

GV5.2 Appendix 1

APPENDIX 1

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN OF LEGISLATIVE TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

The City Clerk's Office conducted a jurisdictional scan and received input on transcription services from the following jurisdictions:

House of Commons
Senate
Alberta
British Columbia
Manitoba
New Brunswick
Newfoundland and Labrador
Ontario
Québec
Prince Edward Island
Yukon
Nunavut
City of Winnipeg

The jurisdictional review focussed on Westminster-style jurisdictions that produce a verified, edited Hansard transcript. The City of Winnipeg is included as it is the only Canadian example, discovered by the review, of a municipal jurisdiction that produces a Hansard-style transcript. The transcript is limited to meetings of City Council, and produced in time for the following month's Council meeting.

Several USA cities, including Houston, Los Angeles, and Tampa, post their unedited captioning transcripts to their websites, while the City of Philadelphia uses a court reporting service to produce its transcripts.

Hours transcribed

The hours below indicate meetings of both the House and committees. The exceptions are Yukon and the City of Winnipeg.

Body	Hours
House of Commons	2,700
Senate	2,500
Ontario	1100
Québec	1850

Body	Hours
Alberta	328
British Columbia	675
Manitoba	500
New Brunswick	Statistic not available
Newfoundland and Labrador	360
Prince Edward Island	260
Yukon	270 (House only)
Nunavut	1200
Winnipeg	100 (Council only)

For comparison, Toronto Council and its Committees and Community Councils met for an average of 585 hours per year during the 2014-2018 session.

Staff complement

Most jurisdictions have an in-house service with dedicated staff, while a few jurisdictions outsource the service. Most jurisdictions employ a combination of full-time and part-time or sessional staff, as the volume of work increases during the parliamentary sessions and decreases when the legislature is recessed or prorogued.

Body	Complement
House of Commons	165 (25 percent Full-time; 75 percent Part-time)
Senate	33 Full-time; 13 Part-time
Ontario	21 Full-time
Québec	19 Full-time; 24 Part-time
Alberta	6 Full-time; 22 sessional
British Columbia	40 employees: 11 regular staff (3/4 time schedule); remainder auxiliary staff called in for work as needed, usually 600-800 hours/year

Body	Complement
Manitoba	6 Full-time; 25 Part-time
New Brunswick	10 Full-time
Newfoundland and Labrador	8 Full-time; 15 Temporary
Prince Edward Island	1 Full-time; 4 Part-time
Yukon	0; service is contracted out
Nunavut	0; service is contracted out
Winnipeg	0 dedicated staff; 3-5 days' staff time required per meeting

Costs

The costs provided vary from \$575 to \$1800 to produce the transcript for an hour's debate. Some figures include fixed costs. Some jurisdictions were unable to provide an estimate, as the line items are shared among several departmental budgets.

Process

On average, it takes one hour to transcribe a five-minute segment of audio, which includes time for verification.

In most jurisdictions, transcribers transcribe manually from a digital audio feed. The audio is often annotated to indicate who is speaking and the time, to make it easier for the transcribers to attribute. Some jurisdictions use a captioning feed or scanned speaking notes as a starting point for the text, while some prefer to transcribe from scratch. One jurisdiction employs machine shorthand reporters, whose translation of the shorthand into text forms the foundation for not only the transcript but also the captioning feed. There are at least two jurisdictions who use their transcript for the captioning, in which instance the captioning is only available with the replay.

Every jurisdiction's process varies, but the common steps include the following:

- a. the digital recording is transcribed, usually by several staff working on short excerpts of a single meeting;
- b. the excerpts are reassembled into a draft which is sometimes made internally available;
- c. the draft is copy-edited, proofread, and published.

Most jurisdictions provide both a printed and a digital version of the transcript.

In many cases, the jurisdiction's Standing Orders (rules of procedure) dictate to some degree the form and content of the transcript, and provide the authority for its production.

Technology

All but one jurisdiction uses transcription technology to manage workflow. These are either off-the-shelf or proprietary in-house designed programs that divide the audio into short segments, time it and synch it to any existing text, such as a captioning feed and scanned notes, and enable several staff to work simultaneously on a single meeting.

The most widely used software, among those jurisdictions that don't have a house-built product, is produced by Sliq Media.

No jurisdiction routinely uses automatic voice recognition software in transcript production. The consensus is that the technology is not yet mature. A few have experimented with programs such as Dragon Naturally Speaking but did not find it practical, noting that it had to be trained on each voice. One jurisdiction reported some success with re-voicing a meeting and using the software – an application that was useful when a transcriber was injured and not able to type at full speed.

Publishing Standards

In most legislatures, the turnaround standard for the House Hansard is to have it published for the next day, and somewhat later for committees. In some smaller jurisdictions the turnaround standards are longer, and some jurisdiction prioritize Question Period or any sections of debate requested by Members, then transcribe the rest in sequence over several days.