



17th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures

Report on the Use of
Tablet Computers
in the Legislative Assembly

Chair: Mr. Bob Bromley, MLA

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BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures of the 16th Legislative Assembly tabled Committee Report 2-16(5): Report on the Use of Laptop Computers and Hand-Held Electronic Devices in the Legislative Assembly on May 19, 2010. This report provided a summary of the rules governing such devices in other jurisdictions and reviewed the Legislative Assembly's actions and views to that date regarding the use of portable electronic devices by Members of the Assembly and Committee staff in the performance of their duties. The report made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that Members be permitted to use laptop computers and other hand-held electronic devices only during Committee of the Whole proceedings;

And further, that laptop computers and other hand-held electronic communication devices are not be used by a Member who has the floor;

And furthermore, that a Member who has the floor must have his or her laptop computer closed and/or his or her hand-held electronic device turned off.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that any electronic device used in the Chamber must be on silent mode at all times.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that the use of laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices continue to be administered through the sole discretion of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly or the Chair of Committee of the Whole and if the use of any electronic device is deemed to impinge on the decorum or dignity of the House, the offending Member may be ordered to discontinue use.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that the guidelines governing the use of laptop computers or hand-held electronic devices be set out in a document entitled "Direction Regarding the Use of Electronic Communication Devices in

Committee” and that the document be attached as an appendix to the Rules of the Legislative Assembly.

All of these recommendations were adopted in the 16th Legislative Assembly by Motion in Committee of the Whole (Motions 9-16 (5), 10-16 (5), 11-16 (5), and 12-16 (5), respectively).

While no formal guidelines on the use of laptop computers and hand-held electronic devices have as yet been attached to the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, Members have treated these recommendations as conventions to be observed in the Chamber. Formal guidelines will be included in the overall review of the Rules now taking place.

Pursuant to Rule 85 (5) (e), the Speaker, in a letter dated December 12, 2011, referred consideration off the impact of the use of tablet computers on the operations of the 17th Assembly to the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures, in light of support received from Caucus for the use of tablets. The Speaker further referred correspondence from the Member for Frame Lake regarding the use of tablet computers in Committee and the House.

The Committee considered the matter at its meeting on January 18, 2011, and makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that tablet computers or other similar electronic devices be considered as a type of laptop computer/hand-held device, subject to the existing conventions in the House regarding electronic communications devices.

The Committee will continue to review the expansion of tablet computer use outside of Committee of the Whole, based on the Members’ experience in the current sitting and after consideration of an updated jurisdictional review.