

President's Report for 1998/99

By now it is almost trite to say 'it has been another busy year,' but there is no other way to describe 1998/99. We broke some new ground in the past year – not only did we respond to a near record number of *Canada Gazette* notices (we did not bother to check to see if we were one or two more or less than in other years), we worked, in partnership, with *Industry Canada* to produce a whole new set of documents to support the introduction of new services and new spectrum management techniques in the 24-38 GHz bands. We began this process in 1998 and finished in the late summer of 1999. The project involved the production of a new class of RABC service – we have created two new publications (a default coordination procedure and a technical study) to help members, and the radiocommunication industry at large, to manage these new services with minimum levels of interference from the Department. This work was done, primarily, by the Fixed Wireless Communications Committee and, specifically, by the members of Sub-Committees A and C, co-chaired by Keith Doucet of **EFC/Newbridge Networks** and Rémi Chayer of **EFC/Harris**. It is a bit unfair to single out individuals, but they – those who have gone on to other things and those who are still working within the Radio Advisory Board of Canada have every right to feel very proud of a job well done.



The 24-38 GHz project is illustrative of the pressures which face all of us in the Board – broadcasters, service providers, network operators, manufacturers, users and regulators, alike. Canadians are demanding new and better services. They see a problem with highway safety, for example, and we are part of the solution. Canadians want more information and entertainment – at home, at the cottage or at the beach – we have a role in helping to provide that. We want to play an active role in the world – deploying our armed forces from East Timor to the Arctic – the **Department of National Defence** is an active member of the Board, working in our committees to help solve its own problems. It does not seem to matter where we look – digital broadcasting, the famous 3rd generation or new multi-point distribution systems – RABC members are in the forefront of bringing Canadians the new radio services they need.

There were about 50 meetings of committees, sub-committees and working groups this year. We can 'guesstimate' that we, as a group, spent about 750 'person-days' working, in committee, on RABC business, and, certainly, as much time 'back in the office.' At a further guess, that work divided about 2:1 industry to government. Our committee work, in other words, was about the same, quantitatively, as the Department might have done, for itself, with four additional engineers; qualitatively the measure is much higher because you, sponsors, sent one-of-a-kind subject matter experts to the table to help with our work. The partnership, in other words, is strong.

We made more and more effective use of information technology in 1998/99. There was much greater and better use of conference calls to help save you, sponsors, time and money. We improved the web site to make it easier to use. We began experimenting with using the web site and teleconferencing, together, for business. The fact remains that all of us – industry and

government people alike - are doing more RABC work. The question, with which we need your help, is: are we doing it well enough, effectively enough, efficiently enough and in a timely manner? If you can say, 'no' or 'yes, but' to any of those questions then please tell us how you want us to improve.

We lost some members in 1998:

- AT&T Canada ended a very, very long association with the Board – going back to the days of CN/CP Tel. This is part of the evolution of the industry – AT&T is getting out of the radiocommunication business and new companies are entering;
- Teleglobe dropped out because they felt that 90%+ of their interests were international while 90%+ of our work is domestic – that is only partially correct, see my comments, below about international standards work; and
- The Canadian Satellite Users Association left because they do not feel that there are any current issues with which the Board help them – that is also only partially true, but we can understand the pressure to get full value for every bit of resource expended.

I directed the staff to take a look at the impact these losses have on the substantive work we do in committee. 'Little or none,' was the report back to me; AT&T told us they have little interest in radio any more, all of the members of CSUA are still represented through other sponsor member organizations and associations, and Teleglobe had stopped participating in the work of technical committees some time ago. On a happier note, we gained a valuable and very active member in 1998 – the **Frequency Coordination System Association** joined and participates actively in committee work.

Membership remains an important issue. There are ongoing changes in our industry which will effect our membership – some long time sponsors may go, potential new ones may appear. We need to keep our membership under constant review because we want to represent the broadest possible 'base' of the radiocommunication industry in Canada – that is implicit in our partnership with the Department. Are we, for example, well equipped – in terms of members – to deal with issues like regulations designed to enhance the use of radio in all aspects of health care? What about committee members to deal with issues surrounding transportation?

