

## **TELEVISIONING THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick has been televising its legislative proceedings since 1988. New Brunswick was among the first Canadian provinces to bring video cameras into its Legislature. In 1988, the Legislature had an agreement with Fundy Cable Ltd. to televise from tape the Routine Proceedings (approximately two hours) of each sitting day on the community-access cable television channel (channel 10). The entire day's business of the Legislature was recorded on videocassette for archival purposes. Channel 10's coverage of the Legislature went live in 1989.

In the 1990s, Fundy Community Television expanded its live Legislature coverage to include almost an entire sitting day. As Fundy Cable Ltd. expanded to become Fundy Communications, with the community channel eventually becoming Rogers Television in 2001, broadcasting of the Legislature continued year after year on channel 10, or channel 9 in some communities.

In 2005 a Committee of the Legislative Assembly resolved to launch the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Television Service on a channel dedicated solely to the broadcast of legislative proceedings. The channel would provide gavel-to-gavel television coverage of all sitting days while the Legislature is in session. On March 28, 2006, the first broadcast took place on the dedicated channel. A new Speaker of the House was elected and the provincial budget was introduced by the Minister of Finance.

The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Television Service commences daily broadcasts of legislative proceedings at the prescribed start time for each sitting day. The proceedings are broadcast on Rogers Cable channel 70 in select New Brunswick communities served by the cable television company. Alternate official language tracks are provided on channel 70 by way of the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) function on most television sets. On channel 70 in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, Miramichi, and surrounding communities, English, whether spoken on the floor of the chamber or translated from French, is the primary audio with French (floor or translation) available through SAP. On channel 70 in Bathurst, Edmundston and surrounding communities, French is the primary audio with English available through SAP. The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Television Service is also provided on digital cable television channel 199 (in English) and on channel 656 (in French), with the availability of each channel varying from place to place. The SAP function is not available on the two digital cable channels, only on channel 70.

Prior to 2005, two video cameras, operated manually on the floor of the Legislature, were utilized for televising the proceedings. With the launch of the Legislature's dedicated television channel, the camera system was expanded and upgraded to five video cameras. The new cameras were positioned in the chamber for optimal camera shot composition from different angles. Cameras 1 and 2 are devoted to the Opposition side of the chamber, cameras 4 and 5 cover the Government side, and a center camera 3 is dedicated to the Speaker, the Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, or other perspectives as required.

All five cameras have robotic controls so as to be operable from a control room located in another part of the Legislature Building. Equipment was installed to enable the cameras to have pre-programmed framed shots of each Member. The signal for each camera to move to a speaking Member's framing shot is relayed from the Hansard microphone activation console in the Legislature chamber to the television control room. The producer in the control room can manually select a camera and, using a joystick, adjust the camera shot in the event that the composition of the shot changes, such as when Members slightly move from behind their desks when speaking. If necessary, the producer can override the microphone activation of each camera and select camera shots by direct manual input. The producer always has the ability to switch from camera to camera to ensure the best coverage.

Graphic identification, in both official languages, of each Member by name and riding or ministerial responsibility is also automatic upon microphone activation. However, the decision to display the graphic on-air when the Member rises to speak rests with the television producer in the control room. Daily agenda items, such as Question Period and Statements by Ministers, are also displayed on-screen manually by the producer.

The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Television Service provides graphic-free (i.e. "clean") video with floor audio to members of the Legislature Press Gallery, such as CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, and Global, for use in their newscasts. Floor audio with graphic-free video is also recorded on a server and on DVD-R for archiving and is streamed on the Internet for webcasting. Rogers TV is provided with daily Question Period, which is then televised at a designated time each sitting day, on various community channels. In 2009, the Legislature expanded its broadcast options to include scheduled repeats of the daily proceedings of the House.

When the Legislature is not in session, the graphics computer generates a rotating sequence of textual messages pertaining to the following: next scheduled sitting of the House; the regular Tuesday-to-Friday schedule by which the House sits; particulars of the channel's distribution; the hours for Legislature Building tours; news about upcoming Legislature events, including scheduled committee meetings; and several specially produced sequences on the Legislature's function, various offices, history, traditions, furnishings, general aesthetic and other subjects of interest to the public within the mandate of the channel. The music played on the channel during the message sequences is from CBC Radio's Galaxy 741 Baroque classical music station.

In 2007, profiles of each Member were added to the list of message sequences. Photographs of all 55 Members of the Assembly are shown with accompanying information on party affiliation, ministerial portfolio (where applicable), riding, and contact information.

The equipment, which includes the robotic cameras and the integrated system by which they operate, graphics computer, audio mixer, LCD television monitors, video distribution amplifiers, modulators, and all wiring and wiring patch bays, was installed in the Legislature by Applied Electronics Ltd. The trained personnel who work in the television broadcast facilities on a daily basis are provided by Rogers.

Ideas for additional message sequences or for other possible programming within the mandate of the channel are welcome, as are comments and questions about the channel. The Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick Television Service strives to provide comprehensive coverage of the legislative proceedings of the House, to strengthen the relationship between New Brunswickers and their elected representatives, and to inform the public about all facets of the Legislature and its various offices and responsibilities.

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