines the way they sit, the way it used to work is—it was all videotape. The way it used to work was, the videotapes are done, they're collected and then they were sent off to the Archives of Ontario. The Archives of Ontario took care of archiving it. So this wording is just to basically say that every single day, we'll be ingesting that in, and we'll be archiving it into the system here on premises and we'll be keeping it. We'll make sure that it has good, searchable metadata and that it's easy to find.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: So it's a large undertaking to put the afternoons online as well?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, because it has more to do with the fact that, first of all, you need it someplace, and currently it isn't anywhere. It's sitting on hard drives somewhere that basically we can find it, we can get to it, but there's no real metadata. It doesn't have great access around the building for your offices or for anyone else throughout the Legislative Assembly.

The idea was: We build this media asset management system; everything gets into that system; everything gets tagged properly with proper metadata that makes it easily searchable; and everyone initially within the Legislative Assembly has access to it and is able to get to it. Once we have that stuff there, once it's available, next step: How do we make it available to the public and how do we attach our website to it so that we can utilize what we just built and so the public can search?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Okay. Numbers 4 and 5: Number 4 doesn't really make sense to me when you couple it with 5. Only "the member who ... has been recognized by the Speaker shall be recorded ... broadcast or streamed."

Then in number 5 we say, "The initial shot of the member shall be of his or her head and shoulders, or medium ... shot showing" the members around them.

As we all know, when we're being recorded the members surrounding you are part of the shot. So is 4 not a moot point? Because they're not the only member.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: No, what is meant by that is that if the Speaker has not recognized you, your microphone is not going to be turned on, and the camera is probably going to stay on that camera 3 wide shot and it's

not going to cut to you. Once the Speaker has recognized you, now we take that medium shot of you, your microphone goes on and you're broadcast on TV. The people around you are on TV, but they're not the focus of it. You remain the focus.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: So can we just change the wording, that they shall be primarily recorded? Because number 4 as it stands just isn't a factual statement. It's not only that member that is being recorded, as number 5 shows.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I can write down to try to figure out wording that would maybe have to do with being the main focus or something like that; sure.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Sure, okay.

From listening to everyone's questions and your answers, it's clear that there are varying timelines for different points on here. For example, with archiving everything, you said that, "It will take a couple of years," versus, "I'm sure some things will be implemented immediately." Would it be possible for us to have a breakdown of these points according to timeline, so how long approximately each change will take to be implemented, as well as a detailed cost breakdown?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, we can look into any of that that you want. What I have given you here was basically: "Here are some things that we could do." These are not things that we are planning on doing, so there's no time allocated to any of this. This was more of a, "If you're looking to improve the broadcast system, here are some of the things that we can do." So if you say, "We think we might be interested in doing this, this and this," I can very easily give you more detailed costs, and I can also give you detailed timelines of what it would take. But because there's no money allocated for any of this stuff, if you were to turn around tomorrow and say, "We're not interested, really, in any of that," then that goes on a shelf and we just continue with what we're currently doing.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Okay. Then you'll wait to hear back from us, then—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, it's definitely more of a, "Here are some ideas of how we can make the system better." At the end of the day, what is it that you would like us to do? As soon as we know, "Yes, we really like this; we really like that," then I can dig down deep into pretty much exact costing as well as timelines.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Great. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill: I've got a couple of questions. Excuse my ignorance; I'm not a regular member of the committee. I'm just filling in for a colleague.

My question is related to the addition of the sixth camera in the chamber. You mentioned that currently if there is a special occasion, you guys have the ability to bring in the sixth camera—I guess a portable one—and cover the proceedings that way. What would the cost be, roughly? Do you have an idea on that? How much does it actually cost for you to organize that and run it for that particular occasion?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Like an actual costing of putting in that camera?

Mr. Parm Gill: Right.

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Mr. Michael Donofrio: I would say that there's really no costing. We use our own staff to do it. It's a matter of being able to find the time when the House is not sitting that we're able to put the equipment in. But there's really no additional costing because we have current staff who does it.

