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**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

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Wednesday 20 March 2019

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Mercredi 20 mars 2019

Chair: Jane McKenna
Clerk: Valerie Quioc Lim

Présidente : Jane McKenna
Greffière : Valerie Quioc Lim

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Wednesday 20 March 2019

Mercredi 20 mars 2019

The committee met at 1302 in committee room 1.

TELEVISION BROADCAST SYSTEM

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Good afternoon. The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will now come to order. Before we begin, I would like to recap where we were in the committee's consideration of the television broadcast system.

As you may know, part of the committee's permanent mandate is to conduct this review. In response to the committee's invitation, the Clerk and the director of the broadcasting and recording service made a presentation and gave a fabulous tour to the committee back in November. The committee invited the director back and asked him to provide information and recommendations on how to update the assembly's television guidelines, which were adopted in 1986 and have not been changed since, and recommendations on how to improve the television broadcast system.

In the committee's last meeting in December, the suggested updates to the guidelines were distributed, and a list of suggested improvements. The committee was going to come back and discuss these items. Mr. Donofrio has provided budget numbers to assist the committee in its deliberation.

The committee has two separate items for consideration: the television guidelines, and suggestions for improvements. The Clerk is going to explain the process for us right now.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Thank you, Chair. In terms of procedure with the two items that are before the committee, with the guidelines, the suggested updates to it, if the committee would like, it's something that the committee can adopt. The Chair would present the guidelines to the House and move its adoption, and it would be up to the House to adopt it and then it will be the new guidelines for the assembly. The committee can also decide to revisit that at a later date.

The other item, which is the suggested improvements that the committee asked for: The committee can also decide to pick one or two or all of the items to endorse and make a report to the House for the House to adopt. If it's adopted, this would go to the Board of Internal Economy to see if there is funding for the implementation of these items.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: If we're ready to discuss both items, I'm prepared to speak to them.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. Which one would you like to speak to first?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to, first of all, speak to the television guidelines.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Oh, yes. Mr. Donofrio is here if you have any questions for him as well to answer.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I don't have any questions, but after reviewing the guidelines once again, the government would wish to revisit these guidelines at a later date, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay.

Mr. Donofrio, we'll give you the floor for a minute, because I think you have something else to present.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Just in terms of the guidelines: It's really to update the current way we do things and the current equipment. These were adopted back in 1986, when broadcasting first started, and been updated since then. It really deals with stuff—we used to send tapes to the Archives of Ontario. We don't do anything on tape anymore. Everything is file-based, and there's streaming and stuff now. So, it's just to update currently what we're doing. I just wanted to add that.

Mr. Mike Harris: Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Go ahead, MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Just to be clear: You are doing all of these things already?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: For example, if you look at number 16, you can see that a lot was crossed out there.

Mr. Mike Harris: Okay.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: That dealt with, each day, way back in 1986, the Clerk would come in, grab the tape, and then they would make sure that it would get to the Archives of Ontario for archiving. Of course, there are no tapes anymore, so what we do now is—

Mr. Mike Harris: You just back everything up.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: We ingest everything on files, and we back everything up on hard drives. We have a new media asset management system that we're going to implement this year, where everything will go into and be kept forever. So, it's just to update that process, because there are no tapes anymore, and nothing is being sent to the archives.

Mr. Mike Harris: As far as anything that's within the guidelines, there's no cost to implementing it.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: There's no cost at all. It's really wording, just to bring it up to 2019 standards—

Mr. Mike Harris: Twenty-first-century standards.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes.

Mr. Mike Harris: Gotcha. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): The Clerk is just passing it out right now. The only change that was updated is number 4.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: In the meeting that we presented, one of the members suggested a slight change to number 4, where we had said “only the member who has been recognized by the Speaker shall be recorded, broadcast or streamed.” She suggested, because there are some people in the background, that we just add wording to the effect that only the people who have been recognized by the Speaker “shall be the primary focus of the camera shot recorded, broadcast or streamed.” In other words, basically, there are going to be some people in the background.

