

PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUREAU

Annual Report

1999-2000

pab

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Highlights

The mission of the Public Affairs Bureau is to help the government in its ongoing dialogue with Albertans by providing quality, coordinated and cost-effective communications services.

Some of the Bureau's key accomplishments for the 1999-2000 fiscal year include:

- offering Albertans increased public involvement through the Alberta Connects initiative (including a toll-free phone comment line and Internet access to government), Alberta Children's Forum, Minister's Forum on Learning, Health Summit '99, and the Alberta Summit on Justice, to name a few;
- comprehensive communications support to government programs and services affecting Albertans and their communities, such as a Community Development Conference, Edmonton Homeless Count, Education property taxes, Health Care Protection Act, Protection Against Family Violence Act, Treaty 8 celebrations, and several trade missions;
- publishing the most comprehensive Government of Alberta telephone directory ever, providing access to telephone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses from one source. The complete up-to-date Government of Alberta listings was also introduced to the Internet at www.gov.ab.ca/directory;
- continuing to revise the Statutes of Alberta, which is well on its way to making the Official Legislation more accessible to Albertans. 1999-2000 saw the completion of the research and development phase in revising the Statutes of Alberta;
- the innovative use of new communications technologies, including the creation of an interactive "virtual forum" as part of the Alberta Children's Forum, and introducing the use of images, audio and video clips on the Government of Alberta web site and Premier's Home Page;
- ongoing efforts to deliver quality service and products to Albertans in the most cost-effective way possible, through initiatives such as enhancing public feedback options on the Premier's Home Page, increasing the use of Alberta Connects as an information link in government publications and on the Internet, publishing eight editions of *Report to Albertans* in daily, weekly and community newsletters across the province, and producing four Alberta Connects television programs covering Budget '99, education, the economy, and health care, along with the Premier's Televised Address; and
- creating and managing an electronic newspaper clipping service (*e-Clips*) for shared use across government.

Organization Chart



Operational Overview

Our clients are:

- Albertans receiving information from government;
- Queen's Printer Bookstore customers;
- RITE telephone system users; and
- ministry clients using central Bureau and communications branch services.

The Government of Alberta Home Page received over **2.4 million** page requests over the 1999-2000 fiscal year.

The Bureau coordinated the purchase of more than **\$7 million** worth of advertising services and some **\$5 million** worth of print and graphic design services on behalf of government ministries in 1999-2000.

The Public Affairs Bureau's spending for 1999-2000 was \$256,000 below its authorized total of \$8.97 million. Bureau revenues exceeded the target of \$1.525 million by more than \$274,000.

The eight core businesses of the Public Affairs Bureau are to:

1. supply professionals to government ministries to develop and implement communications programs;
 2. provide communications planning and consulting support to government;
 3. coordinate government communications to and from Albertans on government initiatives, and during public emergencies;
 4. provide specialized writing and editing services to government;
 5. manage the Regional Information Telephone Enquiries (RITE) system, to give Albertans toll-free access to government;
 6. publish and sell Alberta's laws and other government materials, and operate the Queen's Printer Bookstores in Edmonton and Calgary;
 7. deliver information, including managing the government's use of information technology (e.g. the government's Internet Home Page, and the province-wide distribution of news releases) and technical support for major government news conferences and announcements; and
 8. help government ministries purchase communications support services, including advertising, printing and graphic design.
- 1999-2000 marked the introduction of the Public Affairs Officer Certification Program. Launched in February 2000, the program supports professional development, encourages career growth and recognizes outstanding Public Affairs Officers who have achieved a high level of competency and professionalism.
 - The Public Affairs Officer Internship Program was launched in January 2000. Four people started their nine-month internships, designed to provide a number of training and hands-on opportunities, developing entry-level communications professionals for the Public Affairs Bureau.
 - The Bureau's *People At Their Best* recognition program was expanded in 1999-2000. The new Thank You card component encourages staff to be involved in a spontaneous, timely and informal method of recognition. From September of 1999 to January 2000, 265 recognition cards were presented to staff, averaging 53 per month.

- Feedback from Bureau staff collected for the *Government of Alberta Core Human Resource Measures Project – 1999 Survey of Employees* continues to show an increase in overall satisfaction among employees at the Bureau.
- The 1999 In-House Training Calendar featured sessions to develop management skills across the organization, including *Face to Face Leadership – Part one and two* (developmental sessions for non-management staff); and a one-day Service Excellence Conference on leadership skills. These courses were part of a comprehensive in-house training calendar covering 25 communications, technical and professional development sessions. Staff can also access an annual learning account to help enhance their overall professional skills.