Mr. Parm Gill: I guess it requires a staff to run cabling that you have to put in and remove afterward. Is there not a possibility to leave the cabling there until there's a permanent installation of—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: That is something else that we've talked about: that if we weren't to put in a permanent camera there, we could run some wiring there, at least, to make the set-up easier.

There are three major reasonings for a permanent camera rather than one that we set up every once in a while. One of the main reasonings is the fact that, as I mentioned before, we need a separate control system to control that camera from the control systems that we're using to control the other cameras.

When I did the tour, I showed everybody that we have one control system. One operator is able to go in and select one of all the cameras and operate that camera from that one control system. When we put in a secondary camera, what we're putting in is one of those PTZ cameras that I talked about and that I was kind of recommending for the committee. It takes a completely different control system, so we have to bring that control system in. Now you have the operator, who is operating all the cameras, operating a separate controller for that camera as well and then going back. That camera can also not be tied into our automation.

All of our cameras in the chamber are tied into a Crestron automation system so that when the audio operator touches the button to turn on the microphone of the member who is speaking, it tells the cameras where to swing and it pulls up the name banner of that member. It basically talks with the cameras. When we bring in that other camera, it doesn't. That's a complete manual control. It just means it takes longer, if the person is working over here on this controller, to get there. It's just a much more cumbersome way. There's a huge advantage to having a camera that will talk with the same system.

That camera, even though it's a good-quality camera, is not the same and not as good-quality as the other permanent cameras that are in there. It's much harder to match it to the other cameras as well to make it look cohesive, like all the other cameras do. There's always a little bit of a different colour cast to it. It's a slightly different look. This would help unify that as well.

I did have a third point, and I just lost it. I'll probably remember it, but those are sort of the main reasons for having more of a permanent one.

Oh, yes: The third point is that when we set up a secondary camera there, not being permanent, we're putting it up where the pages sit, up top. We're putting it on a small wooden ledge. We're making it as secure as we can with

chains and stuff, but it's not really incredibly secure. A permanent one would not be able to be hit by anyone. It would be so permanent that you'd never have any chance of it falling or doing any damage.

In the press gallery sometimes, in some of the special cases, there are musicians up there or there are other people who could hit it or even knock it off where it's supposed to be when the camera is on somebody. It could be hit, and it can move around. With a permanent installation, that wouldn't happen.

Mr. Parm Gill: Good. That's everything. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you. MPP Coe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to now be on this committee. If this question has already been put, I'm sure the Chair will tell me that.

Through you, Chair, to our director of the broadcast and recording service: Can you speak to those individuals who have special needs and how you weigh that in the development of the television guidelines? As we've heard, there's a substantial increase in those across the province with a number of special-needs challenges, and I'm sure that, just like others in the province, they'd want to be able to access the proceedings here at Queen's Park, both within the context of the Legislative Assembly as well as the committees.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: All of the television proceedings are closed captioned. There's full closed captioning on anything we air on television, as well as simultaneous interpretation. So there's both English and French interpretation. We're somewhat limited sometimes in the technology and what it is we can do on television itself. The closed captioning and simultaneous interpretation are the big things.

There are some things we've looked into in the past in terms of what I like to call companion apps. Let's say if you're hearing impaired or even sight impaired, there are ways of having an app either on your telephone or an app on something like Google Home, an Apple HomePod or whatever it is—there's this equipment that will put out tones that these apps can see and then you can add additional content to that. For example, when a member stands up and talks, when the Speaker says “the member from such and such”—that can send out a tone and the app itself could actually say the member's name. So if you're hearing impaired, it could say the name. The app itself could also give a pictorial of the name if you're hearing impaired and you need to see. It could also give additional information either about that member or about the bill you're talking about.

So there are ways of using other technology to supplement as an addition to the current television product that can help in many of those areas, depending on how you wanted to go. That technology is out there. We had a company come in and show us a demo of—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Okay. I'm on page 2 of the guidelines, and I see that they were originally adopted in 1986.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes.

