

Mercredi le 6 avril 2020

May 6th , 2020

Dear Ms.Sahota,

Dear Mr.Richards et Mr.Thérien ,

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs

Considering the present circumstances with Parliament and committees not being able to proceed as usual, permit me to present for your consideration another format for the virtual Parliament based on my previous experience .

Mohammed Moussa of Global AV and I created a method that allows for as normal as possible working conditions for Parliament , under the circumstances, withing a remote context with interpretation . Parliament has proven its willingness to innovate at short notice and it is within that spirit I write to you.

This other version of a virtual Parliament could be deemed to be Satellite Parliament with Ottawa as the hub from which the House itself would function normally with the usual protocols.

Due to the vast differences that exist in internet quality across the country, this system bypasses them altogether , thereby insuring equality to all electoral districts . For the user, the only stipulations would be the wearing of a headset to hear the floor and/or the interpretation and use of a push to talk microphones which the MP's are already used to.

The solution does entail travel for the more rural and remotely located members but only within their province or territory. The upside would be better working conditions for all concerned, including the interpreters who depend on high quality sound . The system is ISO PAS-24019

compliant for the audio standards set for remote interpretation which protects from acoustic shock.

The set-up :

One room per province or territory to be found in a major hub . The number of sites could be increased depending on the number of MP's and the needs for social distancing. Each room could be configured like Parliament itself, majority party to the right of the Speaker of the House, other parties to his/her left. One desk per MP. A symbolic clerks table could be placed in the middle of the room. Every MP would have a view to the Speaker by way of a giant monitor at the back of the room and be able to address him/ her while standing just like they do normally. A camera person would be in every room filming anyone having the floor. Some form of decor resembling the real Parliament could be set-up, thereby helping the MP's and the viewing public have a realistic experience. In Ottawa itself , the Speaker, the clerks and the NCR region MP's plus those necessary for the quorum would remain in situ. Each would be able with their own monitor to see their colleagues across the country. Staff interpreters would remain in Ottawa .Broadcast would be as usual.

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Our experience in similar circumstances

In 2016, my client Ms.Luisa Ritacca of Stockwoods LLP in Toronto, was appointed court monitor in the Hepatitis C settlement case. She requested live simultaneous interpretation to be held in three cities at once , the main reason being that many of the victims of Hep C were just too ill to travel to testify. I told her that to my knowledge, that had never been done before, but I would try to find a way. I immediately phoned Mohammed Moussa of Global Av who has provided audio services to the Senate for the past ten years. It was a huge challenge but between our imaginations and his technical genius (he is part of the ISO committee on remote interpretation standards) we came up with a solution. We began by connecting three cities Vancouver,

Montreal and Toronto with audio, vidéo and two way interpretation. A year later, Edmonton was added to the network.

The judges were The Hon. Justice Paul Perrel of the Ontario Superior Court, the Hon. Justice Chantal Corriveau of Superior Court of Quebec, the Hon. Justice Vital Ouellette of the Queen's Bench of Alberta and the Chief Honourable Justice Christopher Hinkson of the B.C. Supreme Court. We are very proud of this technical success and quite grateful that they put their trust in us.

In a setting similar to what I have described above, the judges were together in Toronto (their choice) but witnesses and lawyers could follow the proceedings in each location and could make statements in the language of their choice, while the interpreters remained in Toronto with the judges. Thanks to their headset, all remotely located participants had access to the floor and the interpretation, as did everyone in Toronto. The judges were provided with a monitor each; there was another giant monitor for everyone in each court room, and everything was done in real time. The judges quickly adapted to the technology and enjoyed it. This experience was repeated on several other occasions.

Apart from the House of Commons, this method could equally be used for Committees, commissions of inquiry and later on, in a post-Covid-19 world perhaps to meet the needs of MP's who live the furthest away from Ottawa and therefore must travel a great deal.

We are looking forward to answering any questions you may have.

Cordially,

Pascale Garrett, Interpreter, AiiC Member and freelancer for the Translation Bureau
and

Mohammed Moussa, Président de Global AV et Pro-Comm Audio