Core human resource measures

A 1999 survey of PAB staff showed:

- **95%** of PAB employees are satisfied in their work as a Government of Alberta employee;
- **93%** of PAB employees understand the Government of Alberta's goals and priorities; and
- overall, higher results in 1999 than 1998 in all but four of the 26 questions.

1999-2000 Key Activities

The Public Affairs Bureau met its business plan objectives for 1999-2000 through a wide variety of projects and initiatives, including the following examples.

Goal 1

Increase Communications with Albertans in the Areas They Identify as Top Priorities

The Bureau assigns communications staff to ministries across government to help ensure the strategic planning, development and delivery of public information programs. Communications initiatives in top priority areas in 1999-2000 include:

- *Health Care Protection Act* (Health and Wellness) – Communicated to Albertans through a series of initiatives, including the Premier's television announcement, a Bill 11 web site, automatic e-mail updates to Albertans who requested it, newspaper updates, and mailing a complete copy of the proposed legislation to Alberta households;
- *Student Health Initiative* (Learning) – Successfully communicated, resulting in significant local media coverage of an initiative that improves access to integrated health and related support services for children with special health needs who are registered in school programs;
- *Get Ready Alberta* (Economic Development) – Strengthening the Alberta Advantage is the province's new economic strategy, launched February 2000. The strategy is communicated with Albertans via the Internet, newspaper updates, media reports, as well as distributed to key stakeholder groups including the education, business, environment, technology, and agriculture sectors;

- *a new innovative web site* (Justice and Attorney General) www.gov.ab.ca/just/ – Reviewed and approved content, and assumed responsibility for the management of the site;
- *The Fair Trading Act* (Government Services) – Supported communication initiatives to raise consumer awareness and promote a fair marketplace;
- *Community Development Conference* (Community Development) – Provided communications planning support and media liaison for this, the first conference of its kind, designed to assist communities to build and maintain a high quality of life in Alberta;
- *Symposium on Aging Conference* (Community Development) – Provided strategic communications planning and media relations for 15 public focus groups; and
- *electronic communications* – Bureau staff continued to respond to the increasing demand for information in electronic formats. A range of resources developed in 1999-2000 include opportunities for Albertans to provide feedback through the Premier's Home Page and Children's Forum web site (Children's Services).

Goal 2

Make Government Information More Accessible to Albertans

Access to information through ACN

The Alberta Communications Network (ACN) provides media and public access to Alberta government news releases. In 1999-2000, ACN:

- provided access to more than **1,500** news releases and announcements;
- recorded **485,000** document requests from www.gov.ab.ca/acn.cfm; and
- received more than **5,200** requests for news releases through its fax-on-demand service resulting in the fax distribution of more than **11,200** documents.

Public involvement – Communications staff assist their client ministries in a variety of public consultations across Alberta. A record number of Albertans communicated their views about important issues facing the province in 1999-2000. Of those:

- 36,000 Albertans attended nearly 900 meetings and workshops;
- more than 23,000 oral and written submissions were provided at public hearings and meetings; and
- almost 838,000 Albertans used government information lines to express their opinions and request information.

This participation (897,000 Albertans) is an increase of 30,000 over 1998. Examples of communication support to public involvement in 1999-2000 include:

- more than 1,000 Albertans including 100 youth delegates took part in the *Alberta Children's Forum* in October 1999;
- 200 Albertans from across the province provided valuable input on ways to foster lifelong learning at the *Minister's Forum on Learning*;
- 200 Albertans took part in *Health Summit '99*, a forum to exchange views and develop recommendations on the future of Alberta's health system;

- more than 500 Albertans were involved in a comprehensive review of the programs, funding and accountability of *Persons with Developmental Disabilities Boards*;
- the *Alberta Summit on Justice* gathered 150 delegates. The three-day summit produced 485 recommendations;
- Alberta Infrastructure consulted over 3,300 Albertans on the *Traffic Safety Act*; and
- the *Electricity Branch of Alberta Resource Development* consulted extensively with Albertans on the final phases of restructuring Alberta's electric industry.

