



15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures

Report of the Standing Committee
on Rules and Procedures on
Referred Matters

Chair: Mr. Bill Braden, MLA

MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES

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March 14, 2007

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures is pleased to provide its Report on Referred Matters and commends it to the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Braden".

Bill Braden, MLA
Chairperson

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND PROCEDURES**

REPORT ON REFERRED MATTERS

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES

REPORT ON REFERRED MATTERS

BACKGROUND

On October 26, 2006, the Speaker referred two issues to the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures.

The first issue related to the amount of time available for Members' Statements by a Member speaking in more than one official language.

The second referred issue was the addition of a section entitled "Acknowledgements" to the daily order of business in the Assembly.

Process and Review of Current Canadian Practices

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures held an initial meeting on December 4, 2006, to review background information and parliamentary practices in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Committee agreed on the need to address these issues and provided direction to staff to prepare changes to the Rules and a motion for the House, implementing the proposed rule changes.

The proposed rule changes and a draft motion were reviewed and approved by the Committee at a meeting held on February 14, 2007, and presented to Caucus for their input at the February 20, 2007 meeting.

Findings

Extending Time Available for Members' Statements

A review of the practices in other Canadian jurisdictions revealed that the current time allotted to Members for Members' Statements is, along with Nunavut, the most generous in Canada. It was noted that every Member, including the Ministers, is afforded the opportunity to make a statement if they wish. Most other Canadian jurisdictions limit the number of Members who may make a statement each day, or put a set limit on the time period available for Members' Statements.

The Committee recognizes the right of any Member to use any of the Official Languages of the Northwest Territories in the Assembly. The Member for Monfwi made a solid case for the need for increased time to make a Members' Statement when speaking more than one Official Language. Mr. Lafferty pointed out that it was difficult to express complex ideas in two languages within the time allotted and to do justice to the statement in either language.

It was determined that an extra thirty extra seconds of time, thus allowing a Member speaking in more than one official language three minutes to complete a statement, would be sufficient. Further discussion determined that for the Speaker to be able to manage appropriate time allocations, he would require advance notice of a Member desiring to give a Members' Statement in more than one Official Language. In addition, to ensure the rule change was used for the purpose it was intended, a Member making a statement in more than one language must speak for at least thirty seconds in a second language.

"Acknowledgements" Added to Order Paper

There are provisions in some Canadian jurisdictions, notably New Brunswick, that allow "Messages of Condolence" (with prior approval of the Speaker). As well, some jurisdictions provide an item entitled "Congratulatory Messages". The Yukon has an item on their Order Paper entitled "Tributes" that allows for the recognition of special days and accomplishments in the lives of Yukoners.

The Committee discussed the need for an item called "Acknowledgements" on the daily Order Paper. It was agreed that Members need a way to recognize the significant accomplishments and milestones in the lives of northerners. It was determined that thirty seconds would be sufficient time. The Committee was also of the opinion that any recognition must be directed at a Member's own constituents and that advance notice of the content and focus of the Acknowledgement be provided to the Speaker. The use of "Acknowledgements" would be allowed at the sole discretion of the Speaker.

The Committee decided to focus "Acknowledgements" on the Member's own constituents in order to avoid duplication. Should a Member wish to acknowledge a Northerner who is not a constituent in the Assembly, opportunity already exists by way of a Members' Statement.

In order to ensure that the process is managed properly and reflects the decorum of the House, guidelines were developed to assist the Speaker in administering this item.

These guidelines will allow acknowledgements for the recognition of:

- a) birthdays at the age of 80 and every five years thereafter;
- b) anniversaries at 50 years and every five years thereafter;
- c) death of constituent;
- d) graduations; and
- e) significant accomplishments or awards.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that the Rules of the Legislative Assembly be amended to allow Members speaking in more than one official language three minutes to conclude their Members' Statement.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures recommends that the Rules of the Legislative Assembly be amended to include an item on the daily Order Paper entitled "Acknowledgements" and that appropriate guidelines be developed to assist the Speaker and all Members.

CONCLUSION

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to all Members for their thoughtful insights and feedback. The Committee is confident these changes will better serve the needs of all Members and this institution.