Mr. Mike Harris: Obviously.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes.

Mr. Mike Harris: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Any more questions? Does the committee agree with what MPP Coe has said, that we'll revisit this at another date?

Interjections: Agreed.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): That's carried. MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'll now move to the item that's entitled “Budget Numbers for the Television Broadcast System Recommended Improvements.”

The government is prepared to support item 1 alone. The other items, as reflected in this costing summary, we would suggest be considered at a later date. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Go ahead, MPP Hassan.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: In the last meeting we had here, I think it was MPP Coe who requested that we come back to this. I think it's essential that the people we represent across the province are also clear about what is happening at the Legislature. That is essential for the updates for what is happening, because a lot of people are not able to view as the proceedings are happening. These are the suggestions that—I think we should proceed in a more responsible manner, because this is also advancing democracy, and advancing also the importance for viewers and the people we represent to view what's happening at the Legislature.

So, postponing it again—I think that this last time when we met, MPP Coe was the one who requested this, to postpone it. Is it possible, then, to proceed with this?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): MPP Hassan, just so I'm clear: Right now, we're speaking about the budget numbers. Is that what you're referring to?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Yes. He was speaking to the budget. Remember, the last time when we met, I think, was to bring clarifications about the budget. Now we have the director. I think my understanding was that the reason

we are doing this is to make sure that the proceedings of the Legislature are captured, and people have access to it in different forms and so forth. To that end, I think it is a work that needs to continue, and we should proceed as needed, because it's essential that people see what we're doing. It is what they requested. Professionals have done that.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Just to further elaborate for MPP Hassan, I think when you look at what is already available as far as being able to consume this through traditional media, being able to build in the Apple TV app and the Android app does give a pretty sufficient way for people to consume the broadcast in a more untraditional manner.

Moving forward, obviously we have some concerns with these numbers and what they entail. We're going to have to do a little bit more due diligence, I think, from the government side to be able to better understand these numbers. But with the committee supporting the initiative to move forward with the development of these apps, that will allow more people to be able to tune into what we're doing here.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is, when do you propose that we revisit this? My second question is why you specifically asked for the director to be here today to answer questions. Why did you do that if you have no intention of asking questions?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Are there any other questions or responses? Then we're going to move forward with item number 1, Apple TV and Android TV app, and we'll revisit the rest at a later date. Do you want to adopt it?

MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd ask, Chair, through you—I will give you a motion to adopt, from the paper entitled “Budget Numbers for the Television Broadcast System Recommended Improvements.” I'll give you a motion for the committee to adopt item 1 alone, that the balance of what's reflected here, which requires further scrutiny, be brought back at a later date, yet to be determined.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Can I get a 20-minute recess?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Does the committee agree to a 20-minute recess?

Mr. Mike Harris: I believe we've had a motion moved, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Can we recess for five minutes and then we'll get that motion written up, and then—

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Before we recess, sorry.

Go ahead, Mr. Donofrio.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: If I can make a quick comment on the Apple TV and Android TV apps: When I went to

get costing on this stuff and we realized how affordable it would be to start the process of a simple app to begin with—we have actually started this process within our current budget. A simple version of an Apple TV/Android and iOS app is currently being built and will be ready to be released in beta with the House feed and the Amethyst Room committee feed probably by the end of this month or mid next month already. So we've already started step one with this within our current budget, just so that everybody is aware of that.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): We'll recess for five minutes, we'll get the motion put together and then we'll come back at 1:20.

The committee recessed from 1314 to 1324.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): We'll resume. MPP Coe, would you like to move this motion?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes, I would. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that the committee adopt item number 1, which is specifically the Apple TV and Android app: (a) one-time cost to build applications, approximately \$3,000.

"Budget Numbers for the Television Broadcast System Recommended Improvements," as follows—I just read it for the committee's consideration.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): I'll just read the motion again.