Alberta Connects - February 2000 marked the first anniversary of Alberta Connects, an easily accessible method for Albertans to voice their opinions and ask for information about any government program, service or initiative. Alberta Connects includes a toll-free telephone line callers can use to ask for information and provide feedback as well as a web site that allows Albertans to access information, send the government a comment or question and receive a reply by e-mail.

RITE Telephone System - RITE serves as Albertans' toll-free province-wide connection to the Alberta Government. From January 1999 to January 2000, there were almost 6.2 million calls to the system, up from 5.8 million calls the year prior. Out of the total calls through the RITE telephone system, approximately 25 per cent are handled by RITE operators, while 75 per cent of callers complete their call using the auto-connect option. The new Government of Alberta telephone directory was introduced, the most comprehensive since directories were first introduced 20 years ago. The directory is sold through the Queen's Printer Bookstore and can also be accessed on-line at www.gov.ab.ca/directory - which is updated daily.

Y2K - Bureau staff provided support surrounding the Year 2000 issue, primarily in relation to the cross-sector group responsible for the Y2K Alberta initiative. Staff also supplied communications consultation to the Office of the Chief Information Officer and were involved in the first interim report on the status of provincial government mission critical systems. Communications staff also assisted client ministries with their Y2K communications activities.

Goal 3

Improve the Coordination and Efficiency of Communications Across Government

Alberta Connects - Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Economic Development, Environment, Health and Wellness, Infrastructure, Learning, Resource Development and Treasury coordinated efforts during the production



Through the 1999-2000 fiscal year, Alberta Connects logged:

- **83,000** page requests to the Internet site;
- almost **3,000** comments and **3,300** questions through the web site;
- more than **18,000** calls to the Alberta Connects toll-free telephone line.

The web site can be found at:

www.albertaconnects.gov.ab.ca. Albertans can also reach Alberta Connects toll-free from anywhere in the province by dialing 310-4455.

RITE Telephone System

From January 1999 to January 2000, there were almost **6.2 million** calls to the RITE telephone system.

There is toll-free access to government for Albertans calling from anywhere in the province at 310-0000 or 1-800-232-7215 for the hearing impaired.

There is an on-line Government of Alberta telephone directory: **www.gov.ab.ca/directory**

**1999-2000
coordinated initiatives
include:**

Team Alberta mission to the Pacific Rim and Mexico - Economic Development; Resource Development; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Launch of the Alberta Youth Employment Strategy – Learning; Human Resources and Employment

Y2K preparations – Human Resources and Employment; Municipal Affairs; Innovation and Science

Photo radar guidelines – Infrastructure; Justice and Attorney General

Media buying savings for government ministries

1999-2000 - \$408,000

1998-99 - \$279,000

1997-98 - \$259,000

Alberta is the only province in Canada to offer all Statutes and Regulations in a full range of regularly updated electronic formats. Alberta legislation posted on the QP Source Internet is updated weekly. Most other jurisdictions update on a semi-annual basis.

of Alberta Connects television programs, and the *Report to Albertans* in newspapers across the province.

Legal Research on the Internet - Queen's Printer Bookstore, Justice and Attorney General, the Legislative Assembly, and the Legal Education Society of Alberta hosted a series of workshops across Alberta introducing legal professionals to QP Source, a web site providing access to all Alberta's laws.

Budget 2000 - Treasury Communications continued to improve the cross-government communications process surrounding the Provincial Budget. Staff from across government worked with Treasury to ensure quick and convenient access to high quality communications and materials.

Emergency response communications - Several ministries worked with regional government staff, the Town of Taber, and various community groups to coordinate communications and work with international media following the Taber tragedy. Additionally, Human Resources and Employment, Environment and Municipal Affairs combined efforts following the Hub Oil explosion and fire in Calgary in August 1999.

Agency of Record for media buying - This is the third year the Bureau has used an Agency of Record for Media Buying (AORMB) to drive down costs associated with purchasing advertising for government in print and electronic media. The AORMB reported savings of over \$408,000 when compared to what other advertisers might have paid.

Communication innovations - Bureau staff across government continue to look to new technologies to make communications operations more efficient. For example, the Bureau developed *e-Clips*, a new electronic newspaper clipping service for use across government. Children's Services Communications created a web site for the Alberta Children's Forum, including an innovative "virtual forum"; Municipal Affairs Communications utilized innovative technology to keep Albertans informed about Y2K preparedness and transition to Year 2000 events around the world; the Bureau's Publishing Services branch created an Alberta Connects comment system; and Economic Development Communications developed a "virtual" media room for trade missions.