We must all be on the lookout for new members – both for likely sponsors and, especially for the experts we need in committees. Just for example: could we not have other regional associations analogous to the **Western Canadian Telecommunications Association** – which might include manufacturers, service providers, universities and utilities – some of whom are not, currently, represented in the RABC's committees? Might we want to encourage the **Solicitor General of Ontario**, for example, to expand his membership to include other provincial agencies e.g. TV Ontario and the Ministry of Transport? Also, for example, how do we get members to the table from groups who have occasional interests in the management and use of the radio frequency spectrum? We worked, this year, with CABA (the Continental Automated Building Association) on RSS-210 – CABA is unlikely to qualify for sponsor membership because it does not have an 'important' interest in the business but CABA is a member of one of our members and so we were able to take their interests into account, in committee. What about the medical device manufacturers and vendors and the hospital administrators – how do we get them to the table?

We have, once again, agreed to join with the Department to co-sponsor another symposium in the Spectrum 20/20 series. The next one will be held in about one year – on 29 and 30 November

2000, in Ottawa, at the Château Laurier, just after the 2000 Annual General Meeting of the RABC. Dr. Sabah Towajj of Industry Canada has agreed to chair the Programme Committee – he is assisted by Suzanne Lamarre (CBC), Elisabeth Neasmith (DND), Paul Rayment (EFC/Nortel Networks), Bill Taylor (Stentor/Bell Canada) and Vito Vinodrai (Mobility Canada/Bell Mobility) from the Board as well as by experts from within the Department. Our General Manager, Ted Campbell, will be responsible for organizing Spectrum 20/20 – he will be in contact with members re: participation and sponsorships over the next year. Our aim in co-sponsoring Spectrum 20/20 is to provide a service to our members and to the industry at large – we need to know what you want from Spectrum 20/20, so please, give your ideas to the appropriate people.

Finally, a word about collateral work. While Teleglobe was, partially, correct about our domestic focus that is changing – it has been changing for some time. Members of RABC committees are very active in a wide range of international fora and they are bringing RABC output documents to the international tables and international problems are coming to the RABC for review and advice. RABC committee members are active in the ITU, CITELE, ETSI, TIA and IEEE, to name but a few fora. The Board has not, yet, taken a formal role in those organizations and we will not do so until we can make a necessary and positive contribution. The lack of a formal role does not, however, mean that we are either disconnected or unconcerned.

Change seems to be the only constant in our work. You will see even more changes in the coming year – many will be changes for the better as we, in the Radio Advisory Board and in the radiocommunications community at large, find better ways to serve Canadians. Changes come with a price and we will pay part of that price as old friends and colleagues move to new jobs or retire and leave the rest of us to find other ways to do the work which was on their plate.

Members will know that Mrs. Mary Short – our former administrative assistant, who retired only last year – died in the early fall, after a car accident. We expressed our collective condolences to the Short family.

I suspect that few, if any, members have been involved with the Board longer than I. That seniority allows me to make one forecast: we will have more to do next year, it will be more difficult, more contentious, and more important to our parent associations, organizations and companies, and to Canadians. I hope that sponsors will continue to support the Board's work – through your dues but, even more important, by continuing to provide the excellent people who do the substantive work of the Board in committees. What we are doing, in partnership, with Industry Canada, is for our collective benefit – as companies, as associations and consortia and as Canadians. Sponsors, I believe, are getting a bargain from the RABC. The fact is that we are the Department's most trusted advisors and we are representing our collective views in an efficient and effective manner. There are alternatives, but do we really want to go to the Department, association by association and company by company and ask them to sort out our business for us? That is expensive, time consuming and risky. I remain convinced, after all these years, that we, in the RABC, have found a good *modus operandi* allowing us to work in partnership with the Department for our mutual benefit.

Good luck to us all in 2000!

R.D.C. Coles
President
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