Mr. Lorne Coe: That's almost 32 years ago. This is the first time they've been updated?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I started here two years ago, so I'm not fully up on exactly how many times they've tried to update them. I do know that when I came in, there was a set that—the last director had some recommendations and had put in there. It never really went anywhere, so I don't know what happened in committee or anything like that.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm on number 13. It says, "Factual information shall be shown in print across the bottom of the screen from time to time." What does that exactly mean, and who makes that determination about "time to time"?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: If you watch our broadcast, you'll see a crawl that goes along the bottom, and it's usually letting you know what bill it is that's being debated. It's the information that it's "bill whatever, da, da, da, da," and just gives more information on what bill is being talked about. That information is given to broadcast and recording by the Clerks' table. They're the ones who give us the wording, to put that on.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Number 11: "Applause shots may be taken. However, care should be taken to ensure that the decorum of the chamber is maintained." Earlier in the guidelines, number 2 says, "The guidelines shall be enforced by the Speaker." But we're talking about television shots. Who makes the judgment about whether an applause shot should be included or not?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: We don't editorialize. We will not turn a camera around and show people just applauding. What that is basically mentioning is that there may end up being a wider shot where the member who is speaking is in and there may be several members in the background, and they stop, the members applaud—that can be in the shot, but we never actually make a choice to just go over and show applause.

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Mr. Lorne Coe: All right. I'll move from the guidelines to the recommendations. My colleagues were asking some questions earlier. MPP Harris had some questions, but he had to attend a ministerial briefing and had to leave.

He had a question about high-definition service on Rogers. It had to do with the streaming. What has been your experience with the potential of streaming the activities in the Legislative Assembly relative to the capability of Rogers in their high-definition service?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I'm not completely sure I understand the question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Is Rogers able to accomplish what you would like to see here in terms of the guidelines?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Up until this point, Rogers has only taken our SD signal. What I mentioned to the committee last time is, that wasn't necessarily Rogers that was making that decision. Our signal gets sent to the cable companies by a satellite company. It gets sent up on the satellite. That satellite company was only sending up our SD signal. They did not have the ability to send our HD signal.

When I first got here, I talked to them: "This is 2017. SD is an outdated technology. When can we get our HD signal up?" They told me that they weren't ready. They wouldn't have the infrastructure probably until 2020.

So we started looking at other ways of getting our HD signal to the cable companies. We established an HD line—a fibre line—to the biggest data centre here in Toronto, and Rogers is now taking our signal from there. They started taking it a couple of months ago. Shaw also is taking it from there.

Rogers now has a new service that is out called Ignite TV, I believe. They have agreed to start airing us in HD starting this month on Ignite TV.

We're also currently now negotiating with Eastlink, which I believe is the second- or third-biggest cable company in Ontario. They are also looking into taking us in HD as well. We are working with them now to get our HD signal out there, and we've had good response from them.

As far as streaming services and stuff as well, there were a few reasons I was recommending an Apple TV and Google TV app. One, there are some areas—even the member from Nickel Belt last Thursday mentioned the fact that in northern Ontario they don't have access to cable and therefore don't get the Ontario parliamentary network. There are some areas that still don't have access to cable and don't have access to us.

By having an Apple TV and a Google TV app, anybody who has an Internet connection anywhere in the world can download the app and then get our broadcasts and be able to see them in great HD quality on a big 50-inch or 60-inch TV at home.

That's the one advantage there; we're now not only relying on cable companies to distribute our signal. And our website—for people who might want to watch on their computer or their mobile—we are now actually broadcasting ourselves to anyone in the world who wants to download the app. It opens up a lot. That's one good positive there.

The other positive I mentioned is for you members in terms of your constituency offices or your homes. We would be able to give you the ability, in your constituency offices, to see all of our feeds. So in your constituency office, you'd be able to watch the House feed, committee room 1, or even committee room 2 and 3 with the one camera, and the media studio—any of that stuff. You'd have the ability, with an app and with a \$90-to-a-couple-hundred-dollar box in your office, to watch any of those things.

I know, too, that they are currently decanting the Macdonald Block and moving people around. It just gives a great opportunity to be able to offer that anywhere we need that has an Internet connection.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much for your answers.

Thank you, Chair. Those are my questions.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): I just wanted to clarify, MPP Coe. You asked about these—the report was adopted Thursday, October 16, 1986. There haven't been any changes, and these are the current guidelines.