Publication efficiencies - Queen's Printer Bookstore now publishes and distributes the Alberta Court Calendar, creating time and cost-savings for Justice and Attorney General.

Goal 4

Deliver Products and Services that Allow Us to Meet or Exceed Revenue Projections and Customer Needs

Revised Statutes of Alberta - The Revised Statutes of Alberta is well on its way to making the Official Legislation more accessible to Albertans. 1999-2000

saw the completion of the research and development phase in revising the Statutes of Alberta. The revision and conversion, the first of its kind in 20 years, will result in the number of bound volumes reduced to approximately 12 volumes from the current 27. The newly created standard format will enable consistent publishing across a variety of media.

Electronic commerce - *QP On-line* provides world-wide 24-hour shopping access to the Bookstore's inventory of over 3,300 items. On-line shopping has seen monthly growth in usage and revenues since its introduction.

QP Source CD-ROM - Queen's Printer Bookstore staff continue to make improvements to the legal resource, QP Source. Changes include upgrades to the search software and improvements to the CD-ROM installation process. This year, historical QP Source CD-ROM's for 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 and an Orders-in-Council CD-ROM were developed.

QP Source Internet for professionals - Revenue from QP Source Internet subscriptions have increased as a result of changes that saw the subscription-based QP Source site for professionals grow to include several new databases for legislation.

Partnerships with the private sector - Queen's Printer Bookstore continues to expand its co-publishing initiatives to the private sector, resulting in a new range of value-added products for Albertans. An example includes the *Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System Audit (WHMIS) Compliance Manuals* (produced in conjunction with Human Resources and Employment and a private sector organization).

**Queen's Printer Bookstore
1999-2000 achievements
include:**

- assumed the responsibility for publishing and distributing the Alberta Court Calendar;
- raised awareness of Alberta legislation products through participation in forums and conferences;
- upgraded all Queen's Printer electronic products to be Year 2000 compliant;
- hosted a series of workshops across Alberta introducing legal professionals to QP Source Internet;
- partnered with various government and legal professionals to update specific Act indexes; and
- increased the sale of federal legislation including Canadian Standards Association publications by 20 per cent.

**For information about Queen's
Printer Bookstore products:**

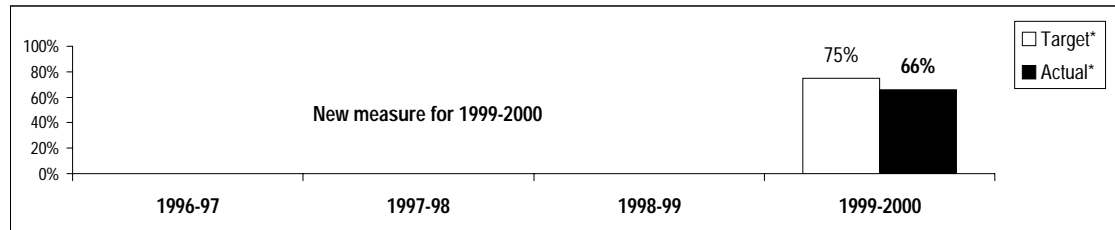
- call 427-4952 in Edmonton (for toll-free connection from anywhere in Alberta, dial 310-0000);
- on-line shopping is available at: www.gov.ab.ca/qp; and
- you can e-mail the Bookstore at: qp@gov.ab.ca

Public Affairs Bureau - Performance Measures

Public Satisfaction with Government Communications in Priority Areas

This measure is related to the goal of increasing communications with Albertans in the areas they identify as top priorities. It rates Albertans' satisfaction with the type of information they receive, either directly from the government or through other sources, in areas previously identified as priorities.

