



February 23, 2006

Members of the Legislative Assembly
Northwest Territories

Use of Electronic Devices such as Laptops in Committee of the Whole

Parliamentary systems, as with all aspects of modern society have been filled with progressive measures, particularly within the last one hundred years. There has been a fairly linear advancement of methods, ideas and concepts that have been incorporated into our daily lives.

This advance can be seen in the evolving tools available to representatives in parliamentary systems around the world. Up until the twentieth century, many legislatures prohibited the use of paper in their Assemblies, expecting Members to openly debate the issues of the day without the use of notes or other such resources.

Today, we are subject to a massive amount of information covering the entire range of government's responsibility. From our own departments, constituencies, non-governmental organisations, lobby groups, municipalities, corporate communities both large and small we receive an unprecedented volume of details, numbers, statistics, surveys and studies. Unlike the past, each region is no longer dominated by one or two pressing concerns. This new global community we find ourselves in, dictates that we may hear concerns involving multi-national corporations one hour and then hear dust control strategies in the next. Every concern that crosses our desks, phone lines or servers is equally important and demands our full commitment.

Technology has created new ways of doing business and new mediums in which to express ourselves. This evolution will continue into the future as it always has making adaptability an important key in remaining relevant. This is the case in many fields; politics is no different.

We, as the elected representatives of the people of the Northwest Territories are committed to serving the people of this Territory to the highest degree possible. That high level cannot be met without using the full spectrum of tools at our disposal. The Information Age has created for us; the greatest knowledge base in our history and failing to flexibly incorporate it into the way we govern would be a disservice to our form of government and the efficacy at which it operates.



Currently, in Canada, nine of the thirteen elected Provincial and Territorial Legislative bodies permit the use of these types of media, be it in laptop, hand held PC or palm pilot form. By remaining in the minority, restricting the usage of these devices, this Legislative body is falling behind its national counterparts.

Real-time problems deserve real-time solutions. I implore the Members of this House to actively pursue the provisional use of these devices to enhance their ability to multi-task, represent and remain informed to the highest degree.

What I lay before us is an opportunity, not to be considered a must for all members. I draw this to our collective attention because the members of this Assembly each conduct their business differently. I believe those who feel the need is not there need not restrict those who are supporters of this idea and want the chance to experiment with the possibilities of this advancement. There needs to be a choice for members and recognition of the alternate way we conduct our business.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Hawkins", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Hawkins