Mr. Lorne Coe: All right. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Hassan.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you for coming, and thank you for also providing us that tour. It showed us the hard work and the important work you guys are doing.

My question is related to—since it is the first time since 1986 that the review is coming up, those items you mentioned, are there any other improvements that you think we could discuss or include that are important?

I know that many people in Ontario do not even use television. They use Internet access, so the idea of everybody having a television is not the case. People have given up television, but now they're tuning into the Internet and other aspects of it, so it makes sense to review this. If we approve this today, when would it be implemented?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: When it comes to the apps, for example, I wouldn't have a good time frame right now because I haven't gone out to any companies to find out how long it would take them to build.

We have all the backbone in place. So we have all the streaming devices. We're already streaming every single one of our feeds right now to our streaming service provider. That's already there. On our end, there's not really much of a backbone that we would have to put in place. It would be more whoever would be chosen to build the app, how long it would take them to actually build the app. I don't really have a good time frame of how long that would take them to do.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: In your experience, is there anything that you think can be improved? I notice it mentioned, item 4 and item 11, that sometimes when we are capturing someone, you only see their head. Can it be included full-body those behind or at the front so that it gives a presentation of who these half faces of individuals are in the chamber?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I gave a list of improvements that there would be some cost to and some staffing requirements to, because we are constantly looking at improvements inside, on how we can improve the entire system within the current budget. We're often improving, as I mentioned, older equipment. We're often trying newer things—as mentioned last time, an entirely new graphic look for this Parliament, stuff like that where we can do that in-house without it costing us any more. We don't have to have any more money in the budget. No more staff is needed. So we're constantly doing that.

I didn't put any of those things that we're doing to improve, and we're always looking at improvements—and we always will be, to try and improve the product within the current budget and with the current staffing. The stuff that I have given to you is more of—I can't go and move towards, let's say, a second committee room being televised without the members wanting it because there are not only one-time costs in actually getting the equipment but there are ongoing staffing costs that would need to happen with that. That is something that is beyond what I can do within my current budget.

Yes, we are all often looking at how we can improve shots, how we can improve the quality of what we're doing and the equipment for what we're doing. As a management team, as an actual broadcast team in general, our entire staff, we're always looking at ways to continue to make it relevant for everybody.

We understand that people's viewing habits are changing. We understand that people's viewing habits are very different now than they were 10, 15 or 20 years ago. We know that the way your product gets distributed is really the way of the future. We don't believe that television cable is ever going to disappear. It's just that there are going to be multiple ways of getting the content, which is why while we're trying to improve the quality that goes out on the cable and satellite companies right now, we also want to think to how we get it to other people, as you mentioned: the people who are cutting cable, the people are not ordering cable, the people who like streaming services like Netflix and stuff like that.

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That's why these apps, to me, make a lot of sense: because we're able to get those people who would never get us on cable, who would never see us and who may—yes, they have access to us on the web or on their phone, but they may want to watch us on a big screen. It looks much better on a big screen if you have a dedicated app that you can then watch on that screen,

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Are there any further questions? So I would like to thank you—

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Oh, sorry. I don't know why I can't see out of this side of my eye. For heaven's sake. I apologize. MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you so much, Chair.

I do have another question. You've given us a list of possible things. If you had a magic wand, what's your wish list? In what order would you like to see them implemented?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: That's a good question. Again, I believe that the Apple TV and Android TV apps are a big one, because I believe that that will bring us viewers that we may not be currently getting. It gives us a way of actually making sure our content is being distributed by us in a really good quality. It would help us out in a lot of areas. To me, that would be a high priority.

I also think that televising the travel committees, adding a camera to the travel committees, would be good as well. We have this content. We're shooting it when we travel, but it's not airing on TV; it's only airing on the web. While that's happening, on TV we still have graphical ads for what may be coming down the road or the fact that the House will resume on such and such a day. We're not utilizing the content that we're doing, albeit that is somewhat limited because you're travelling maybe three to four weeks a year. But other than some equipment cost, there are no real extra staffing costs or anything that go along with that. I think that that would be a big one.