* Represents the total of "Very" and "Somewhat" satisfied responses



Source: Environics West

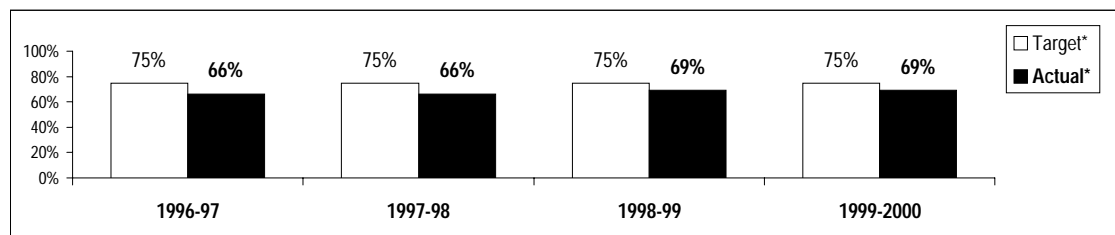
1999-2000 results reflect telephone interviews with 1,006 adult Albertans conducted from June 26 to July 4, 2000. Respondents were randomly selected from across the province. A sample of this size within the given population produces results which are reliable to within plus or minus 3.1% 19 times in 20.

The figure shown represents the averaged results of satisfaction with the type of information received in five priority areas, specifically the economy, taxes, health care, fiscal spending and education. The 1999-2000 result of 66% is less than the target of 75%. The reason given most often by respondents who indicated they were dissatisfied was that they did not receive enough information.

Public Satisfaction with Government Information

This measurement is related to the Bureau's goal of making government information more accessible. It rates Albertans' overall satisfaction level with the information they receive about government programs and services either directly from the government or through other sources.

* Represents the total of "Very" and "Somewhat" satisfied responses

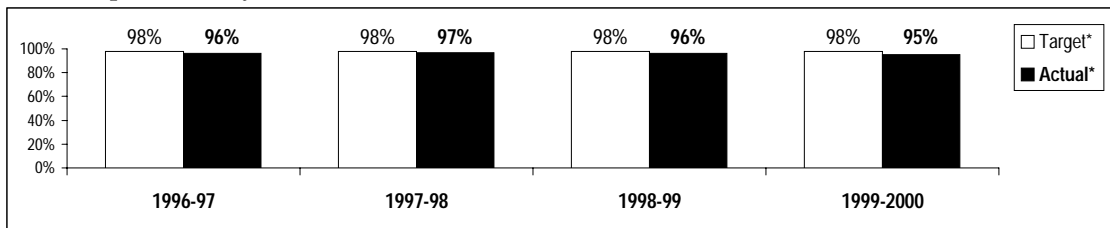


Source: Environics West

1999-2000 results reflect telephone interviews with 1,006 adult Albertans conducted from June 26 to July 4, 2000. Respondents were randomly selected from across the province. A sample of this size within the given population produces results which are reliable to within plus or minus 3.1% 19 times in 20.

Public Satisfaction with RITE and Queen's Printer Bookstore

This measurement relates to the goal of making government information more accessible. It rates the satisfaction levels of Albertans using the RITE Telephone System to access government and obtain information. It also measures how satisfied customers are with the services provided by the Queen's Printer Bookstore.



* Represents the total of "Very" and "Generally" satisfied responses

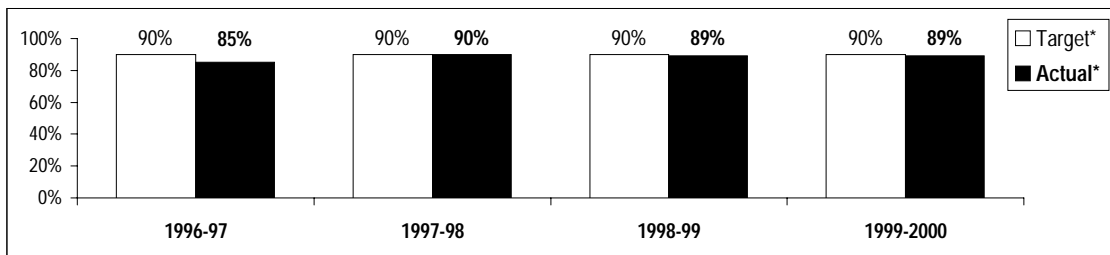
Queen's Printer Bookstore results were obtained through surveys mailed to one third of the clients selected at random from the active customer database. 207 surveys were returned. The survey took place in March and April 2000.

RITE results reflect the responses of 301 system users during telephone interviews conducted in March and April 2000. Those surveyed were selected from a total respondent list of 555 names which was compiled in March when RITE users were asked if they would participate in a satisfaction survey.

The surveys were compiled internally by the Bureau. The figures shown reflect the averaged results of multiple questions. Results have also been averaged to give both groups' responses equal weight. "Doesn't Apply" and no response replies are not included in the calculation of results.

