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**Official Report
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Wednesday 17 February 2010

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 17 février 2010

**Standing Committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Organization

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

Organisation

Chair: Bas Balkissoon
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Président : Bas Balkissoon
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLYCOMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Wednesday 17 February 2010

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The committee met at 1303 in room 228.

ORGANIZATION

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll call the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly to order on Wednesday, February 17, 2010.

The order of business: The first item is organization, appointment to the subcommittee on committee business. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Chair. I move that Mr. Prue replace Mr. Tabuns on the subcommittee on committee business.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The next item of business is the draft committee report pursuant to standing order 111(b). Any discussion, comments? Shall the draft report pursuant to standing order 111(b) be adopted? All in favour? Carried.

Shall I present the committee's report to the House? Agreed.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Chair, may I request that in other business we have a brief discussion on two items? Item number one is the committee's participation in the July National Conference of State Legislatures meeting, and item number two is a review of the report done some time ago on technology in the precinct, pursuant to the discussion that we were just having before the meeting started.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay. As the clerk has advised on the NCSL conference, the only thing we know right now is the date. We normally write a letter to the House leader when we receive the full invitation. I'm happy to at least include it in the discussion at our next meeting so all members are aware of it. We'll bring all the material that we have on it up to date the next time we meet.

Under the other item, do you want to discuss it today, or would you like to—if I remember correctly, it's in the hands of the Speaker. Would you like to invite him back?

Mr. Norm Miller: Would we like to invite the Speaker back?

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To tell us where it's at.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, Mr. Chair, I think it's time to do that. I know we spent a fair amount of time a few years ago working on the report to do with technology in the precinct. I think it's safe to say the House leaders at that time weren't exactly open to ideas of change. That may have changed now.

I will also note that on recent pre-budget consultations, I know that two of the three PC members, one being myself, made good use of laptops on that and found it extremely useful for being able to note what the presenters had said and not lose it on scraps of paper.

I will also mention that at least one of our members, one of the PC members, Mr. Shurman, brought the issue up yesterday with me, asking about the use of laptops in the actual chamber and suggesting that it would be of benefit.

So I think it is time to revisit this, whether it's the use of wi-fi in committee rooms or the actual use of laptops in the chamber itself. If the way to deal with it is to ask the Speaker to come to a meeting and perhaps to review the report we've already done, or discuss it, I'd certainly be in favour of that.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Any other comments? Mr. Delaney?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm sorry. Why don't we go to Mr. Prue first.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, sorry, Michael. Mr. Prue.

Mr. Michael Prue: I was just going to say that generally in my caucus we are opposed to the use of laptops in the chamber because it's too open to abuse.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): What about here?

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't think that at committee anybody really cares. But in the chamber, people can be passing you notes and all kinds of stuff and it's—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I think the issue is also here, because in the report it was suggested to use it here, but I don't think the wi-fi network is available in here. You can use your laptop today, but you have to have one of those Rogers red rocket wireless things.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. And again, I had no difficulty on the finance committee with Norm using his laptop. Nobody raised it; nobody cared. But if he starts using it in the Legislature, bells will go off.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Well, I hear you. Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Two points to make: I'm open to a discussion of the use of the technology in the Legislature, and I'll leave it at that, without suggesting a conclusion.

With regard to committee rooms, I think the committee should consider the fact that the only way to get Internet access on a machine that we are allowed to bring in here is to have a Bell or Rogers USB connection, which strikes me as duplicative at best, wasteful at worst, in that we already have the ability to deliver the signal here. It strikes me as pointless to pay for the same thing twice when all we need to do is to extend a wi-fi signal into the committee rooms and any other obvious places that are not now served by a wi-fi signal.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay. Anyone else?

I just want to clarify: At our next meeting, whenever it is, we'll have on the agenda the NCSL conference, which is in July. Hopefully, we'll have more information by then.

The next item: Is it clear with everyone and are all agreeable that we just invite the Speaker to tell us where the whole project is at and bring us up to speed?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Chair, you mentioned the words "whenever it is." May I suggest that the committee empower you to call such a meeting specifically for these purposes no later than a month from now to have resolved these issues, particularly the one with regard to the use of technology?

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take that under advisement.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you. Actually, I'd like to make that a motion, that the Chair bring in the Speaker. I'd like to actually move that the Chair bring in the Speaker.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will invite the Speaker.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The idea of a month, I'd rather leave that to the Chair.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Fair enough.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Ramal?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Just a question for the members from the NDP caucus and the Conservative caucus: I

guess they have no objections to having them in committees and everywhere in the building except the House, right? Is that what I took—

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's what I think he said.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Oh, I see.

Mr. Norm Miller: I don't presume to speak for our whole caucus at this stage, but I know some members of caucus expressed an interest in being able to use laptops in the House. But I think that's what we could discuss, without trying to decide what the end point of the discussion will be.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Just to clear up what Norm said: Except for probably Mr. Bradley, everybody in the House has a BlackBerry, which in effect is a mini-laptop anyway.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): BlackBerrys are not allowed, legally.

Mr. Rick Johnson: So if there's anything we could do to move to a paperless—the option where we could have agendas and things like that come up on the screen and save some of the paper would be a good thing.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay. Mr. Delaney, you had another comment?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mr. Prue made a comment on the predisposition of his caucus toward the use of computers in the House. Mr. Johnson accurately noted that we already have a very powerful computer that sits in the palm of our hand which we use in the House. At the time that the committee deliberated on this, and I think it was the 2005-06 time period, the compromise we were at the time discussing prohibited the use of technology during routine proceedings but okayed it during debates.

The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That was the recommendation?

Mr. Bob Delaney: That was, if I recall, essentially the recommendation.

The Chair (The Chair (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll bring everything back at the next meeting. The clerk will provide you with a copy of the report and everything else.

Everybody okay with that? Okay. Meeting adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1311.

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