"I move that the committee adopt item number 1 from the document titled 'Budget Numbers for the Television Broadcast System Recommended Improvements,' as follows:

"Apple TV and Android TV app

"(a) One-time cost to build apps. \$3,000."

Any more discussion? MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Am I not correct that, given that this is already happening, there is no motion required to consider it? If we do nothing here today, if we don't do a motion on it, it's still already happening, so the motion is de facto unnecessary. This is not new.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Any other discussion? We can adopt it, but MPP Berns-McGown is correct in what she's saying.

MPP Harris?

Mr. Mike Harris: Mr. Donofrio, if this motion is helpful, we're happy to move it. If it's redundant, then we don't need to move forward with it. It will be tabled in the Legislature that the committee does support what you're looking to achieve, but if you think it's unnecessary, then we don't need to proceed with it, as per MPP Berns-McGown's request.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: Yes, it's not really, at this point, necessary. Basically, within our current budget, we're always trying to improve the system, so we're always moving on things that we can do on our own. When I was asked to come with some recommended improvements in front of the committee, this was on the list. I had not costed it out yet. I hadn't known what it was going to cost, so it was on a list of something that we could do if everybody wanted.

When we started the process and realized we could do it within our current budget, we decided to do it, so at this point it's already under way. We're already doing it. I'm glad that everybody likes the idea, but it's happening already.

Mr. Mike Harris: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. So it's up to the committee to decide if you want to report it or withdraw it. It's open for discussion. MPP Coe?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Based on the response that we've just had from the director of broadcasting services, I'm prepared to withdraw the motion.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay, we'll withdraw it.

Mr. Mike Harris: Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Yes, MPP Harris?

Mr. Mike Harris: I did have a couple of quick questions about the budget numbers. When were these prepared? Are they recent? Are they a year or two old? Just out of curiosity.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: No, they are recent. When I appeared in front of the committee last time, when we recessed, I started looking at the numbers over the recess.

Mr. Mike Harris: Okay. So these would be the most current, up-to-date numbers that—

Mr. Michael Donofrio: These are the most current, up-to-date numbers. Some of them are construction numbers, so they deal with putting in lighting grids in the ceiling, for instance, adding electricity and stuff like that, so they're approximate without having—

Mr. Mike Harris: But it's as close as you can get.

Mr. Michael Donofrio: But they're as close as I can get, and they are numbers that are current, yes.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to ask the director a question. Since this report is current and up to date, my question is—this budget is necessary for you to carry on your work, to enhance the work we are doing here at the Legislature. Is that correct, that this is necessary?

Mr. Michael Donofrio: This is depending on what the members yourselves deem where you would like broadcast and recording to go. The status quo, what we are currently doing, what we are currently providing—we're good. We do a very good job with what we have. When asked how we can improve the system, these are some ways we can improve the system.

There are some other jurisdictions—Quebec, for example; Ottawa, for example—who do televise more than one committee room. There are others who don't. As a way of improving the system, that's just one suggestion: that if we want to have the public be able to see all or a little bit more of the proceedings that we currently do, we could televise, for example, the stuff that happens in this committee room or stuff that happens in this one and the following one. To do that, then this money would be necessary to do that aspect of it.

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But all these recommendations are just ways that we can enhance what we're doing, to make the system better. They're not something that is required for broadcast and recording to keep going. The committee asked if we could bring forward some recommendations on how we can make the system better. These are ways that we can make it better. If the members decide, "Hey, we really like that idea, but we don't really like that idea; we'd like to maybe move forward on this," I gave costing here so that you guys can decide whether it's worth the costing to do something like that.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I think that's a very important point, because I think it is important to update it, in order that mass members of the people of Ontario can have access to committee, to other deliberations of the Legislature. It strengthens democracy and voters or residents hear directly from their representatives. In order to enhance that, I think it is important, and I understand it's important to also make improvements.