I like the idea, too, of being able to utilize the media studio. Right now, all of the press conferences that happen in the media studio really only go to the internal network channels throughout the precinct, so that the members and staff can watch it, and to the media. The public never really gets to see any of that whatsoever.

If we were able to put that on our website and then also air it on our television station later that night, it gives the public an opportunity to actually see all of the press conferences that happen here at Queen's Park and, again, utilize the content that we're already producing. We already have the equipment in place. We already have the staff in place. There are some staff implications to make sure that we have the simultaneous interpretation and some closed captioning, but for the most part, we're already producing that content and not necessarily utilizing in the best way we could.

Then, I think an additional committee room would also be a way of giving the public a sense of a much more open Parliament. We're letting you see as many of the committees as we can. Again, it gives us much more content to fill the airtime that we already have. We have an entire channel that we could fill if we had the content, and it's built in there.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: So you would put the sixth camera fourth on the list?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: For me, the sixth camera is definitely a nice thing to have, but I think there are other things that would give us more. The sixth camera doesn't give us more content, right? As mentioned before, on special occasions, we can bring another camera in there to do special things. It is a nice-to-have. Some of the other things, I think, give the public a little more—

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Bang for their buck.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, access, so to speak. They would get to see something that they're not currently seeing now that we already are doing. I think that they get a little more out of that than they would out, say, the sixth camera.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you very much. I have one last question, if I may. This question is about American Sign Language. Is that something that you deal with, or is that something that we deal with not with you, if we wanted to ask about getting all the proceedings signed and not just on special days? This is sort of to follow up on the question of my colleague across the table.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: As far as sign language when it comes to television, because we have it closed captioned, it's a bit redundant for us in a way because we're providing the closed-captioning services. Anybody who is hearing impaired can read it on the screen. It's there. For us, it actually takes away from the television broadcast to have a square of somebody up there signing. It takes away attention from the people are not hearing impaired and diminishes, sort of, the television product. We're already giving that service that they can basically read it anyway. For television, it's not something that I see gives a lot of extra. In terms of maybe for people that are within the chamber, it could. But we also have it up in the Speaker's gallery, so anybody who is hearing impaired can go up into the Speaker's gallery, and we do have closed captioning there. We also have closed captioning in the galleries as well. So there are things available for people within the chamber as well too.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Oosterhoff.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yes. Through the Chair: My suggestion was that we just make our own Netflix series, but I wasn't sure how that would go over.

In all seriousness, even just looking at the presentation here on the screen, one of the things I think that is important is involvement with the community. Respectfully, I think it's important that we ask you your perspective—you're working in this day to day. But I'd like to also, quite frankly—just to the committee, on a bit of a broader note—see what we can do when it comes to public engagement with this. They're the ones watching. Most of us will maybe see a clip here and there, but we're not sitting there watching.

I think about my page—I just took him out for lunch before this meeting, and I said, "How did you get involved? What made you interested in politics?" He said, "Watching the debate in question period." He's 13 and he's doing that, which is quite something.

Maybe asking people to get involved and send in submissions about, "What are the areas that you think we could improve?"—sort of like the way we're doing submissions here if you have a written submission you want to send to the pre-budget hearings committee. What about having a submission process to our committee about what that would look like? That's just something hypothetical, but I think the consumers themselves, the citizens, often have a pretty good idea about things that annoy them about what they're watching or ways that they want it changed.

I think of myself, even: With YouTube we can watch members' statements and we can watch question period. Why can't we watch everything else? You can only watch those things on the Legislative Assembly—and I use it all the time. Whenever I'm trying to show someone a clip or something from question period, I just pull up YouTube. It's a lot easier. There's an hour of clips there.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: This is also something that could be put into that Apple TV or Android TV type of app. Not only does it have the live feeds that you can choose from, but it can also then have, depending on how long you want it, question periods from the last however long, and members' statements from the last however long, that they can click on to watch as well.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Right. I think that's a great idea and I applaud it, but my question, I guess, is more to the committee about the appetite for public engagement on this sort of file. I get that it's our House and everything else, but I think it's important to involve the people. I don't know if there's any room for discussion or what your perspective would be on that, unless that's not something you're interested in—just feedback on it.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I'm always open to any way we can make things better and get more viewers. You always want to put out the best, most engaging product there is. We do have strict guidelines that we need to follow from the CRTC on what we are allowed to show. So there will be a lot of ideas that we just wouldn't be able to do because of our CRTC requirements. But you always want to be open to any great suggestions that you might not have thought of that would help the product.

