

17 March 2017

Mr John McCormick  
Chair  
Commission on Parliamentary Reform  
Scottish Parliament  
Room CG.07  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

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Dear Mr McCormick

### **STV SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSION ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM**

STV has an office and television studio in Holyrood which is the permanent base for two staff. The Holyrood team produces news reports, interviews and live analysis for STV News on broadcast and digital platforms. The main broadcast output provides four regionalised editions of STV News at Six covering Glasgow and the West, Edinburgh and the East, Aberdeen and the North and Dundee and Tayside.

STV's dedicated political reporter works from our Holyrood office on a regular basis and STV's digital output is also supported by the wider political unit.

Additional output includes extensive coverage of parliamentary proceedings on Scotland Tonight, which was launched in 2011 and has established itself as Scotland's leading current affairs programme.

Parliamentary highlights include chamber debates, First Minister's Questions and committee hearings, which are covered in a dedicated programme on STV's local channels for Glasgow and Edinburgh and transmitted on Sundays. With the extension of this network to cover Ayr, Aberdeen and Dundee areas later in 2017, the audience reach for this channel will expand to cover 80% of Scotland's population on DTT, supported by universal reach on DSAT.

STV has produced dedicated programmes covering major debates live, including the two-day debate on a second independence referendum on March 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Scotland Tonight will broadcast live from the Scottish Parliament as part of a special three-night run following Easter weekend this year.

**STV operational experience at the Parliament**

Both the Parliament press office staff and broadcast office staff are very helpful – particularly in helping us get archive committee/chamber footage as we currently can't store large amounts of media on site.

Parliamentary teams have been very supportive of our project to broadcast live from Holyrood in April and we believe this will add to wider public understanding of the institution.

**STV suggestions for consideration**

STV would welcome the ability to interview non-MSPs on Parliamentary estate. It would be useful if there was a dedicated room set aside for this purpose or alternatively an area of the building. In our experience, the Public Lobby is usually too dark and the noise levels are too high.

Some committee rooms, in particular room 6, would benefit from additional cameras to deliver higher-quality broadcast material from committees. This issue could be addressed by scheduling the more newsworthy committees in the main committee rooms and the more administrative ones in the smaller rooms. Over the last few months, the Economy Committee has regularly met in Room 6 while conducting its Brexit inquiry. Proceedings were often newsworthy but challenging to report because it was covered using only two cameras. Perhaps future booking adjustments could be made with improved consultation between clerks and press officers. We have been offered the opportunity to install our own additional cameras but resource constraints don't allow that.

Furthermore, in some committee rooms, lighting can be an issue which again impacts on our ability to broadcast the proceedings satisfactorily. In the upper rooms, glare and refraction is an issue which can, on particularly sunny days, make the footage unusable. This can be a challenge in the chamber too when there is particularly strong sunlight. Perhaps blinds could be installed to manage the impact of the sunlight, which could avoid the need to compromise coverage.

All broadcasters film arrival shots before FMQS in the glass corridor next to the chamber. However, it's poorly lit and would benefit from enhancement.

There are often functions in the Garden Lobby, which is also the main point for broadcast live reports. An alternative location would be welcome or the ability for access to the public gallery of the debating chamber on a more regular basis.

- 3 -

On a more ambitious note, there would be a real benefit if broadcasters had access when required to a dedicated bookable broadcast studio which could be used for special coverage of debates and parliamentary events. Current resources are based on a one-contributor studio and single camera plug-in boxes. STV has regularly used the multi-camera studio facilities operated by the European Parliamentary Broadcast Unit in Brussels for special coverage for Scotland Tonight, with very satisfactory results. A dedicated space at Holyrood with three cameras and simple production facilities would be a significant enhancement and would enable STV for example to provide additional broadcast coverage for our expanding second channel STV2.

**In conclusion**

STV's news output from Holyrood has increased significantly as devolution has matured and we anticipate it will increase further as the Parliament exercises its additional powers.

Yours sincerely

**Gordon Macmillan**  
**Head of News**