Thank you for your comments.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Any more discussion? MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I do have a question, but not related to the motion. We're done with the motion, so I can ask another question, right?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Yes.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Okay. I wanted to know the rationale for delaying a decision on updating the television guidelines, given that all they're doing is being brought into line with current practice. I want to know what the rationale is for delaying the decision on that.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): I'm just clarifying that we are going back to the guidelines and that's what you're referring to.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: At this moment, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Any further discussion? MPP Hassan?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I think we need a specific period of time, say the next couple of meetings, that we specifically deal with this matter so that we make—

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Which matter?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: The matter of approving this budget that is required for continuation of the work that is necessary to improve the services that are needed to bring it up to date, as you know. Shall we then adapt or, say, reschedule the meeting?

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Just to clarify: You're speaking about the budget, correct?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Yes, the reason I'm speaking about the budget is we should support it as soon as possible, so that we're no longer delaying it, because I think the broadcasting services need it to update to continue their work. Our committee should be facilitating and helping that work go forward.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. MPP Harris?

Mr. Mike Harris: So in regard to the television guidelines, with MPP Hassan's blessing, I think in a two-week period we can reconvene and we can discuss moving the television guidelines forward at that point.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: So we're going to talk about the television guidelines in two weeks; on what date are we going to talk about the budget? I think we can't just say that we're going to push it off indefinitely. I think we need a date and perhaps we can do both in two weeks. That gives plenty of time for folks to go back and talk to their respective people—but two weeks to discuss both, not to kick it down the line indefinitely.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay, just so we're clear at the moment—for myself, anyway—the guidelines will be in two weeks, on April 3, and you're asking for both?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm asking for the budget to also be considered in two weeks and for it not to be delayed again.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Does the committee agree to that?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Yes.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes, we will agree with the guidelines coming back in two weeks' time.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I asked very specifically about the budget as well, in two weeks' time. That's the question.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Sorry, I didn't have a chance to recognize you. MPP Coe.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Madam Chair, point of order. We have cross-debate going on here in committee. The procedures of the committee don't permit that. I'll just leave that with you to sort out, please.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Why don't we start with the guidelines, just so we're clear, that we're coming back in two weeks to discuss. That's April 3. The committee agrees with that first? Okay.

Then with the budget, coming back in two weeks, does the committee agree? Okay. Both will be—

Mr. Mike Harris: Madam Chair, the budget will be deferred to a later date.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. All right. Does the committee want to set a date now for the budget?

Mr. Mike Harris: Not at this time.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Not at this time. Okay.

MPP Berns-McGown.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I would like to formally ask that we set a specific date to discuss the budget and not just kick it down the line indefinitely.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I propose that we discuss the budget also on April 3.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. We've agreed that—did you want to continue? Sorry, did I interrupt?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: No. My original discussion talk was the budget, not the guidelines. That's why I think it's essential—and I think MPP Coe agreed—that we should discuss it at the same time to move forward, so that we deal with the matter.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Just so we're clear first, before we move on: The guidelines—have agreed to April 3. We're just waiting to see open discussion for the budget, if you want to have a date now or another time. MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Madam Chair, we'll add the budget to be discussed further on that date as well.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay. That's April 3. I'll say that: April 3 for the budget and the guidelines. We'll set that date up for April 3 for both. Does everybody agree? It will just be the committee.

Mr. Mike Harris: Perfect.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Okay.

Mr. Mike Harris: Before we move on—sorry, Madam Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Go ahead, MPP Harris.

Mr. Mike Harris: Before we move into our closed session to discuss further business, I just wanted to congratulate the MPP for Brampton—

Mr. Gurratan Singh: East.

Mr. Mike Harris: —East on his brother's election into Canada's House of Parliament. I just wanted to read that into the record.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I appreciate that.

The Chair (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you so much, Mr. Donofrio. We appreciate all of your hard work and your answering some questions here today.

We'll recess and go into closed session.

The committee recessed at 1337 and later continued in closed session.

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