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Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I even look at the President of the Treasury Board receiving 25,000 ideas from everyday

Ontarians about how the government can save money. Even if we receive 250 ideas from everyday Ontarians about how we could improve access to democracy here and their perspective on viewing our proceedings, I think that would already be a huge step.

That's not just to you. It's not really a question, but it's a commentary and something that I think we should, as a committee, consider. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): With no further questions, on behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for today. The committee will look forward to all of the information that you're going to bring back.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: I just want to be clear on what you're expecting from me. Am I waiting for the committee to say, "Here are some of the things that we would like more information on"?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): We can discuss that after, sure.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you.

Moving forward to discuss the report and what we'd like to do, do you want to have a discussion about that now, or would you like to set up another meeting to come back and discuss this? MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Madam Chair, I'd like to suggest, through you, that another meeting be scheduled to discuss the content of the report.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Is everyone in favour of that? Okay. We'll get more information when we come back, and what we're expecting.

Go ahead, MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I think that the specificity of the information that we're seeking relates to the budget impact. Members of the committee have been very clear in their questions about wanting to see a structured budget of what the additional costs would be if the recommendations before the committee were to proceed. I think that it would be helpful to have that information in advance of the next committee meeting. Therefore, we'd be in a stronger position to make a judgment on the way forward.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. Can I just clarify what information you're actually looking for from him for our next meeting? The points that he has are all on the front here—

Mr. Lorne Coe: In the recommendations before us, on this particular page, it talks about adding particular equipment. It talks about the potential—and I heard it in some of the answers—of assigning another person. Those are some of the implications that I think we need to understand going forward.

If there are going to be additional costs over and above what the allocation provided is in the current fiscal year, are there projections that there would be additional monies required going into the new fiscal year, appreciating that the fiscal year ends in April? I think that's what we're looking for, and I think that that's clear enough.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: If I can just add to that: Because I think you gave us a lot of the numbers here,

perhaps if we were to have them in written form, that would be useful.

In addition to that, in part because the apps are one of the key elements that I think we'd want to consider, I'm wondering whether everybody would like an exploratory sense as to at least a ballpark figure.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Because there are obviously a number of different recommendations—I would assume that the committee is not going to come back and say, "Yes. Go and do all of them"—it would help, for me, if the committee could back to me and say, "We like these three ideas. We like these two. We like this one. Can you get us more detailed costing on that?" Going through every single one of these and engaging with all of the people I would have to engage with to get costing and do all of that stuff—not only is it a lot of work to do, but it's also putting them in a situation where they're going to be expecting, "Oh, when are we going to be moving forward with stuff?"

If I could get some idea of, "Don't worry about these two. There are three that we might be quite interested in. Can you get us more detailed costing on that?", then I can very easily do that.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: We have basic costing as of this meeting, because that's what I was asking about. You were very kind to provide that, with the exception of the apps. So maybe we do have enough to have that initial conversation about what the things are that we're most interested in.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I think what we're looking for is a consolidation. To the point the MPP just made, some approximations were provided.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes.

Mr. Lorne Coe: We would like you to drill down a little bit further. Assuming that the recommendations you have before us today on how to improve the broadcast system—if you worked with the assumption that all of those were to be adopted, what would be the financial impacts? Is that clear enough?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, I can look into that. That will take some time to get all of those numbers.

Mr. Lorne Coe: That's fine. I think, though, that that's important information for the committee to have before making any ultimate decisions in determining what recommendations, if any, are adopted.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): I would suggest to committee that maybe we have another meeting and we can all sit down together and discuss which ones we would like to see as priorities, and then we will get back to Mr. Donofrio with those recommendations from our next meeting. Is everyone in agreement with that?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. That's wonderful.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'll give you a motion to adjourn, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you. Adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1406.

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