Government Client Satisfaction

This measurement is related to the goals of improving the coordination and efficiency of communications across government. It rates government client satisfaction levels with the communications services provided by the Bureau.



* Represents the total of "Very" and "Generally" satisfied responses

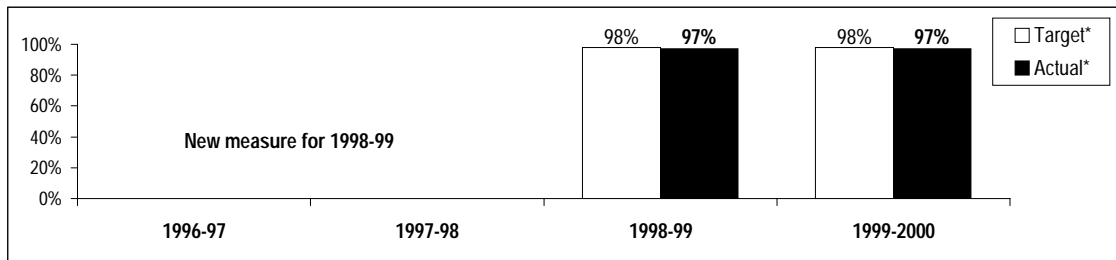
Communications Directors provided lists of departmental clients comprised of 146 executive committee members and 369 directors. Surveys were mailed to these clients. 79 executives and 176 directors responded to the surveys in March and April 2000. Wording on some questions was simplified from previous years to make the survey faster and easier for respondents.

The surveys were compiled internally by the Bureau. The figures shown reflect the averaged results of multiple questions. Results have also been averaged to give both executives' and directors' responses equal weight. "Doesn't Apply" and no response replies are not included in the calculation of results.

Customer Satisfaction with Products

This measure is related to the Bureau's goal of delivering products and services that allow us to meet or exceed revenue projections and customer needs. It rates the satisfaction of Queen's Printer Bookstore customers with the products available.

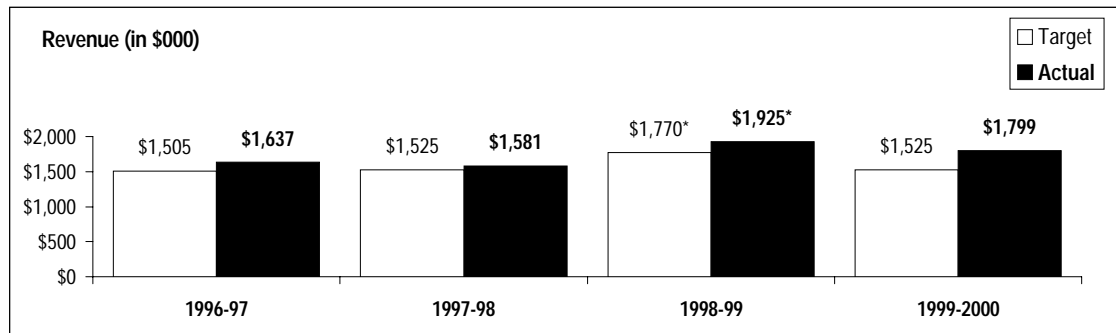
* Represents the total of "Very" and "Generally" satisfied responses



The results shown reflect the averaged responses to two questions regarding the range of products available and the variety of format options included in the survey of Queen's Printer Bookstore customers (see "Public Satisfaction with RITE and QP Bookstores" for methodology)

Revenue Projections

This measure is related to the Bureau's goal of delivering products and services that allow us to meet or exceed revenue projections and customer needs. It compares authorized revenue projections with the results actually achieved.



The Public Affairs Bureau generates revenue through the sale of legislation, government publications and other materials from the Queen's Printer Bookstores in Edmonton and Calgary. A small amount of revenue was also realized between 1996-97 and 1998-99 through chargebacks to agencies, boards and commissions for communications services provided by the Government Communications Group. These chargebacks were discontinued in 1999-2000.

Actual revenues are taken from the audited financial statements of Executive Council. Actual revenues were higher than targets due to increased production as a result of significant amendments and subsequent sales of the "Rules of Court". Revenues were also higher because of an increase in total available products.

*Increases in both the revenue target and actuals for 1998-99 are related to sales of the updated "Rules of Court".

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