

The Official Report Hansard: The Official Report of Debate

What is Hansard?

Hansard is the official report of debates for the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Hansard Services records, transcribes and prints the debates of the Legislative Assembly and its parliamentary committees. As a unit of Hansard Services, Hansard Broadcasting televises live proceedings from B.C.'s Legislative Chamber and provides a live and archived webcast over the Internet. Committee of Supply or Committee of the Whole proceedings in the Douglas Fir Room are also webcast live over the Internet and broadcast at the conclusion of morning and afternoon sittings. Audio podcasts of Question Period are available on the Internet.

Hansard is the official report of debates for Commonwealth parliaments and legislatures around the world.

Hansard's Mission

Hansard Services supports the work of the members, officers and staff of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and fosters public awareness and understanding of the legislative process by making the proceedings of the House and its committees accessible to all British Columbians.

A Brief History of Hansard

The name Hansard dates back to early nineteenth century Britain, when Luke Hansard and his son Thomas, printers to the British Parliament, produced a transcript of proceedings. Published as Debates, this service continued under private contract until 1908, when the British Parliament began producing a publicly funded record of debate.

The name Hansard was later attached to these reports in formal recognition of the Hansard family's contribution. It also remains the informal name given the reports.

The Canadian House of Commons has had a complete Hansard report since 1880. British Columbia's Hansard, first introduced in 1970, became a complete printed report in 1972. Since 1991, House proceedings have also been televised live and in full, with closed-captioning for the hearing impaired added in 1994.

DID YOU KNOW...

Hansard is "a full report, in the first person, of all speakers alike, a full report being defined as one 'which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument.'" Written in 1907 for the U.K. Parliament in Westminster, this statement of Hansard policy still applies throughout the Commonwealth.

How Hansard is Produced

Hansard begins with a digital recording of all debates. Console operators located in the House or in committees switch on microphones as each MLA is recognized by the Speaker or Chair and begins to speak. Console operators

make annotations to each audio file, correctly identifying the member(s) speaking and the House or committee business underway.

Hansard Services editors receive the digital recording in five-minute audio files for transcription and editing. These files go through a four-stage process, from transcription to final proof. Editors ensure legislative procedure is represented clearly, remove repetitions and redundancies and correct obvious errors. Hansard remains a substantially verbatim account of what takes place during debates in the Legislative Chamber or in committees. At peak production Hansard processes over 16,000 words an hour. A comprehensive index of all House proceedings is produced in both a printed and online format. An online index is produced for parliamentary committees.

Automated equipment in the Chamber streamlines the gavel-to-gavel television broadcast of Assembly proceedings. Robotic cameras linked to the microphone system focus on each MLA as they are recognized in the Chamber and allow Hansard Broadcasting staff to make last-minute adjustments to each shot prior to going on air. When cameras are in position, a computer signals the recall of the name, party label and riding (or Cabinet portfolio) of the selected member. Hansard Broadcasting staff insert this information on-screen, as well as inserting scrolling information bars at the bottom of the screen to improve public understanding of the House proceedings or committee business underway.

The broadcast is enhanced by a closed-captioning service. Free podcasts of each week's Question Period are available on the Legislative Assembly's website. Users can also subscribe to a feed that automatically delivers the latest podcasts and plays them on any device that supports digital audio files.

All proceedings of the House are webcast live over the Internet and are also available as an archived webstream.

How to Access Hansard Transcripts and Broadcasts

Complete first drafts, known as Blues, are uploaded to the Internet in batches as they are completed, usually within an hour of a debate taking place. Within approximately three hours after debate ends, enhanced versions of the complete Blues are uploaded. These draft transcripts can be accessed online via the Legislative Assembly's website.

Final transcripts of each sitting are also available on the website. These are posted to the Internet on the second morning of the day following each sitting. Hard copies are printed by the Queen's Printer and can be ordered through the Crown Publications retail book store. Bound volumes of Hansard are also available to the general public at major public libraries across B.C.

Draft transcripts of parliamentary committee proceedings are normally available on the Legislative Assembly website the same day. Draft transcripts of travelling committee proceedings are available within a few days. Final transcripts are on the website within a week of committee meetings taking place. Live and archived audio of all Select Standing Committee debates held in open session is available on the Legislative Assembly website. Proceedings of Select Standing and Special Committees are not televised.

Hansard Broadcasting's satellite broadcast signal is provided free of charge to all cable television companies, and live legislative broadcasts of House proceedings are available in most locations around the province. Consult local TV listings for channels and times. When the House is in session, Question Period is rebroadcast shortly after the end of the broadcast of live proceedings from the Legislative Assembly. Question Period rebroadcast is followed by the broadcast of House proceedings from the Douglas Fir Room. For information on channel guides, broadcast schedules and links to podcasts and live and archived webcasts, please go to the Hansard home page at www.leg.bc.ca/hansard.

Visiting the Legislative Assembly

WE WELCOME VISITORS. Free tours of British Columbia's Parliament Buildings are available Monday through Friday throughout the year, and seven days a week in the summer months.

To see MLAs in action, visitors are welcome in the public galleries of the Legislative Chamber whenever the House is sitting. Please note that the galleries are often full during Question Period – the 30-minute period every Monday to Thursday when MLAs ask questions about government activities.

For further details, visit www.leg.bc.ca or contact:
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To visit the Parliament Buildings, go to www.leg.bc.ca/tours or contact:

Parliamentary Tour Office
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